ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: WOMEN IN ORANGE: HOW WOMEN IN PRISON ADAPT, NAVIGATE RELATIONSHIPS, AND MAINTAIN IDENTITY

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The body of literature describing women's prisons and the adaptations of women in prison largely overlook the role femininity plays in structuring life in the single-sex space of a women's prison. Virtual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifty-six women housed at a women's prison in Arizona. Participants described providing care for others and care for the self. Life in the prison was therefore structured primarily around care, which refers to a feeling of concern or interest, providing for the needs of someone, or paying close attention to doing something to avoid harm.

WOMEN IN ORANGE: HOW WOMEN IN PRISON ADAPT, NAVIGATE RELATIONSHIPS, AND MAINTAIN IDENTITY

by

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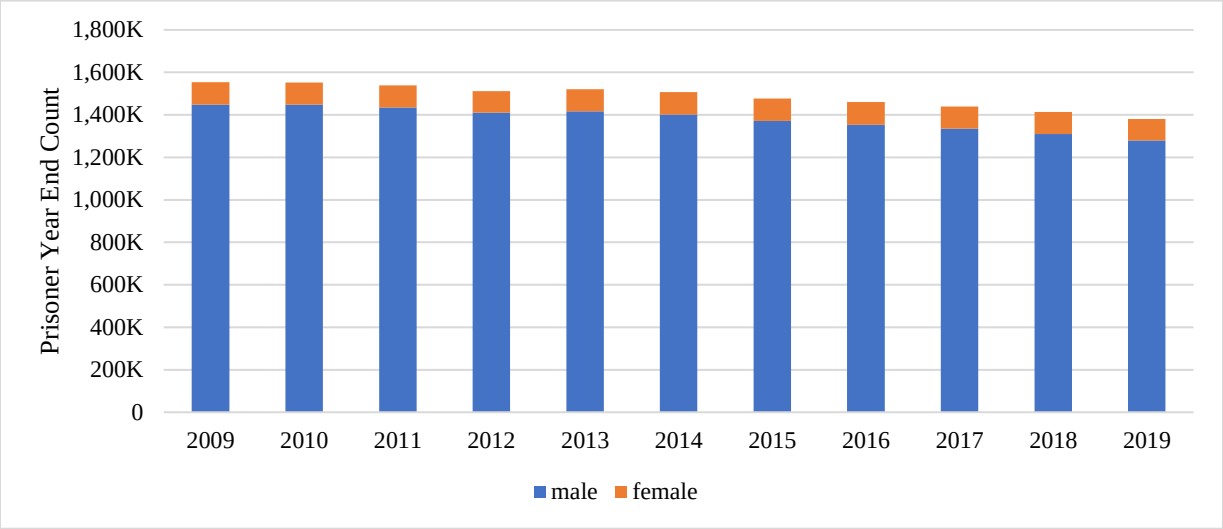
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

America's prison boom started in the 1970s and peaked in 2008 at 2.3 million citizens held captive in jails and prisons – an incarceration rate that dwarfed that of every other country. Throughout this prison boom, increases in women's incarceration rates have outpaced men's (Frost, Greene, & Pranis, 2006; Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018; Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014). Between 1977 and 2004 the number of women in prison increased by 757 percent while men's imprisonment increased by 388 percent (Frost et al., 2006). Women make up roughly 7 percent of the incarcerated population in America, but the dissimilar increases in the rate at which women are held captive compared to men has garnered some attention. Some have even argued that mass incarceration has impacted women more than men since the growth in women's incarceration spiked at higher levels and has remained high for a longer time period (Frost et al., 2006). With the population of incarcerated women being relatively small, though, it is not women's imprisonment that is driving the overall incarceration trends. However, the authors explain that the study of incarcerated women is important as "women's prison populations may be especially sensitive to the factors that drive rapid growth in the overall prison population" (Frost et al., 2006, p. 19–21).

Though incarceration rates in the U.S. continually rose from the 1970s through the early 2000s, since their peak in 2008, the population kept in prisons has been on the slow decline. As of 2019, state and federal prison populations totaled 1.38 million, just over 100,000 of whom were women (7.3 percent). Figure 1 shows the number of persons in state and federal U.S. prisons reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics from 2009 to 2019. This figure illustrates that the portion of the incarcerated population that are women is consistently small, and it also shows the small overall decline in U.S. prison numbers across these years.

Figure 1:
Total U.S. Prison Population by Sex

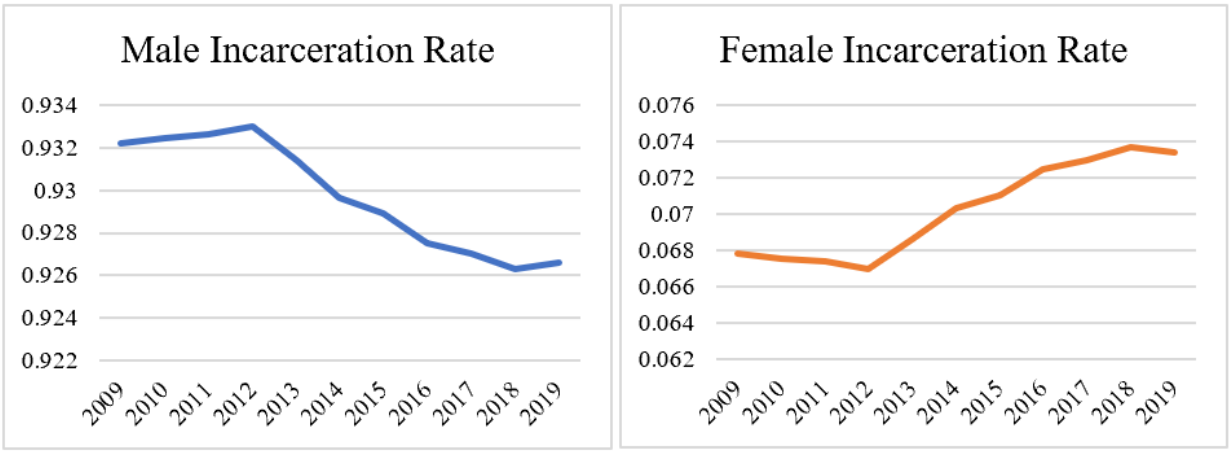


Source: Carson, 2020
Note: These data include U.S. state and federal prisons

The differences in imprisonment trends for men and women described by Frost and colleagues (2006) are made clearer by examining incarceration rates by sex. Using the same BJS data, Figure 2 shows a side-by-side comparison of the yearly incarceration rates for men and women between 2009 and 2019. Whereas men's incarceration rates have been mostly on the decline in recent years, women's incarceration rates have been increasing.

The gap in incarceration growth rates between men and women has widened in recent decades, with women's rates consistently outpacing men's rates at state and federal levels (Frost et al. 2006). However, the reasons for this gap and the differing trends remain unclear. As men make up the vast majority of the United States' incarcerated population, most of the research on mass incarceration has focused on men. We know comparatively little about the incarceration of women. The causes for these differing incarceration growth trends as well as the historically large population of incarcerated women deserve empirical investigation.

Figure 2:
Male and female US incarceration rates, 2009-2019



Source: Carson, 2020

Note: These data include populations from U.S. state and federal prisons

Men and women in the criminal justice system share several similarities as well as many differences prior to incarceration. Histories of trauma and abuse are often reported by men and women in prison, but scholarship on women's prisons asserts that victimizations among women in prison are more common and more often "multiple and cumulative" (Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2017, p. 1364). The prevalence of these painful histories among the women in prison is posited by researchers to impact how people respond to the prison environment and the other people within it. Additionally, women are more likely to have committed a nonviolent crime, particularly a drug offense, compared to men (Carson, 2020; Kreager and Kruttschnitt, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2020). Women who have committed crimes tend to be disproportionately women of color, young (in their early to mid-30s), and are often the mothers of minor children. On average, they are not married and have a high school education but limited vocational skills and spotty work histories. Justice-involved women are also especially likely to have multiple physical and mental health issues, and to have substance abuse problems (Frost et al., 2006).

These characteristics as well as subsequent research reveal women swept into the criminal justice system have a variety of needs which are not adequately addressed by carceral facilities. Lack of rehabilitative services, adequate medical care, and gender-specific reentry services are commonly cited as evidence of this systemic neglect (Braithwaite, Arriola, & Newark., 2006; Trammel, 2012).

Women's imprisonment also impacts families and communities. Described as the "glue" which hold together communities (Kruttschnitt, 2010), women often play multiple roles (i.e. child care, emotional support, etc.) in the community, particularly in poor and disorganized neighborhoods (Rose and Clear, 2003). Therefore, researchers posit that the removal of women from communities due to incarceration is particularly detrimental compared to men (Kruttschnitt, 2010). Indeed, Candace Kruttschnitt refers to this as the "paradox of women's imprisonment" (2010, p. 39), that such a small number of women who are incarcerated has such considerable consequences in society. In reviewing health issues of incarcerated women, Braithwaite, Arriola and Newark state that "[w]e know so little about the dynamics of institutional life upon them [female offenders]; and what we do know about the long-term impact of incarceration on their children, family, and communities is not good" (2006, p. 15). The community from which women in prison come and will return to lack economic resources and social capital to assist with reentry needs.

Scholars have long pointed to changes in policy which increasingly sent women to prison for their crimes as the cause of the increase in women's prison populations rather than women becoming more dangerous. Because women in the prison system are disproportionately incarcerated for nonviolent crimes that stem from drug abuse and economic marginalization, Frost and colleagues (2006) recommend that policymakers focus on women as they formulate

alternatives to incarceration. Therefore, while women represent a comparatively small population of incarcerated people and the mass incarceration problem is arguably not currently growing, understanding women's experiences with the criminal justice system is essential for the progress of criminal justice responses.

For example, given that women are more disadvantaged and tend to look different on paper prior to their incarceration, it stands to reason that they may react and adapt to their incarceration differently as well. Insofar as these adaptations are different, prison culture may be different as well. However, much of what is known about prison culture relates to *men's* prisons. Seminal works on prison conclude that the culture within men's prisons is structured generally around strength, power, and conflict, particularly conflict with correctional staff. Power belongs to those men who know how to navigate the prison system, "get things done" (Sykes, 1958), and manage interactions with both correctional staff as well as transactional relationships with other men in prison. Scholarship on women's prisons has grown in recent years concluding that women's prisons differ from men's prisons in two main areas: the structure and quality of relationships between people in prison, and the prevalence of violence in the prison social systems.

Certainly, there are similarities in the ways that men and women respond to imprisonment (Hartnagel & Gillan, 1980; Kunzel, 2009; see also Pollock, 2002), but research suggests differences as well. Even so, theoretical understandings of prison adaptation do not well-explain *why* women react and adapt to their incarceration differently than men. Many of these conceptual models are based on androcentric theories which ignore the gendered life experiences of women prior to as well as during their incarceration (Giallombardo, 1966; Hartnagel & Gillan, 1980; Trammel, 2012; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). While many needs of

women in prison are similar to those of incarcerated men, it is likely that women experience the "pains of imprisonment" differently than men (Crewe et al., 2017). Women in general are socialized differently than men; they interact with friends and foes in a different way and react to stressful situations differently. Sykes (1958) describes the prison as a "society within a society," and other classic scholars also recognize that the structure of life in prison is not fully removed from the ways that life functions outside of prison (Clemmer, 1940; Irwin 1970). Therefore, while the depriving aspects of the prison certainly alter behavior, it cannot be assumed that the prison and its culture of norms is totally consuming or overrides the gendered expectations of the people in prison. Due to differences in socialization and gendered life experiences, men and women, even while held in similar isolation and captivity, should respond in ways that are deeply impacted by their gendered upbringing and socialization.

In short, though women's incarceration rates have been rising at a faster rate than men's for decades, women's incarceration remains understudied. The differences in socialization, expectations, and life histories suggest that androcentric explanations of prison adaptation fall short in understanding the behaviors of women adapting to prison life. There is a need for more studies to explore the experiences of justice-involved women from the ground-up, rather than trying to understand women's experiences using theoretical lenses built from research on men.

The primary aim of this dissertation was to investigate how women adjust to life in prison, focusing on relationships, adaptation techniques, and gender expression. For this research, I conducted fifty-six interviews at a mixed-security, women's state prison in Arizona. Arizona has seen some of the highest incarceration rates in the country since before the development of the state's Department of Corrections in 1968. The state has also long been an exemplar of the "no frills" punitive movement which dominated American corrections starting in

the 1990s (Lynch, 2010). In 2004, Arizona ranked seventh among states with the largest female imprisonment rates (Frost et al., 2006), and as of 2019, women account for nearly 10 percent of the incarcerated population in Arizona (ADCRR, 2023).

In summary, this study explores how women adapt to prison life, focusing on the quality and nature of relationships formed as well as individual gender expression in the regulated prison space. Given the stark differences in life histories and socialization prior to incarceration between men and women, I posit that women employ different strategies to cope with confinement. Certainly, behavior in prison is guided in no small part by gender norms. Attempts to force ill-suited theories to apply to women often ignore gender stratification and gendered justice, but extant literature on women's adaptations to incarceration employ theories that were developed for men to try to predict or explain the behavior of women. By ignoring the need for research on the unique needs, concerns, and barriers of incarcerated women, we may be overlooking factors which are important for secure administration of prisons as well as improving the wellbeing of incarcerated women.

Indeed, women incarcerated at Arizona State Prison Complex – Perryville (ASPC-Perryville) do not adapt to their confinement as research based on men would suggest. Rather, the ways that life function for "women in orange" were influenced by gender. Specifically, I found that life in the prison was structured around care, particularly care for others and care for the self.

West and Zimmerman (1987) and Messerschmitt's (1993) works theorize gender as a continuous social action which occurs and is assessed in all social contexts. Doing gender for women may be related to feminine appearance as well as behaviors which are considered

feminine. How women 'do gender' informs the characteristics that they import into the prison with them as well as how they adapt to the depriving carceral setting. Care therefore may be an imported response to deprivation, produced in large part because women are socialized to provide care to others as a means of expressing or "doing" femininity. Providing care among women in orange can be conceptualized as an avenue by which incarcerated women "do gender" in the carceral space.

Recent literature on women in prison tend to frame the actions of incarcerated women as resistance against the carceral institution and examples of agency in a space that deprives inhabitants of such control (Bosworth, 2000; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Lempert, 2016). Though there were indeed examples of resistance discussed by some, the women that I spoke with did not describe many of their actions in this way. Instead, women talked about themselves and their neighbors as "natural nurturers," as people who felt compelled to guide and provide for others, and as members of a community who sought to protect their dignity and avoid drama primarily by tending to the needs of themselves and the small group of people they felt close to. Care, therefore, is the framework through which life in this women's prison functions.

Overview of Dissertation

Throughout this dissertation I refer to the people incarcerated at Perryville as "women in orange" as this is the color of the state-issued uniform they all wore on screen during our interview. Several interviewees used this term, but it was more common that women referred to their neighbors as "inmates" or "females." I use the term "women in orange" for several reasons. Firstly, it allows me to avoid using terms like "inmate" which is often considered a dehumanizing label for individuals held in carceral facilities (Boppre & Reed, 2021), obscuring the person in favor of their role. Secondly, it focuses the subject of this research as a woman – a

gendered being with a life of experience and socialization – who is draped in the symbols of the prison but is much more than her inmate number. Her orange clothing is a representation of the way in which women in prison are stripped of their identity and treated as interchangeable 'inmates,' however, she is also a mother, a daughter, an employee, and a student. Women in orange are housed in facilities that resemble carceral institutions for men,[1] yet life inside these places are deeply impacted by the people that they hold. Though they wear the same orange uniform, are governed by similar rules of conduct, daily schedules, and often even correctional staff, women in prison do not closely resemble men in prison. Their concerns, sources of comfort, and motivations during their confinement appear uniquely feminine and centered on caring.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the body of literature on prison life. Early studies of prison culture examined men and the body of literature on culture within women's prisons finds that these established theories partially explain women's adaptive experience to incarceration, but largely fall short. For most of criminology's history, women's crime and experiences with the criminal justice system have been considered tangential to men's, but rarely deserving of its own study. This chapter includes an overview of the concepts of prison culture and adaptation from seminal works from men's prisons, a summary of the classic works on women's prisons as well as a synopsis of gender socialization and feminist theory, describing how the characteristics that women bring with them to prison may influence the culture that exists within women's prisons. A brief history of women's prisons as well as norms and adaptation strategies in the modern women's prison are also discussed. This chapter concludes by outlining care as a

[1] ASPC-Perryville held incarcerated men until 2000. Indeed, a few of my interviewees were housed at Perryville before it was an all-female prison complex.

framework for life in the women's prison, including the ways that the concept of care is gendered and intricately linked to feminine socialization and identity.

Chapter 3 describes the research project in detail, including an overview of Arizona's women's prison, ASPC-Perryville, where interviews took place, as well as the larger penological context of Arizona. Due to COVID-19, participants were interviewed virtually. These interviews explored how the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the women have (or have not) changed during their confinement, the quality and nature of relationships inside and outside of prison and aimed to better understand gender and gender expression in this women's-only facility. Demographics of the participants are included in this chapter and compared, where appropriate, to the rest of the population housed at Perryville and to the larger population of women incarcerated in US state prisons.

Chapter 4 discusses care for others. Newcomers to the prison recalled receiving care from roommates, strangers, and people who eventually became part of their tight-knit group. Ranging from "friends for now" to "life-long family," belonging to these small groups created a space for women in orange to care for others and to be cared for by people in prison with them. Serving in caregiving roles like teacher or mother at the prison also functioned to affirm some women's personal identities. Care for others was not only a product of close found family groups, but also described as a feature of the prison communities at Perryville. This chapter details how care was provided between women in orange in ways that responded to the deprivations of the prison environment using skills and methods and actions that are largely gendered.

Chapter 5 describes the ways that women in orange care for themselves. This includes the ways that the self is cared for by caring for the body through hygiene and appearance, expressed

their femininity or masculinity, and tended to their wellbeing through creative expression while incarcerated in a "total institution." Care for the self was often accomplished via modes of friction (Rubin, 2015), which allowed women in orange to nurture their identity and well-being in a highly controlled space.

The ways that women in orange expressed femininity in prison is partly explained by the doing gender framework, but this theoretical lens appears to fall short. Women in prison described caring for themselves in ways that would signal to loved ones that they were still "a mom" for example, but for many in their daily routines, feminine displays that were prioritized on the outs were abandoned. Importantly, this was not understood by most women as the institution stripping their feminine identity, but rather a means of living comfortably while removed from many of society's expectations of feminine presentation. Care for the self, therefore, best frames the actions related to creative expression, feminine identity maintenance, and hygienic self-care.

While care certainly frames many of the actions of women housed at Perryville, theoretical frameworks provided by extant works were also evident in the actions of the women I interviewed. Chapter 6 finally describes these additional methods of adaptation to the prison environment utilized by women in orange at Perryville. The ways that femininity informs the use of inmate and street code tenets in the prison though fighting – and the violations of these codes like via snitching are explained using theoretical frameworks beyond care. Additionally, examples of resistance and advocacy, identity transformation, and learning to work the system during incarceration are examples of adaptations evidenced in the interview narratives which support existing theories of prison adaptation.

Finally, chapter 7 provides a summary of the findings from the interviews with women in orange at Perryville, addresses how this work contributes to the body of literature on adaptation to prison life and concludes with several implications for the future of correctional administration.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORY & BACKGROUND

Though the modern prison has been present in the U.S. since 1829, it has only been within the last eighty years that life within these institutions has warranted much scholarly interest, starting most notably with Donald Clemmer's ethnography of a men's prison in 1940. Other groundbreaking works in this arena arose in the following decades, and though the bulk of scholarship on prisons has historically focused on men's prisons and men's lives within these confined spaces (Irwin, 1970; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes, 1958), the body of literature on women in prison has grown recently. This scholarship on women is the focus of this chapter. To begin, however, it is important to understand that women have long-since had a prison experience unique to that of men. Differences in the behaviors for which they were confined, the facilities they were held in, and the experiences endured during their incarceration throughout history likely inform life in women's prisons still today. A brief discussion of the history of women's prisons starts this chapter.

Historically, women's prisons have been described as "gentler" places than men's prisons. In the earliest jails and prisons (and even into the early twentieth century), men and women were not separated from one another. Frequent abuses of incarcerated women and "the [early nineteenth century] reformist recognition that men and women could not be effectively controlled within the same institution (Faith, 1993, p. 129)" eventually led to the small number of women in facilities being separated from incarcerated men. Being small in number, women in the 1930s typically were held in one overcrowded room or a separate wing of a men's prison, or a separate building on the same prison grounds as men. These accommodations were marginally more secure than being housed with men but abuses and exploitation from male guards was still common (Pollock, 2002).

Many prison facilities designed distinctly for women in the nineteenth century utilized a "cottage system" wherein women were encouraged to think of themselves and supervisors as a family. While tiered cells and dorms became common in men's prisons, women were living in private bedrooms in these small homes with a small group of other women. This system was "an architectural embodiment of the [nineteenth century reformist] notion that criminal women could be reformed through domestic training" (Rafter, 1990, p. 33), spending their time cooking, cleaning, and engaging in other "feminine" tasks. Reformatories for women emphasized domestic roles and dependency as a means of establishing social control over women deemed in need of feminizing (Rafter, 1990; Pollock, 2002). Even a century later, Ward and Kassebaum (1965), Giallombardo (1966), and Heffernan (1972) described their prisons of study as being domestic settings with women living in home-style dorms on prison compounds without razor wire or armed guards which women in prison described as feeling "like college" rather than a prison. It is important to note that these reformist changes were not applied equally to all women, however. Historically, judges have been less inclined to sentence white women to jails and prisons compared to nonwhite women, and in the reformist era Black women along with women deemed serious offenders were almost exclusively sent to prison farms rather than reformatories (Faith, 1993; Pollock, 2002).

As new penology ideals emerged in the 1970s and 80s, women's prison structure changed, prioritizing security over rehabilitation (McCorkel, 2013). The trend in prisons built since the 1990's is to build using a unisex architecture – women's facilities are built to model men's prisons with a focus on security (Pollock, 2002). Discussing prison architecture in the UK, Jewkes and colleagues explain that "the emphasis tends to lie on the perceived need, or symbolic desire, for the security paraphernalia that denotes 'this is a prison' and women's prisons,

therefore, tend to look like men's prisons, despite the very different experiences and needs their occupants bring to custody with them" (Jewkes et al., 2019, p. 9). The bulk of funds for both men's and women's prisons are spent on security measures like security cameras, razor wire fences, weaponry, and guards who prioritize preventing escape and riots (Faith, 1993). However, women pose much less risk of escape and assault compared to men, and therefore some argue that women's prison resources should focus less on overbearing security measures and more on providing adequate programming, treatment, and health care to women in prison (Faith, 1993).

Prisons, therefore, are implicitly gendered institutions. While early prisons for women looked and functioned very differently from men's, today's prisons are designed with men in mind, built around masculinist assumptions about physical space, medical services, and rehabilitation (Sufrin, 2017). How have these changes in the built environment of women's prisons changed the behavior of women that are held within them? Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) assert that even as the physical structures and functioning of the women's prisons shifted to resemble men's prisons, the women housed within them have not changed their behaviors substantially nor does it appear they adapt in vastly different ways than they have in the past. Serious violence and racial conflict which is common in men's prisons is largely absent in women's prisons and remains uncommon even as overcrowding became a prominent issue (Frost et al., 2006). Some researchers find that the play family or pseudofamily "is an enduring feature of women's prison culture" (Owen, 1998, p. 134).

Classic ethnographies of prison adaptation

The earliest and most commonly cited studies of life in US prisons studied only men in prison. The current dissertation, in contrast, examines only women in prison. While these studies

therefore may not adequately explain life in women's prisons, they have no doubt laid essential groundwork for prison research and the concepts developed by these researchers continue to frame contemporary works.

Describing the prison community, Clemmer (1940) observed that prison is made up of a constantly changing population, and yet, there is stability in the values and controls of the prison. The prison community, therefore, has a culture which is carried and transmitted, though only mildly modified by the individual members of the community. He asserts that "… the prison culture is not distinct, or even greatly different from the culture in a free society" (Clemmer, 1940, p. 86), and details the cultural antecedents and trends in pre-prison histories of those men incarcerated at the prison. These characteristics which are imported from criminal society into the prison are pointed to by Clemmer as evidence that there is not a unique society that exists within the prison, but rather that prison is merely a microcosm of broader society.

In the prison, just as in society, people with a variety of backgrounds are brought into one another's lives and conflict ensues when values and attitudes differ between them. To resolve conflict, adjustments are made by individuals in the community. One means of adjustment he calls assimilation, in which a person "learns enough of the culture of a social unit in which he is placed to make him characteristic of that unit" (Clemmer, 1940, p. 87). In the prison society, such assimilation is referred to by Clemmer as 'prisonization.' Though not all people in prison become prisonized, the folkways and mores embodied by them impact the prison culture and structure the functioning of life and development of relationships in the prison. Men who are most likely to be prisonized to a high degree are those who serve longer sentences, are younger, have fewer social connections outside of the prison, and are accepting of the culture of the prison

(Clemmer, 1940, p. 301). Similar factors are found to be predictors of adherence to the inmate code in recent scholarship (discussed later).

Illustrating the deprivations inherent to the prison environment, Sykes (1958) describes the litany of "pains of imprisonment" experienced by men held in prison. The 'deprivation of liberty' he describes as one's involuntary seclusion from family, relatives and friends, the subsequent loss of emotional relationships, and feelings of boredom and loneliness. While the basic necessities of a person in prison are met, the lack of individualization, bulk, or adequacy of goods and services provided in the prison causes suffering. This Sykes labels the 'deprivation of goods and services.' The 'deprivation of heterosexual relationships' is another pain of imprisonment, in which one is "figuratively castrated by his involuntary celibacy" (Sykes, 1958, p. 70). Anxieties surrounding masculinity stem from this deprivation. 'Deprivation of autonomy' refers to the restricted ability of the person in prison to make choices and damages their self-image as they are reduced to a weak and helpless child-like status during their incarceration. Finally, the uneasy and unsafe sense people in prison commonly report while imprisoned is described as the 'deprivation of security.' Contrary to the free world, people confined in prison understand their neighbors to be mostly non-conforming and many are unable or unwilling to rely on guards for protection in this new environment. This contributes to a near-constant anxiety about avoiding victimization. These deprivations described by Sykes are often cited and explored in contemporary prison research.

Further depicting the process of deprivation experienced by people in prison, Goffman (1961) referred to prisons as 'total institutions,' in which those confined are stripped of much of their identities, privacy, and autonomy. Nearly all aspects of their daily lives are planned and controlled by authority figures, and they are treated as "inmates" and "criminals" rather than

unique individuals confined in a space. People in prison today are provided state-issued uniforms, the substitution or alteration of which is often strictly prohibited. The number of books, pictures, or other personal materials that are allowed to be in one's possession in prison are controlled, which also comports with Sykes' contentions about material deprivations. The timing at which people in prison are expected to wake up, eat meals, and move about the prison are not the decision of the individual, but part of an orchestrated administrative schedule. High levels of uncertainty are characteristic of prison life; information (such as transfer dates or housing assignment changes) is sometimes purposefully kept from people confined in prison to aid in the secure administration of the prison, though frustrations related to lack of information about prison services (e.g. how to get money on a commissary account or use the phones), pre-trial case processing and court dates, or reentry necessities (e.g. housing and employment options) are also common complaints of incarcerated individuals (Owen, 1998). Concerns about victimization also contribute to a consistent and alarming sense of uncertainty (Travis et al., 2014). How people in prison navigate, cope with and/or adapt to these deprivations are the focus of much scholarship including the current dissertation.

The concepts of "pains of imprisonment," "mortification of the self" and "prisonization" as well as descriptions of the prison society have been studied for decades by prison researchers. These seminal works limit their study of people in prison to men in prison, but the terminology and frameworks they provide have been important for much of the subsequent investigations of both men and women in prison. As I will argue, more women-centered studies are needed to improve our understanding of women in prison, but these classic concepts continue to offer useful insight to the current dissertation.

Classic ethnographies from women's prisons

There are several classic ethnographies from women's prisons that sought to understand the ways in which women's prisons were different from men's. Conducted in the 1960s, these early works utilized the androcentric concepts derived from the works of Clemmer (1940), Sykes (1958), and others. These studies found similarities in the social roles adopted by and adaptation styles of women and men in prison, but also identified some stark and prevailing differences: the prevalence of pseudofamilies and intimate relationships between women in prison as well as the lack of solidarity among the prison community.

The first empirical work of life in a women's prison, Ward and Kassebaum's (1965) *Women's Prison: Sex and Social Structure,* uses a mixed methods approach at the California Institution for Women (CIW) and Frontera women's prisons to determine whether women react to incarceration in similar ways to men. Like early studies of men in prison (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958), Ward and Kassebaum describe the process of entry to prison as being disorienting, causing uncertainty and apprehension among the new arrivals. The process is one which deliberately deprives individuals of status and autonomy, contributing to the pains of imprisonment as described by Sykes (1958). While they find that adaptations to this harsh and bewildering environment somewhat resemble those used by men, Ward and Kassebaum identify several differences as well. In contrast to observations at men's prisons, those labeled a "snitch" at women's prison are much less criticized and rarely endure violent retaliation from the society of people in prison. Altogether, less importance is given to loyalty and solidarity among imprisoned women, and consequently the inmate code is less salient, a finding that holds in subsequent research (Hartnagel & Gillan, 1980; Tittle, 1969; Trammell, 2012).

Describing the gender role expectations of women outside of prison, Ward and Kassebaum explain that women are socialized such that they must be "feminine" to attain status

and security through marriage and motherhood. While incarcerated, women in general continue to value restraint, passivity, and gentleness, and seek to recreate the status-attaining roles of mother and wife through substitution in a women-only society. The authors assert that the "most salient distinction to be made among female inmates was between those who were and those who were not engaged in homosexual behavior in prison, and further, of those who were involved, between the incumbents of 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles" (Ward and Kassebaum, 1965, p. v). Reflecting traditional gender role expectations, masculine-presenting people in prison serve as protectors of their partners and domineer in the relationship, while feminine women take care of the living space and other domestic tasks. Therefore, Ward and Kassebaum concluded that women adapt to their new environment in a way that largely recreates and reflects the larger free society.

In *Society of Women,* Giallombardo (1966) describes the ways in which women alleviate and respond to the deprivations inherent to prison life. Like those adaptations of the women in Ward and Kassebaum's (1965) study, the adoption of more masculine roles among some women is common, though most incarcerated women maintain femininity and traditional female roles (referred to as 'femmes'). Consequently, there is a shortage of masculine women (referred to as 'studs'), so intimate and romantic relationships in the prison are often polygamous.

Related to these gender roles but also common for women who do not involve themselves in romantic or intimate relationships during their imprisonment is the development of pseudofamilies or "play families." Giallombardo describes this family structure as being a way for women in prison to achieve the socialized, internalized expectations of women as wife or mother while these roles in the free world are otherwise blocked. Membership in a play family provides a woman with mentors and people she can trust and feel close to during her

confinement. Therefore, Giallombardo concludes that while solidarity often does not extend to the whole society of women in prison, women typically have a small group of people in prison that they feel very close to while incarcerated.

Heffernan's (1972) book, *Making it in Prison: The Square, the Cool, and the Life,* identifies three main argot roles of women at the Women's Reformatory at Occoquan used by the District of Columbia. Heffernan asserts that prison life is organized around pre-prison identities as well as different adaptation styles to prison culture. The 'square' denotes the women who maintain conventional norms and values during her incarceration, while the 'life' refers to women who are embedded in street culture outside as well as the deviant parts of prison life. Lastly, the 'cool' are the women who use manipulation and control to adapt in a way that lets them "do their time" during their imprisonment.

She again finds that "familying" or membership in a play family is a common way for women to live in prison, allowing women to put the outside world out of their minds and serve their time as painlessly as possible. Not only is being a member of a prison family useful for coping with the separation of individuals from their outside selves, but the family is regarded by many people in prison and Heffernan as being critical to the social order of the prison.

Sex in prison

Early research on women's lives during their incarceration focused on women's sexuality, categorizing roles in same-sex relationships and encounters (Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Giallombardo 1966). Indeed, prison sexuality, particularly for women, has been a defining feature of women's prison research so much so that some researchers have summarized the difference between men's and women's prisons as "men make weapons; women make dildoes

(Lempert. 2016, p. 68).” This scholarly fixation stems from two sources: (1) a historical preoccupation with controlling women’s behavior and sexuality through the criminal justice system, and (2) a general lack of concern about same-sex relationships between women in prisons as well as other single-sex spaces like boarding schools. Mary Bosworth (2000) recounts the history of women’s incarceration noting that as early as 1684 “the prison, rather than a simple holding place for women awaiting punishment, was already a substantive punishment in its own right” (p. 271) where women who offended against societal views of appropriate sexuality were confined for up to three months. However, once confined in prison, women having sex with other women attracted far less attention from formal social control efforts than did same-sex activity between men. Regina Kunzel (2008) reports that prior to the mid-1900’s very little effort was made to segregate women who were known to have intimate relationships with other women. These relationships were deemed harmless, and segregation would have been difficult given small population sizes coupled with the ubiquity of such pairings. In contrast, men’s prisons went to great lengths to identify and separate men who had sex with other men.

A principle difference between men’s and women’s prisons is that sex between women in prison is almost universally consensual, while sex in men’s prisons often involves sexual violence and coercion (Kunzel, 2008).[2] Indeed, early ethnographic work identify the deprivation of heterosexual relationships as a salient pain of imprisonment and sexual assault among men in prison as a means of asserting one’s masculinity (Sykes, 1958). Men’s prisons, therefore, have been characterized as “pressure cookers of sexual frustration” (Kunzel, 2008, p. 117). In women’s prisons, sexual assault and coercion among the incarcerated population is much less

[2] One survey found that 32 percent of incarcerated men had been physically assaulted, and 3 percent experienced a sexual assault during the previous 6-months of their imprisonment (Wolff & Shi, 2009).

prevalent. Instead, consensual and affectionate partnerships characterize women's prisons (Kunzel, 2008; Lempert, 2016; Owen, 1998). Indeed, some researchers find that intimate relationships in prison for women are more about affection and emotional concern than about sexual satisfaction (Giallombardo, 1966; Lempert, 2016) though others contest this (Kunzel, 2008).

Following the scholarship of Sykes (1958), same-sex activity and relationships were understood by the researchers to be coping mechanisms of the women and a means of "substituting" for men in an environment deprived of them (Giallombardo, 1966; Ward and Kassebaum, 1965). Kunzel (2008) critiqued these conceptions of same-sex relationships in women's prisons as "substitution" and an alternative method of accomplishing conventional gender roles. She stated, "representing prison lesbianism as the consequence of women's desire to fulfill their roles of wife and mother rather than their sexual desire required eliding considerable evidence to the contrary" (p. 136) as women in these early studies often asserted that sexual desire was in fact significant.

Sex as an exercise of autonomy or resistance among women in prison is discussed by scholars as well (Krusttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Lempert, 2016; Owen, 1998). Echoing the conclusions of Ward and Kassebaum (1965), Barbara Owen (1998) wrote that same-sex relationships are a means of feeling control and autonomy, and that the absence of men necessitates the substitution of women in relationships. Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) reported that qualitative feminist research frames these relationships not as coping mechanisms, but rather as a way for women in a highly controlled environment to assert some autonomy in their lives.

Particularly in early work in prisons, same-sex activity was referred to as homosexuality. Contemporary research, though, argues that sexual activity and sexuality are distinct concepts, particularly in the prison environment. Lora Bex Lempert (2016) explains "external labels bifurcating sexuality into gay or straight are not relevant in the prison context. Intimate contact between women is simply one means by which relational dynamics are manifested inside" (p. 205).

Whether for sexual desire, relationship commitment, an expression of autonomy or sexual identity, it is clear that sex among women in prison is common. So prevalent are same-sex relationships that some women in prison explain that its "just part of life in here" (Kruttschnitt and Gartner, 2005, p. 92). Sexuality and sexual activity may be one avenue that women in prison engage in care while incarcerated. By affirming one's sexuality and fulfilling sexual needs, women may be caring for themselves and their identity. Engaging in loving and nurturing partnerships may create a space for women to care for others and be cared for during their confinement as well.

Many researchers find that the play family, surrogate family or pseudofamily "is an enduring feature of women's prison culture" (Owen, 1998, p. 134; see also Lempert, 2016; Pollock, 2002). Such close and supportive relationships may reflect ideal family relationships and be "more real than any she had on the outside" (Pollock, 2002, p. 139), and serve important functions in providing women with emotional support and socialization into life in prison (Lempert, 2016). However, other researchers question the prevalence of pseudofamilies in contemporary women's prisons (Dye & Aday, 2019; Faith, 1993; Young & Haynie, 2022).

Similarities between men and women in prison

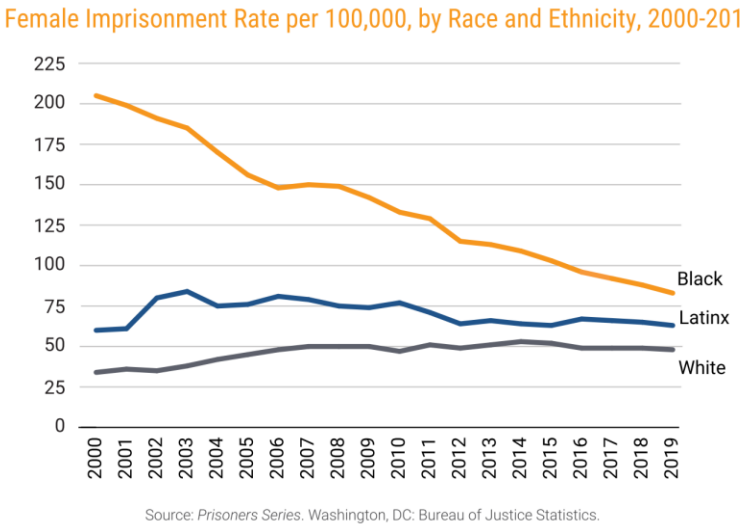
It is important to note that while there are many differences before, during, and after incarceration in the lives of men and women, there are often similarities in the pathways to crime and experiences in prison for men and women. In her American Society of Criminology Presidential Address, Candace Kruttschnitt remarked that "[f]emale inmates have always been characterized as having special needs, but the basic necessities (housing and employment) inmates require once they are released from prison are in fact gender neutral" (2016, p. 1). As the bulk of the literature on prisons prioritizes men, it is important to highlight the similarities as well as differences between the men and women who end up in prison.

Indeed, the childhoods and pre-prison lives of men and women in prison share several similarities. Lack of parental monitoring and supervision, parental criminality, and living in a disadvantaged neighborhood are all strongly associated with engagement in crime for men and women (Krusttchnitt, 2010). Many of the men and women in prisons are survivors of child abuse - girls more often experience sexual abuse but boys and girls often endure physical abuse (Kruttschnitt, 2016; also discussed further below). Men and women who have committed crimes tend to be disproportionately young, people of color, parents, and unmarried (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Frost et al., 2006). Black and Latino/a individuals are overrepresented in US jails and prisons. As of 2019, Black and Latina women were incarcerated at a rate 1.7 and 1.3 times greater than that of white women, respectively (The Sentencing Project, 2020).[3] Though racial and ethnic disparities have been decreasing in recent years, Figure 3 below from the Sentencing Project (2020) illustrates the changes in imprisonment rates for women by race and ethnicity.

[3] In comparison, Black men were incarcerated at a rate 7.7 times greater than white men in 2019. Latino men's incarceration rates were 2.7 times higher than white men's (The Sentencing Project, 2020).

Figure 3

Changes in imprisonment rates for women by race and ethnicity



Source: The Sentencing Project, 2020: 2

Roughly 60% of women in prison are mothers to dependent-aged children and 46% of men in prison are similarly fathers (Maruschak, Bronson, & Alper, 2021). Though the majority of men and women in prison have children, women are much more likely to have been the primary caregiver to their children prior to their incarceration, and their removal therefore tends to be even more disruptive for children than the incarceration of a father (Kruttschnitt, 2010).

Though in the past men's and women's prisons have looked and been run quite differently from one another, as previously discussed, today's prisons are interchangeable in terms of architecture and function. Accordingly, the deprivations of the prison environment are often similar between men's and women's institutions. The removal of one's identity tool kit,

separation from loved ones, lack of autonomy in one's daily life are pains that any person confined inside a prison face. However, the weight of these deprivations may be informed by gender. Comparing severity scores reported by men and women in prison, Crewe, Hulley & Wright (2017) assert that women report a more painful experience with prison than men. Their survey results cite "loss of contact with family members; power, autonomy and control; psychological well-being and mental health; and matters of trust, privacy and intimacy" (p. 1359) as the most salient issues with their confinement. Other researchers find that the most commonly reported pain of imprisonment for women in prison involves the deprivation of liberty insofar as it applies to one's separation from family and children (Foster, 2012). Additionally, while women often reference lack of privacy in terms of physical privacy, a lack of emotional privacy or feelings of "emotional claustrophobia" (Crewe et al., 2017, p. 1374) are commonly reported.

Pre-prison differences

Despite the many similarities, women have different experiences than men prior to incarceration. Owen's (1998) ethnography and interviews with incarcerated women in California found that "[i]n examining their lives before prison, three central issues specifically shape the study of prison culture for women: multiplicity of abuse in their pre-prison lives; family and personal relationships, particularly those relating to male partners and children; and spiraling marginality and subsequent criminality" (p. 41). Additionally, women are subject to social stigmatization for their engagement in crime which differs from the stigma applied to men.

While histories of trauma and abuse are often reported by men and women in prison, scholarship on women's prisons asserts that victimizations among women in prison are more

common and more often "multiple and cumulative" (Crewe et al., 2017, p. 1364). The physical and sexual violence experienced by women is often perpetrated by family members and intimate partners (Braithwaite et al., 2006). This is particularly true for justice-involved women, who despite their more frequent victimization, are less likely to be incarcerated for violent offenses than men or to engage in violent misconduct while incarcerated. Indeed, scholars of women's prison life assert that for many women, life may be safer and better in prison compared to outside (Faith, 1993; Sufrin, 2017; Owen 1998). This statement is more of a commentary on how dangerous life is for women outside of custody rather than a recognition that women's prisons are relatively safe. Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) summarize these difficult histories in their conclusion by saying that "[m]any women have survived circumstances far more damaging than a prison term and most will continue to survive in the face of insurmountable odds" (p. 192). The prevalence of these painful histories among the women in prison is posited by researchers to impact how women in prison respond to the prison environment and the people within it.

Despite these well documented differences in backgrounds, a single criminal justice system and set of responses is used for men and women. It is important to recognize that the criminal justice system, much like criminological theory, was developed for men, and therefore the needs of women are often neglected (Braithwaite et al., 2006; Trammel, 2012). Karlene Faith asserts that "maleness and masculine gender are taken for granted [in criminal processing]; they are fundamental to the enterprises; they are the unarticulated essence of (almost) every criminological paradigm" (1993, p. 68). Women often contend with lack of programming and rehabilitative resources both during incarceration and outside of prison, more frequent sexual abuse by correctional staff, as well as inadequate health care while in jail and prison (Belknap, 2010; Braithwaite et al., 2006; Britton, 2011; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Lempert, 2016;

Pollock, 2002; Trammel, 2012; Travis et al., 2014). Lempert (2016) notes that gender-blind mass incarceration policies contributed to women receiving comparatively few carceral resources.

Given the stark differences in life histories and socialization prior to incarceration between men and women, women likely employ different strategies to cope with confinement. Certainly, behavior in prison is guided in no small part by gender norms. In her investigation of violence behind bars, Trammel (2012) finds that "men described a hypermasculine environment, whereas women described behaving in a civilized manner" (p. 8), and that women in prison tended to denounce violence as "something that men do." Violence in women's prisons often is the result of jealousy but, in contrast to men's prisons, almost never a means of obtaining sexual satisfaction (Kunzel, 2008). One woman in prison explained that "there are no big bad bullies that go around beating people up - when a fight happens there's usually a cause and they're seldom an actual physical fight. Usually, it's a lot of screaming and threatening" (Faith, 1993, p. 232). When violence occurs in prison, Trammel concluded that women are likely to blame the victim of a violent incident for having violated gender norms and therefore having brought about her victimization. She also finds that the ways people in prison deal with daily conflict adheres to prescribed gender roles, with women commonly spreading rumors or attempting to outsmart other people in prison, while men tend to report fighting a fellow person in prison to "put him in his place" (Trammell, 2012, p. 17).

In-prison themes

There are similarities between men's and women's prisons in terms of adaptation styles and the characteristics that amass power and respect. However, the prevalence of violence, the social distance between people confined in prison and staff, and the closeness of friendships and intimate relationships between women in prison emerge consistently as the most obvious

differences between life in men's and women's prisons. The following section will summarize the themes from extant research in women's prisons, as well as contrast the behaviors and attitudes that are common in women's prisons to those in men's prisons.

Displays of masculinity and toughness are common in men's prisons, both as imported attitudes and behaviors and in accordance with the informal code of conduct which exists in the prison. Culture in this space is characterized predominantly by respect and solidarity between people in prison. The social division between prisoners and guards or other correctional staff is fundamental to navigating prison life for men. Those confined in the prison who are able to traverse this boundary to "get things done" for themselves and their fellow captives amass respect and power during their incarceration (Sykes, 1958). The relationships men form with one another in prison tend to be cooperative and superficial rather than emotionally supportive or intimately connected. Racial segregation still exists as an informal social boundary throughout many men's prisons in the US. These features are well-documented in prison research, but to what extent are these characteristics of *men's* prisons?

In both men's and women's prisons, researchers conclude that those with respect and power are those who "get things done" such that they have learned how to navigate the prison system and to manage interactions between correctional staff and the other people incarcerated in the prison. Though much of the work on prison culture takes place in men's prisons, research in women's prisons identify two main differences between women's prisons and men's prisons related to in-prison relationships and violence. The culture within men's prisons is structured generally around strength, power, and conflict, particularly conflict with correctional staff. In contrast, Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) summarize the consistent findings from women's prisons: "[i]n the women's prisons studied since the 1960s, violence, gangs, and overt racial

tensions are unusual; intimate and consensual sexual relationships and prison families are common; and relatively cooperative relations with staff predominate" (p. 71).

Women often report being concerned with violence at the start of their prison experience, but prison violence is fairly uncommon in women's institutions. While incarcerated, women tend to commit fewer assaults on staff as well as other women in prison compared to men (Harer & Langan, 2001; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003). Both incarcerated men and women use violence as a response to perceived disrespect, but women also engage in violence in response to intimate relationship conflicts (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003). This all suggests that it is rarer for women to commit violent misconduct while incarcerated, but when they do, it also is in response to a broader range of stressors.

Rather than physical violence, the misconduct concerns for confined women tend to be related to women stealing from other people in prison and being involved in drug use. Beyond misconduct as well, people in prison express more concerns about gossiping, arousing jealousy, and the snitching behavior of the women they are housed with far more than fear of physical attacks (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003, 2005; Owen, 1998). Owen (1998) also finds that respected women in prison are not "messy" – they do not cause undue trouble for her fellow prison community members and avoid gossiping. Because of this 'messiness' snitches are considered socially undesirable, but rarely do these women experience physical harm or even social exclusion.

In addition to there being less violence within incarcerated women's populations, relationships between women in prison and correctional staff tend to be less hostile in women's prisons. Sykes (1958) deemed the separation between correctional staff and the population

housed in the prison "[t]he most obvious social boundary in the custodial institution" (p. 87), and men and women both report an expectation that people in prison do not assist staff. However, researchers find that women in prison commonly interact with staff. Women interviewed by Owen (1998) explain that "[c]orrectional officers have feelings too. They are human and they react to the way you treat them" (p. 161) and that "[t]o get respect in here, you have to give them respect" (p. 162). Researchers report incarcerated men take great efforts to avoid appearing close with staff at the prison, avoiding the label of "rat" or "snitch". Though appearing too close with staff could label a woman a "rat," tolerance for conversing with correctional staff is much higher, perhaps even somewhat valued among incarcerated women compared to men (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002). This difference was also noted by one interviewed officer who noted that "the men will not ask any questions of staff – a fear of looking like a snitch – whereas the women will approach officers when they want to know something" (Owen, 1998, p. 85).

Relationships in prison can refer to both intimate relationships and friendships or peer relationships. Both of these relationship types differ between men and women in prison. Friendships in women's prisons tend to be close, emotionally supportive, and meaningful (Pollock, 2002). In contrast, peer relationships between men in prison tend to be distant, instrumental and purposefully superficial (Clemmer, 1940; Crewe et al. 2017; Zamble and Poporino, 1988). Kreager and colleagues (2017) report that the men in their study were not comfortable referring to other men in prison as "friends" but instead referenced "associates" or people they "get along with." Emotionally distant friendship is more common among men outside of prison as well, suggesting that the differences researchers observe in the depth and quality of in prison relationships reflects gender differences rather than unique reactions to the

deprivations of the prison environment. Relationships with family and children outside of prison, with fellow prison community members, and with prison staff are the primary social structures in women's prisons. Social support is garnered between women struggling with being separated from their families, and topics related to these families are the focus of many interpersonal conversations between women.

Trusting and supportive relationships, via friendship, pseudofamilies, or romantic relationships are far more common among women than men in prison. After the disruption of and separation from many family relationships, relationships with other women in prison can help to fill the painful void (Young & Haynie, 2022). Certainly, having trusting relationships are important for the mental health of women in prison (Pollock, 2002). However, cultivating trust in prison is not perceived to be an easy task. The most difficult part of prison life identified by women interviewed in early works as well as those in the 1990s is learning to live alongside so many other women (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). Prior to their confinement in prison, many women have been involved in relationships that betrayed their trust and being placed among so many strangers described as "conniving, back-stabbing people" (Crewe et al. 2017, p. 1374), women in prison must be selective in choosing who to trust (Dye & Aday, 2019; Young & Haynie, 2022). Though often beneficial, friendship in prison can also be dangerous and devastating (Dye & Aday, 2019).

Classic prison ethnographies describe an ingroup/outgroup distinction between staff and the people confined in a prison, such that loyalty to the interests of others housed at the prison is prioritized above the interests of staff. However, rather than feeling solidarity with the rest of the "prisoner" group in prison like men do, women tend to be close with a small group of other women in prison.

In response to unjust living conditions and treatment in prison, there are many examples of collective resistance among men in prison including riots and prisoner rights movements in the 1960s. Despite facing additional deprivations during confinement, such as lack of access to programming and health care, resistance in women's prisons is infrequently a collective effort. Instead, resistance tends to be an individual undertaking (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). Some researchers believe this is caused by a fear that opposing prison administration will result in women losing access to their children (Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002). Indeed, disciplinary measures in prison frequently include loss of visitation rights and other forms of isolation. Additionally, solidarity among incarcerated persons and social separation from guards and other staff is an essential component of in-prison black market operations. Organized contraband operations are far less common in women's prisons than researchers observe in men's prisons (Pollock, 2002). Contraband and legitimate goods frequently are dispersed through informal social groups, like pseudofamilies or friendship groups in women's prisons (Lempert, 2016).

In short, the absence of solidarity in women's prisons is due in part to fear of repercussions to collective resistance efforts, lack of adherence to the inmate code, the absence of organized contraband operations. Additionally, statements reflecting internalized misogyny appear in much of the extant research – that women are by nature untrustworthy, manipulative, and that they "stand ready to take advantage of one another" (Giallombardo, 1966, p. 100). Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) explain:

> Despite being keenly aware of how prison constrained and structured their own lives, the women we interviewed in the 1990s tended to attribute the lack of solidarity among prisoners not so much to the nature of imprisonment but to the nature of women. Women were seen as essentially fickle at best, disloyal at worst, and unlikely to ever stand up for each other (p. 90).

Race has been identified in research as another clear social boundary in men's prisons. The relationship between race and violence in carceral settings is commonly discussed in corrections literature, so much so that prisons are considered "race-making machines." Racial classification and, historically, mandatory segregation in men's prisons has been justified as a means of reducing violence among people in prison, largely because race is used as a proxy for gang membership. Racial gangs, tensions, violence, and segregation have been much less common in women's prisons, however (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002; Young & Haynie, 2022).

To reiterate, the social boundaries that structure men's prisons, such as race, involvement with contraband markets, and gangs are not prevalent in women's prisons. The manner in which men adapt to the social environment of prison are no doubt influenced by these boundaries. What are these adaptation styles and does extant literature find that women adapt to the prison environment in similar ways, despite these noted differences in social structure? The following section addresses these questions.

Similar to Clemmer's (1940) *prisonized* inmate and Irwin's (1980) *jailing* inmate, Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) describe the 'convict' adaptation type. These people tend to have status among their incarcerated peers and they prioritize respect from other people confined in prison compared to staff, though they are close with only a few other women. Owen (1998) also reports incarcerated women using the term 'convict' compared to 'inmate' in a respectful, status-earning way. Convicts value aspects of prison culture that resemble the inmate code like "Don't get involved in other people's relationships, affairs. Stay to yourself. Have a few friends. Don't trust anyone" (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005, p. 135).

Like findings from men's prisons, classic and recent studies of women's prisons find that respect and power belong to those who are able to "get stuff done." Owen (1998) describes two types of women who manage to navigate prison life, largely due to their ability to manage and navigate relationships with correctional staff: those who are 'prison-smart' and those who are 'organizationally smart.' 'Prison-smart' women know how to manage finite resources in the prison as well as their fellow women in prison by cultivating useful relationships and knowing how to "get things done." 'Organizationally smart' women are skilled in their interpersonal relationships and management of the prison bureaucracy but do not adopt a prison identity or affiliate much with other women in prison like the prison-smart women do. Similarly, Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) identify 'adapted' people as those who "seem to have figured out how to manage the contradictions and constraints of prison life" (p. 132). They are women who interact with other people in prison and indicate that respect of other women in prison is more important than respect of staff but have very few issues with staff.

An additional commonality between men's and women's prisons is the integral role that long-term serving individuals play in the stability of life in prison. Termed "old heads," men and women serving life or very long prison terms are reportedly a stabilizing force in prisons and are often pointed to as a large reason there has not been a demonstrable increase in violence in prisons even as overcrowding would have increased the pains of imprisonment in the recent decades (Kreager et al. 2017; Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018). Indeed, "maintaining order in that [social] universe is a priority" (Lempert, 2016, p. 126) to those who spend many years stuck behind prison walls.

Gender roles also partly determine who has power in women's prisons, such that it appears patriarchy still plays a role in single-sex spaces. As noted in classic works

(Giallombardo, 1966; Heffernan, 1972) power in women's prisons appears to still be a part of masculine roles, such that women in prison who present more masculinely or otherwise identify as manly are those who are provided for and taken care of by other women in prison. Contemporary scholars report that women adopting masculine personalities in prison may pattern their behavior after the men in their lives with a tendency to be "dominating, aggressive, and unfaithful" (Pollock, 2002, p. 136)

Forming and navigating relationships with fellow people in prison is not the only way to serve time in prison, of course. Another group of women will stick to themselves, preferring to be alone during their incarceration. Described as an "isolate" by Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005), "going it alone" by Heffernan (1972), or as trying to avoid the "mix" as Owen (1998) calls it, the women who adapt in this way report feeling alienated or fearful of other incarcerated women (see also Haney, 2010; Pollock 2002). Isolation is characterized by minimal participation in programming and other aspects of the prison social world. This adaptation is more common for women who are not serving long sentences. Self-harm or excessive sleeping are other forms of withdrawal with are also more common for women in prison than for men (Haney, 2010). Coping with strain through withdrawal, isolation, and other internalizing processes have been cited by other criminologists explaining why women are less often involved in crime more generally as well (Broidy and Agnew, 1997; see also Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004). It is perhaps not surprising then that though isolation is the least common adaptation style identified in women's prisons, this adaptation strategy is far rarer in men's prisons (Kreager and Kruttschnitt, 2018).

In summary, solidarity among incarcerated individuals, racial animus and separation, conflict with staff and related to snitching, and the prevalence of violence are all consistent

differences observed between men's and women's prisons. Relationships are a priority for women in prison, both in terms of their friendships and partnerships in prison as well as coping with being separated from valued relationships with family outside of prison. Adaption styles and power allocation of women in prison share a few similarities with men in prison, but research finds a variety of differences as well. Indeed, women experience a variety marginality in society which is compounded in the many ways described so far in this dissertation for those with criminal justice experience. The socialization that occurs and the social expectations that exist outside the prison walls certainly do not disappear during captivity in the prison – while the depriving aspects of the prison certainly alter behavior, we cannot assume that the prison and its culture of norms is totally consuming or overrides the gendered expectations of the people in prison. Due to differences in socialization and gendered life experiences, men and women, even while held in similar isolation and captivity, will still respond in ways that are deeply impacted by their gendered upbringing and socialization.

Theoretical frameworks

Extant literature provides several useful theoretical frameworks which guide the current dissertation. Since the earliest explorations of prison society, researchers have observed the existence of an informal code of conduct in prisons. Whether this inmate code describes the experiences of women in prison remains disputed, however, as the development of this theoretical perspective of prison culture has focused on studies of men in prison. Though women's crime and experiences with the criminal justice system have been considered tangential to men's for most of criminology's history, feminist theory portends that gender is not just a demographic variable to be assessed, but rather that gender structures social institutions, beliefs, values, and experiences. The theoretical reasons gender continues to be a key feature in single-

sex spaces like women's prisons and the ways in which gender can inform prison adaptation techniques are discussed below.

Inmate code

Conceptualized as a result of prisonization by Clemmer (1940), the inmate code refers to an adaptive code of conduct among incarcerated people which reflects solidarity among people confined in prison and opposition to administrative expectations. Clemmer discussed informal rules created by incarcerated men which emphasized minimizing displays of vulnerability, resolving conflicts using violence, punishing any perceived disrespect, displaying toughness, and neither trusting nor helping authority figures. Also called the prisoner code (Clemmer, 1940), prison code (Ward & Kassebaum, 1965), or convict code (Kruttschnitt, 1983), the code, in short, calls for loyalty among people in the prison community. Accordingly, people confined in prison should not assist staff with discipline or provide them with any information, and therefore the greatest structural feature of the prison social system is separation between the officials and the prison population. Despite regular violation of the code, the prisoner's code is core to the informal social control culture of the prison and garners empirical support still today (Mitchell, Fahmy, Pyrooz, & Decker, 2017). Derived from studies of incarcerated men, work on inmate code finds that violence is a means by which men gain and maintain respect while they are incarcerated, and that the code is essential for the smooth running of illegal business enterprises (such as contraband smuggling and selling) that people engage in while confined.

Parallels have been drawn between prison cultures and code of the street. The code of the street was derived in Anderson's (1999) ethnographic work in one of Philadelphia's disadvantaged and high crime neighborhoods. This informal code of conduct emphasizes gaining and maintaining respect, often by using violence to establish a tough identity. Respect is

understood to provide an individual with valuable social capital, protection against victimization, and self-esteem "especially when various other forms of capital are denied or unavailable" (Anderson, 1999, p. 66). Anderson (1999) explains that "[t]he code of the street emerges where the influence of police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin" (p. 10). The prevalence of violence and preoccupation with avoiding victimization is certainly a feature of many US prisons as well, an environment wherein safety is understood to be a personal responsibility. Importation of the code of the street into the prison has been studied by Mears and colleagues (2013). These researchers find a positive and significant relationship between an individual's adherence to the code of the street and their involvement in violence during incarceration. People in prison in this study who were younger were more likely to report observance of the street code and were more likely to engage in violent misconduct while in prison. Nearly half of the sample identified as female and researchers found no differences between men and women in terms of the strength of the relationship between street code adherence and violence in prison (though the sample size was relatively small, N=219).

Both the quality of relationships and the presence of violence in prison may be related to a relative lack of adherence to the inmate code in women's institutions. The behaviors promoted by the inmate code fit with gender stereotypes that men are and should be tough, aggressive, and assertive. A small body of work has tested the prevalence of the inmate code in women's prisons. Researchers have generally concluded that similar factors predict adherence to the inmate code of men and women, but with some important divergences. People in prison who are younger and have been incarcerated previously are the most likely adhere to the inmate code. However, the inmate code is less salient for incarcerated women compared to men (Hartnagel & Gillan, 1980). Gentleness, care, sadness, and love are considered displays of weakness and are discouraged in

the inmate code though these characteristics reflect gendered stereotypes of women who are typically seen as gentle, compassionate, and yielding (Bem, 1981). “Do your own time” is an adage of the inmate code, referring to the value placed on not getting involved in the affairs of other incarcerated people and minding one’s own business while in prison. Women, like men, often assert that one should “do their own time,” but women are far more involved with one another’s personal lives than men in prison (Pollock, 2002).

In short, women adhere to inmate code unevenly, but research has not identified a code of conduct unique to women in prison (Pollock, 2002). Joycelyn Pollock (2002) contends that “there may indeed be a female inmate code but it must be found by phenomenological means by listening to women’s views and values rather than attempting to measure them against an outdated and inappropriate male yardstick” (p. 146). Research on women’s inmate code applies an androcentric definition of the inmate code, rife with expectations of masculinity, to incarcerated women. However, there may be differences in the code of conduct in women’s compared to men’s prisons.

Feminist theory/structured action theory

Freda Adler (1975) posited in her liberation hypothesis that as the social world became less gender stratified, women would engage in more crime to the point that there would no longer be a gender gap in crime rates. She was responding to rapid increases in women’s criminal offending and incarceration rates, and though the growth in women’s incarceration rates have been increasing overall since her writing, the “new female criminals” Adler expected never materialized. Women who engage in crime are, on average, involved in different crime types than men still today – and women have not been “masculinized” in a way that has translated to

equitable criminal offending. Though Adler's hypothesis has not garnered empirical support, her main thesis that incremental changes in gender roles and expectations affect women's social experiences appears sound. Owen (1998) explains that for women, "their roles in the world are defined in terms of their sexuality and reproductive status" (p. 12) and furthermore asserts that "the study of women in prison must be viewed through the lens of patriarchy and its implications for the everyday lives of women" (p. 15).

Doing gender

The theory of 'doing gender' recognizes gender as being a social action in response to normative beliefs about masculinity and femininity which contributes to social structure, rather than gender as a role or characteristic of an individual. West and Zimmerman (1987) first posited this sociological theory which contends that "[r]ather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (p. 126). They contend, therefore, that gender action is unavoidable in social situations, as one's behavior is always "at risk of gender assessment" (p. 137). While other identities, such as those related to our interpersonal relationships (e.g. friend, spouse) or careers (e.g. professional) can exist in the same person but mean something different to the many people they interact with (i.e. a person is not a "spouse" to their colleagues), gender is an ever present and – mostly - unchanging identity. They assert that "What this means is that our identificatory displays will provide an ever-available resource for doing gender under an infinitely diverse set of circumstances" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 139). Related to the current dissertation, then, women in orange may simultaneously hold identities as mothers,

employees, and an "inmate," but regardless of the social context they are women, and their actions are assessed by others through this gender lens.

Extending this conception of gender as social action, James Messerschmidt (1993) developed his structured action theory to explain the interrelationship between masculinity and crime. His theory claims that, in response to emasculation and humiliation (the result of social inequalities in the free world), men develop 'oppositional masculinities' in which manliness is demonstrated via criminal involvement such as vandalism and violence rather than the conventional actions of masculinity which include success in school and the labor market. The proliferation of violence and coercion in men's prisons is discussed by Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958) as substitutions of ways to show one's manliness and reflect Messerschmidt's conception of oppositional masculinity as a means of doing gender.

Messerschmidt's original conception of structured action theory is a theory of masculinity and not femininity. However, the core thesis can be summarized as follows: *when traditional avenues for demonstrating gender are blocked, individuals find culturally or subculturally recognized substitutions to "do gender,"* which are useful for understanding social structure in a single-sex space like a women's prison. In describing gender and power relations, Raewyn Connell (1987) coined the term "emphasized femininity" which complements hegemonic masculinity in that it represents the culturally idealized gender action for women. Through this normative style of femininity, she contends unequal gender power relations are legitimated and replicated through women's actions of compliance, nurturance, and empathy. Doing gender for women in prison, therefore, may be accomplished via domestic chores (West & Zimmerman, 1987), appearing sexually attractive (Connell, 1987; Haney, 2010), as well as in caring for others in the ways that women in orange at Perryville do. For example, offering social

support to fellow people in prison struggling with being separated from their families could be considered "emotional labor" which demonstrates "essential femininity" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 144). In short, how women 'do gender' informs the characteristics that they import into the prison with them as well as how they adapt to the depriving carceral setting.

Femininity and crime

For centuries, crime and gender have been linked. Assumptions about femininity have been connected to the reactions of criminal justice systems, presuming that those who "did gender" correctly were unlikely to break the law. Bosworth explains: "definitions of criminality in penal practice depended at least in part on prevailing views of femininity… those who had offended against societal views of appropriate sexuality were most likely to find their way to the prison" (2000: p. 267). Women engaged in crime were and often still are considered "unfeminine" and suffer social stigmatization for her violation of gender expectations (Britton, 2011; Faith, 1993).

Classic works assert that since a woman's traditional focus is on her family rather than on her labor market success, enterprises and money-making endeavors are not a priority in women's prisons. Solidarity among people in prison and avoidance of correctional staff which is essential to these illegal schemes in men's prisons is consequently less important for women. Furthermore, extant research finds that women who engage in same-sex romantic relationships do so not just for the physical release like Sykes (1958) and Clemmer (1940) note of incarcerated men. Rather, women in prison discuss the emotional and romantic aspects of dating life as their reasons for dating in prison (Giallombardo, 1966; Lempert, 2016; Owen, 1998).

People in prison are required to adhere to a series of rules regarding their appearance – clothes are state-issued, hair, skin, and nails receive little to no products, and accessories are limited. As described by Goffman (1961), a total institution like a prison confiscates one's identity tool kit and mortifies the self, an attempt at removing individual identity from those held in the prison. Existing works frequently report ways in which people in prison who are stripped of their identities find creative ways to exert some control over their self-presentation and demonstrate their gender via clothes, hair, and accessories despite institutional regulations (Dye & Aday, 2019; Giallombardo, 1966; Kunzel, 2008; Owen, 1998). For example, Ellis (2018) describes women decorating their prison-issue glasses to make them more unique and feminine and Kunzel (2008) identifies butch hairstyles and clothing as an example of identity tool kit formation in prison. The deprivation of material goods (Sykes 1958) like hair care products, jewelry, and makeup, while also restricted in men's prisons, may therefore be more impactful for incarcerated women and may contribute more substantially to a "mortification of the self" as described by Goffman (1961).

Much of the qualitative research on women's prisons was conducted more than twenty years ago. The role of patriarchy no doubt still plays a large role in socialization of women and therefore will also likely still be a formidable force in prison life. However, many women do not rely on men to be their providers or heads-of-household anymore. If the prison is a "society within a society" (Sykes, 1958) then we should assume that social change that occurs within the prison is likely influenced by the social world outside of the prison. Whereas Giallombardo (1966) claimed that "the status, security, and self-image of the American female depends in large measure upon the kinds of relationships that she establishes with the opposite sex" (p. 185), modern women may have reshaped understandings of men's roles in their lives outside of prison.

This dissertation as well as much of the scholarship on women and crime describe women involved in crime as one "monolithic group" (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004: p. 216). While women in prison often share more similarities with one another than they do with men in prison; life experiences vary across factors like race/ethnicity, parental status, sexuality, gender and others. In addition to struggling with maintaining an identity in prison, women in prison often struggle with their status and role as a mother while they are forced to be largely absent from their children's lives (Haney, 2010; Kunzel, 2008; Faith, 1993; Lempert, 2016; McCorkel, 2013). As previously described, Black women are overrepresented in prisons and their treatment in prison on average differs from that of white women. For example, Kunzel describes the "a long tradition of mapping masculinity onto black women" (2008, p. 131) in as well as outside of the prison. Women in prison and staff in Lempert's (2016) study frequently reported beliefs that black women were strong, assertive, and aggressive while white women were frail, passive, and in need of protection. I aimed to explore the intersection of motherhood, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and gender among women in prison in this dissertation.

Care in prison framework

The descriptions of life at Perryville framed care as the primary social structure among people held in the institution. Though care is likely not the first concept to come to mind when imagining prison life, care indeed is a key feature of feminine socialization and often identity. Care is a gendered construction of femininity, associated primarily with domestic and intimate relationships, and laden with concepts of love and solidarity (Lynch, Kalaitzake, & Crean, 2021; Poole & Isaacs, 1997). Carol Gilligan's (1982) theory of the feminist ethics of care posits that women prioritize interpersonal relationships and care in their lives and moral development over independence. Giving of oneself to others has been discussed as a feature of femininity by other

scholars as well. Elizabeth Fürst (1997) coined the term "rationality of the gift" to describe the essential nature of women's work in creating human beings. She explains that in contrast to wage labor, which is traditionally masculine, housework in its various dimensions is "oriented toward the structuring of emotional relations" rather than future goals and commodity production (p. 445). Jean Baker Miller (1978) summarized gender differences outside of the prison context as "men do, women give," and that a woman's struggle for identity is tied up her giving. Caring and nurturing, therefore, are understood by feminist scholars as roles assigned to women by society, but also as a source of meaning and fulfillment for feminine women (Poole & Isaacs, 1997). Indeed, this concept of care describes much of how life in this women's prison is structured.

Care refers to a feeling of concern or interest, providing for the needs of someone, or paying close attention to doing something to avoid harm. Additionally, self-care includes the confirmation of one's self-concept, the development or maintenance of individuality and personal identity as one's sense of self is integral to one's well-being, especially in stressful situations (Rosenbaum & Talmor, 2022). Women in orange engaged in care for themselves by paying attention to their own cleanliness and hygiene, by engaging in intentional behaviors to protect their mental health and wellbeing, or to maintain their identity or express their gender. All described ways that they and others care for people in prison with them, often by providing material and emotional support to those around them, engaging in mentorship with individuals new to the prison, and some advocating for the rights of people at the prison while still incarcerated. Concern was often expressed for "new numbers" and people with serious mental and physical health issues. Care for others was provided for the benefit of the person receiving the care, the woman providing the care, and indeed the prison community as a whole. By regulating the actions of community members, people at Perryville ensured that women in

orange could continue to live in "peace and relative comfort" during their sentences. Even the commonly given advice to "mind your own business" was offered as a means of care for the self and community – to respect what little privacy people in this tiny community have and keep oneself out of any unnecessary conflict.

Extant literature on women in prison have described the ways that women create a "substitute universe" in prison which reflects their identities outside of prison (Giallombardo, 1966) or ways that they engage in rule breaking as an indication of resistance to the depriving environment of prison (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). My conception of the social world in a women's prison as a space of care does not oppose these established understandings of behavior in prison as coping mechanisms or indicators of agency. Rather, this care perspective highlights the normalcy of life in a women's prison as they were described by women in orange. For example, intimate relationships were understood by most women as providing a sense of companionship and care, just as such relationships do "on the outs," which is how women in orange referred to the world outside of the prison. Additionally, women in orange understood one another to be "natural nurturers" and therefore found "little kids" and friends to nurture during their time incarcerated as they tended to do outside as well. These close family-style relationships have been described by previous researchers as "substitute" versions of identities that are prioritized outside of the prison (Giallombardo, 1966; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). Some of the women I spoke to described their groups exactly like this – they couldn't currently care for their children and loved ones, so they'll care for someone else's child while in prison. Others saw mentorship and nurturance as a way to do something with their time – to take the lessons they had learned and pass them on to "new numbers." Others still explained that it was essential to "love and be loved" in life, and that the need for care doesn't go away because a person is

confined in prison. Substitution and resistance are therefore indeed some of the means by which women in orange prioritize care and adapt while in prison.

Prisons are typically thought of as depriving, dangerous, and cutthroat places (Wang & Sawyer, 2021), so the idea that care is what structures life within such a carceral facility may be unsettling. Indeed, care does not proliferate life in a women's prison *despite* the punitive violence that is present. While the prison is a community purposefully separated from the rest of the world, life within it does not function totally separate from society. The women that are held in the prison bring with them a variety of life experiences – many have experienced an uncaring world outside of the prison walls, but all have been socialized as women to prioritize caring for others because of their gender. Therefore, even if the prison is an institution designed to be uncaring for its inhabitants, those women who reside within it arrive often with a proclivity to care and many describe learning to care for themselves and others more deeply while held in the prison.

The paradox of care in an inherently punitive environment has been addressed by anthropologist Carolyn Sufrin in her book *Jailcare* (2017). She notes that failed societal safety nets render the jail a safer place than the world outside for many women. Focusing on healthcare – specifically obstetric and gynecological care – jailcare "emphasizes that there can be tender, affective dimensions to care, and that these dimensions arise from the very forms of violence that characterize incarceration" (Sufrin, 2017, p. 24). Furthermore, she describes care as "an ongoing process people work through in everyday lives, not as a distinct category of activity" and that "through a variety of relations and practices, [care] is central to everyday life in jail" (Sufrin, 2017, p. 21).

Rather than focusing on care in terms of health care, care in this dissertation refers to the provision of support, mentorship and even love between people in orange. This includes *care for the self* in terms of one's hygiene, gender expression, and individual identity and *care for others* in terms of taking other women in orange "under one's wing" and assisting those with physical, material, and emotional needs.

Summary

Women have been historically overlooked in criminology, and as Miller (2001) astutely notes, "theories developed to explain why people commit crime have actually been theories of why men commit crime" (p. 3). The field has been fraught with attempts to adapt androcentric theories of delinquency and adaptations to the hardships of incarceration, disregarding the gendered processes that influence women's engagement in crime and deviance. Extant literature on women's adaptations to incarceration tends to employ theories that were developed for men. These theories partially explain women's prison culture, but ultimately fall short. Because women are socialized differently than men, have different life experiences on average than men, and end up in prison often for different reasons than men, to expect that the culture of women's prisons is different than that of men's prisons is logical. Therefore, while prominent understandings of adaptation and deprivation provide a useful framework, a ground-up approach to theory development for women specifically is needed to parse out how and why women and men respond to incarceration in distinct ways. Additionally, the ways in which women in prison "do gender" and otherwise express their gender in a prison environment which purposefully and deeply restricts their self-presentation abilities has not been thoroughly investigated.

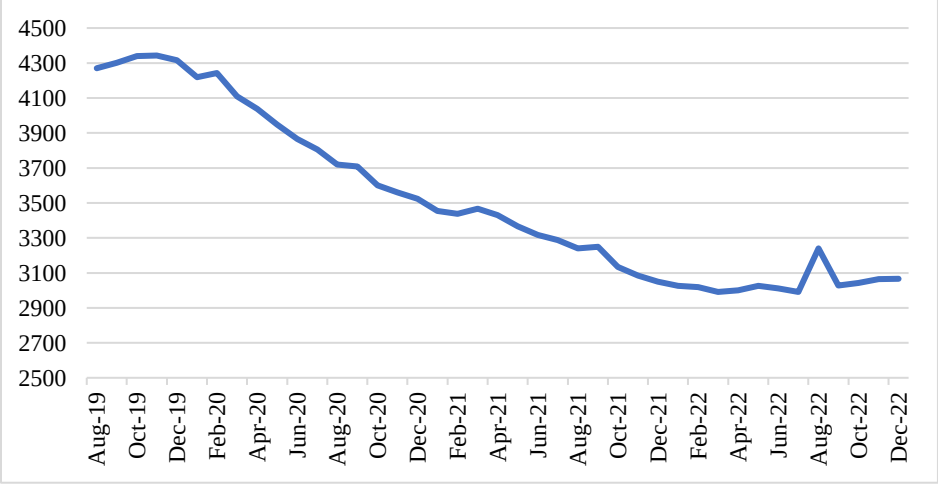
Gender structures much of social life and indeed social institutions – we should not expect that prison is exempt from gender's influence. However, even contemporary works studying women in prison which explicate the gendered socialization that women come to prison having received do not focus on femininity in prison (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002). These contemporary works use agency, autonomy, and resistance to frame the rationale behind rule breaking as well as conforming actions among women in prison, but this overlooks ways that feminine socialization structure life in incarceration. Though women in orange often described actions that have been discussed in extant works, (i.e. mentorship of people new to the prison, the creation of tight-knit groups or families, etc.) they didn't explain these behaviors in terms of resistance or agency. Their identity as *women* in prison, not just *people* in prison was clearly important to many of the people with which I spoke. Their daily routines and priorities tended to their dignity and identity by nurturing others and caring for their own physical and emotional wellbeing. Care is indeed a feminine concept and its presence in the prison indicates that gender plays a key role in the functioning of a single-sex space like women's prison. The current dissertation, therefore, is essential for improving understandings of women in incarceration, but also necessary for the study of prisons in general.

CHAPTER 3 – DATA & METHODS

I conducted semi-structured interviews with fifty-six incarcerated women at Arizona State Prison Complex (ASPC)-Perryville using Google Meets virtual meetings. ASPC-Perryville is a mixed-security facility, housing women from security levels 2-5 (5-highest risk, 1-lowest risk), with a maximum capacity as of January 2020 of 4,311 people. The population of women at Perryville when interviews commenced in October 2022 was 3,042.[4] In 2020, the average length of stay for a woman at Perryville was 823 days, and the ages of the prison population ranged from 18-80 (ADCRR, 2023). Figure 4 displays Perryville's total population reports from August 2019 through December 2022 when interviews were completed (ADCRR, 2023). Despite increases in the rates of imprisonment of women at the national level, this graph shows that the population in Perryville has been declining over the last few years.

Figure 4

ADCRR Institutional Capacity and Committed Population – Perryville Total Population



[4] Source: ADCRR Daily Inmate Count Sheets for October 31, 2022.

Source: ADCRR Institutional Capacity and Committed Population reports, January 2018-December 2022

The surrounding setting

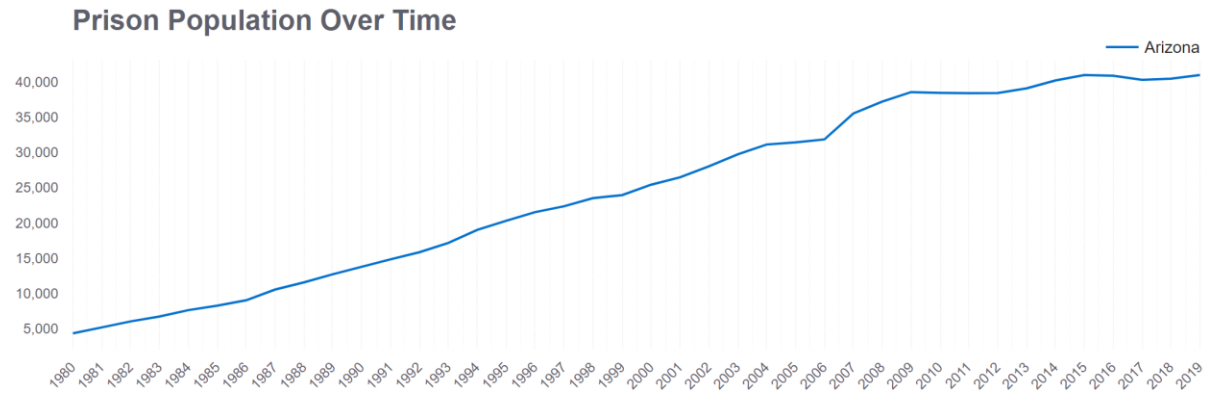
Arizona has been an exemplar of the "no frills" punitive movement and has been lauded as a leader in the "post-rehabilitative, warehouse-style prison system" (Lynch, 2010, p. 146) which dominated American corrections starting in the 1990s. Lynch's (2010) historical analysis of corrections in Arizona describes how a state that prioritizes fiscal frugality and libertarian ideals placed expensive prison expansion coupled with harsh punishment styles at the forefront of politics. She traces many of the U.S. punitive penal trends since the 1980s to Arizona, including charging people confined in prison for medical treatment and electricity, as well as modern-day chain gangs and supermax prisons.

Arizona has seen some of the highest incarceration rates in the country since before the development of the state's Department of Corrections in 1968. Figure 5 from the Sentencing Project displays trends in Arizona's prison populations from 1980 to 2019 (Sentencing Project, 2020) showing the steady increase. In the last decade, Arizona has seen a miniscule decrease in its incarceration rates – Arizona's prison population has decreased by 2 percent compared to its peak while the US average is currently 7 percent lower than peak prison populations in 2008 (Ghandnoosh, 2019). Figure 6 shows a side-by-side comparison of the monthly incarceration rates for men and women between January 2018 and November 2021. These rates differ slightly for men and women across these years, but in contrast to the national trends (see Figure 2), women's incarceration rates in Arizona have not been increasing while men's rates decrease.

Altogether, incarcerated populations in Arizona are not on the rise, and this is true as well for women in Arizona.

Figure 5.

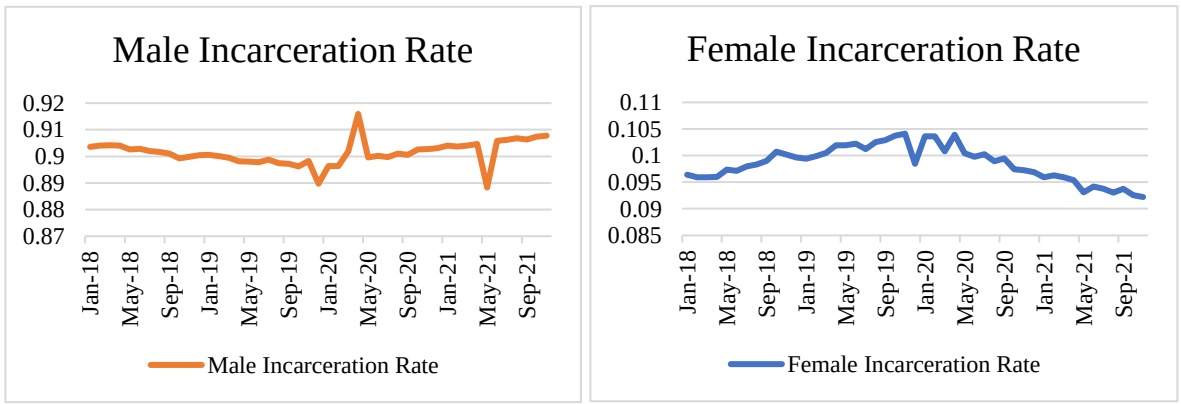
Arizona prison population between 1980 and 2019



Source: Sentencing Project (2020)

Figure 6.

Monthly incarceration rates for men and women in Arizona 2018-2021



Source: ADCRR Corrections at a Glance reports, January 2018-November 2021

Recruitment/sampling

My aim was to achieve a sample of interviewees of different ages, race/ethnicities, incarceration experiences, and security-levels to investigate broad patterns in how people who are incarcerated at ASPC-Perryville adapt to their living situation. Women were recruited through the CO-III staff at ASPC-Perryville. CO-IIIs are correctional programs officers who serve as case managers for all people housed at ADCRR facilities. Their role involves acting as a liaison between incarcerated individuals and the services and loved ones outside of the prison, including through visitation. I provided CO-IIIs on all five units of the prison with the study's recruitment flyer and my contact information to pass along to women held at all security levels at the prison since they work face-to-face the women.

In response to COVID-19 protocol, many prisons and jails, including my research setting increased access to virtual communications to limit potential virus exposure. This change in virtual access to the prison is one which I utilized for this project by conducting virtual interviews with women in prison. I used a convenience sampling strategy, advertising my project in each of the housing units within Perryville. I asked CO-IIIs to schedule up to 15 participants on each unit. Table 1 shows the proportion of interviews conducted at each unit at Perryville and the percentage of Perryville's population at each of these units for reference. The units I refer to as Minimum B and Minimum C are distinct units at Perryville, but they share a Deputy Warden, COs and other staff and they house comparatively small populations and are therefore reportedly treated as one unit by the prison. My interview recruitment numbers reflect this. Minimum security yards house people in bay-style housing that the women in orange typically described as "an airplane hangar" or a "warehouse" filled with half-walls and cots or bunk beds. These bays have washing and drying machines for laundry, microwaves, and communal bathrooms and

showers which serve between 100-200 women. Bunk beds line the walls of the bays and women in orange who have spent more than a few months on the yard are typically moved to a "cube," which is a housing space in the bay surrounded by three-foot walls. Women in orange share the cube space with another person, which they referred to as their "bunkie" or "cellie." Medium and higher security yards have "two-man cells" with a toilet, sink, one or two cots, and a metal door which open to the outdoor yard. Most of the women in these cells have one "bunkie" or roommate. The unit I refer to as Mixed-High custody includes an intake yard – containing people who have arrived to the prison within approximately the last 2 weeks – close custody yards which house the individuals in the most strict security due to the perceived danger they pose to themselves and others, and a medium security yard. On all but the medium yard, people held on this unit were confined to their cell 23 hours a day, some with "bunkies" and others without.

Table 1

Proportions of Interviews and Populations per Unit at ASPC-Perryville[a]

	# of interviews	% of interviews	% of ASPC-Perryville
Minimum A	16	29	41
Minimum B	8	14	6
Minimum C	7	12	11
Medium	15	27	25
Mixed-High custody	11	20	17

[a] Percentages reported are rounded and therefore may not add up to 100.

Expecting difficulties with reaching my recruitment number goals, I was surprised – though the CO-IIIs were not – at how quickly the sign-up sheets posted on each unit filled up with willing participants. Indeed, CO-IIIs typically had far more women in orange interested in

interviews than they were able to sign up.[5] Interviews were scheduled for the first fifteen names on each list that had availability in their schedule to accommodate a 1.5-hour interview slot between CO-III working hours of 8am-4pm.

Table 2 displays characteristics of the participants, including the pseudonym used to identify them in this dissertation, their age, total current sentence length, and time served in the current sentence at Perryville. Summary demographic information from the interviews is also displayed in Table 3. The people in orange that I spoke to ranged in age and sentence length substantially. On average, participants were about 43 years old (m = 43.55; sd = 11.72) and were serving a sentence of just less than a decade (m = 9.37; sd = 9.72). 10% of my interviewees were serving a life sentence, though several were eligible for parole. Over 80% had either grown or young children and many of these women had grandchildren and a few even had great grandchildren. 9% of the people that I interviewed at Perryville did not identify as a woman. In my recruitment efforts I specifically did not exclude non-cisgendered individuals in my interviews as I wanted a fuller picture of life at a women's prison. I often refer to my interviewees and the broader population at the prison as "women in orange" as this is identifies the vast majority of those held at Perryville. Furthermore, this strategy also helps to maintain confidentiality of the small sample of nonbinary and non-cisgender people in my sample.

[5] Interviews on the mixed-high custody yard presented the most difficulties with scheduling. This was due in part because the CO-III originally intended to be the point person was no longer available at the start of recruitment – meaning that the new person had not attended the information sessions and was less familiar with their role in the process as CO-IIIs on other yards – and the fact that mixed-high custody yard experienced more frequent security issues resulting in lock downs or requiring the attention of staff members. interviews therefore were harder to get scheduled and were more frequently "no-shows" on this yard. These interviews were all (with the exception of one) conducted after interviews on the rest of the yards had concluded. Due to minor overscheduling on these yards and the fact that my IRB approved recruitment limit was 60 participants, I limited the number of interviews scheduled on the mixed-high custody yard. Nonetheless, by the conclusion of the interviews, I feel confident that I had reach saturation at a level comparable to the other yards.

Table 2

Characteristics of interview participants[6]

Pseudonym	Age	Race and/or ethnicity	Time served (years)	Sentence length (years)
Alicia	41	White & Hispanic	1.6	2.5
Amanda	26	Native & Hispanic	2	5
Amber	30	Hispanic	1	5
Amy	41	White	0.5	2.5
Angelica	45	Hispanic	2	2
Anna	42	Black	12.5	15
Ashley	27	White	2.5	5
Barbara	62	White	15	life
Brenda	49	White	5.5	7
Carol	42	White	1	2.5
Carrie	51	Native	11	21
Cheryl	62	White	3	8
Christina	32	White	3	6
Connie	66	White	1	1
Crystal	38	Black & Native	13	32
Dawn	51	Native & Hispanic	21	life
Denise	39	White	15	21
Donna	51	White	3.5	6
Emily	31	White & Native	1	3
Erica	35	Hispanic	12.5	13
Gretchen	35	White	0.5	6
Jackie	45	Hispanic & Other	0.2	1
Jamie	63	White & Other	26	life
Janet	46	White & Asian	5	7
Jill	54	White	0.6	3.75
Julia	31	Hispanic	4	4.5
Kathy	43	White	1.8	3.5
Kelly	35	White	11	20
Lori	52	Hispanic	28	50
Maria	30	Hispanic	2.5	5
Marissa	34	Hispanic	2	3
Mary	65	White	25	25-life
Melanie	59	White & Hispanic	1.2	5
Melissa	33	White	0.6	2
Miranda	29	Hispanic	5	10

[6] I did not collect educational attainment or convicted offense data from participants.

Monica	28	White & Native	6	8
Nancy	71	White	35	life
Patricia	63	White	1	5
Rachel	32	White	13	19
Rebecca	44	Other	7	15
Renee	59	Native	16	17
Rhonda	55	White	3	6
Robbie	31	White	5	5
Robin	38	Native & Asian	1	1.5
Sadie	28	Native	5.5	14
Sam	45	White	4	7
Sarah	41	White	0.2	0.66
Shannon	41	White	23	25-life
Stacy	55	White	2	2
Susan	60	White	2	6
Tamara	43	Black & Hispanic	6	11.5
Tammy	43	White	7	10
Tara	34	Hispanic	6	7
Tina	42	Hispanic	8	10.5
Veronica	36	Native	11	40
Wendy	35	White	5	5

Table 3

Demographic characteristics of interview participants

	M	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Age	43.55	11.72	26	71
Time served in years	7.28	8.00	0.2	35
Sentence length in years[a]	9.37	9.72	0.66	50
	n	%[b]		
Serving life sentence	6	10		
Has kids	46	82		
Minor children	20	36		
Gender				
Women	51	91		
Nonbinary/non-cisgender	5	9		
Marital status				
Married	4	7		
Divorced/separated	19	34		
Never married	27	48		
Widowed	3	5		
Engaged	3	5		

Note: $N = 56$.

[a] Life sentences are omitted from this figure.

[b] Percentages reported are rounded and therefore may not add up to 100.

Table 4 displays the racial and ethnic identities reported by participants as well as those reported by ASPC-Perryville for the prison population. There is a difference in how these racial and ethnic identities were recorded for my sample compared to the population, however. 21% of people participating in interviews reported more than one racial or ethnic identity. The percentages reported in Table 3 reflect this multiracial/ethnic identification. ASPC-Perryville, on the other hand, records only one race or ethnicity per person and therefore the percentages of the prison population reported reflect those monoracial/ethnic identities. Also note that ASPC-Perryville categorizes the "Asian" racial group with the "Other" category. Participants in the study were more likely than the rest of the population of Perryville to identify (at least in part) as Native, but less likely to identify as Black and, to a lesser degree, Hispanic. ASPC-Perryville does not report average sentence length, proportion of life sentences, or age for people housed at Perryville specifically. ADCRR does not have reports of gender or marital status for any of its prison populations. Comparisons between my sample and the population of Perryville for these demographic variables cannot therefore be reported.

Table 4

Race/ethnicity of interview participants

	% of participants	% of ASPC-Perryville
White	49	50
Black	4	9
Hispanic	25	28
Native	15	9
Asian	3	-
Other	4	4

Note: N = 56. 21% of participants reported more than one racial or ethnic identity.

Interviews

I conducted fifty-six interviews in just under three months between October and December 2022. Interviews were scheduled to last up to 1.5 hours and ranged from 38-93 minutes, averaging just over 77 minutes (M= 77.07 minutes; Mdn=80.5 minutes). In total, I ended my data collection with 4,316 minutes or nearly 67 hours of audio data to transcribe and analyze.[7] The interviews began with acquainting participants with informed consent and project goals. Any mailed correspondence that comes into or out of the prison is subject to search by prison officials for security purposes. Because of the security of the facility and the virtual environment in which the interviews took place, I received approval from the IRB that a signed informed consent be waived. Instead, participants' verbal expression regarding their understanding of their rights as an incarcerated research subject and their willingness to participate in the research at the start of the interview replaced a signed informed contest form. Interviews took place primarily in a CO-III's office via Google Meets.[8] Each participant was brought to the office at our scheduled meeting time and was left alone in the office with the CO-III outside of the room. This meeting format ensured that our interview was not subject to recording and monitoring by the prison staff and allowed for more privacy than one could expect in a visitation room or on a telephone on the yard. All interviews were audio recorded using an external audio recorder on my end of the conversation. For all but one participant who opted to

[7] I conducted a 57th interview, but the participant had recently suffered a stroke which made our conversation difficult to navigate. We covered roughly half of the interview questions in our 1.5 hour time slot and the audio data was very difficult to understand to transcribe. Though this participant was compensated, I do not include their data in my analysis.

[8] One interview conducted at the mixed-high custody yard took place using the video visitation software available at the prison. This was due to a misunderstanding of procedure by the CO-III. Her concerns about security and my concerns about privacy found compromise in this solution, though the CO-III insisted that she be present in the virtual interview in a separate room on her own computer with her video and microphone off during the interview. The remaining interviews at this yard followed standard interview procedure – the participant alone in an office and the interview conducted on Google Meets attended by only the two of us.

have their camera turned off, the interview included video content, though video data was not recorded.

In addition to semi-structured interview questions, I also included a short questionnaire at the start of each interview (see Interview Guide in Appendix). This questionnaire gathered demographic information, such as race/ethnicity, gender (if they identity as a woman, transgender, etc.), age, marital status, how many children they have, at what age they were first incarcerated, how many times they have been incarcerated, how much time they served most recently, and the longest amount of time they'd served at once.

To briefly assess how my sample compares to the broader population of incarcerated women, Table 5 displays age and race/ethnicity percentages for women incarcerated in US state prisons in 2020 compared to those who participated in my interviews. On average, the women in orange in my sample were slightly older than the total US women's prison population. A greater proportion of women in orange are Native and/or Hispanic and a smaller proportion are Black than is typical of women in prison. The 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates finds that 58% of women in prison are parents to minor children (Kajtura & Sawyer, 2023), whereas only 36% of the women in orange in this study reported having minor children. This difference is due at least in part to the older age of the women in this study. For the other demographic data gathered from women in orange such as gender and marital status, I was not able to find current and suitable data reporting this information for US women's prison populations. The 1991 Survey of State Prison Inmates found that 45% of women in prisons were never married and roughly 30% were separated or divorced (Snell & Morton, 1994), which are similar percentages to those reported in Table 2 among women in orange. However, these data are three decades old, and report a much higher proportion of Black women and lower proportions of every other racial and ethnic group

in prisons, and therefore their applicability for people in prison in 2022 is questionable. Additionally, to my knowledge, there are no reports of gender nonbinary and non-cisgender people in women's prisons in the US. Finally, as sentence lengths vary substantially between states, in comparison to federal prison sentences, and depending on crime type, no reliable reports of an average sentence length for US women in prison were found either.

Table 5

Demographic statistics of interview participants compared to US incarcerated women population

	% of women in US prisons	% of participants
Age category		
18-19	0.4	0
20-24	6.9	0
25-29	15.8	8.9
30-34	19.5	17.8
35-39	18.5	14.3
40-44	13.3	19.6
45-49	9.7	8.9
50-54	7	8.9
55-59	4.8	7.1
60-64	2.4	8.9
65 or older	1.8	5.4
Race/ethnicity category		
White	47.0	49.3
Black	17.7	4.3
Hispanic	18.6	24.6
Native	2.5	14.5
Asian	0.8	2.9
Other	13.3	4.3

Note: Data for US women in prison from Carson, 2020 *Prisoners in 2020.*

All English-speaking individuals over the age of 18 housed at ASPC-Perryville were eligible to participate in the interviews.[9] However, people who were housed in intake and those

[9] I limited interviews to English-speakers only as I do not fluently speak any other languages.

on close custody or who were otherwise ineligible to be out of their cells without accompaniment by an officer would not have had the opportunity to see the recruitment flyers posted in common spaces or be left alone in an office space for the interview. There are therefore some limitations to the generalizability of my findings to the rest of the population at Perryville. Note, however, that all of my interviewees had experience going through intake of course, and several had years of experience on the various types of housing situations on close custody and shared their experiences in those spaces with me. Additionally, as this is a qualitative investigation at one women's prison, I do not claim that the experiences described by my sample are representative of all women's prisons. Rather, this dissertation delves into distilling a deep understanding of life at one women's prison.

It was a requirement of participation that the participant consented to my recording of the interview so that I would be able to transcribe the interviews for analysis. All recordings were saved using an anonymous unique identifier (i.e. no names or inmate numbers) and were stored on an encrypted external hard-drive. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants are referenced using pseudonyms throughout analysis and in this dissertation. Upon completion of the interview, participants received $15 directly deposited into their commissary account.[10]

Data analysis

After completing interviews, I uploaded the audio file to an automatic transcription service, *OtterAI*, which created AI-generated transcripts. I then listened through each of the

[10] Two participants were not able to receive compensation for their interview. There were administrative blocks on their commissary account and therefore I was not able to distribute funds to them. After confirming with administrative staff at the prison and JPay, the company that owns the accounts, that I would not be able to place funds on their accounts, I received approval from the women via their CO-IIIs to use their data despite not receiving compensation. I deeply appreciate their charity for this project.

recordings while editing the transcript to remedy any errors that had occurred (e.g. slang terms used, names of housing yards), remove any identifying information which women had inadvertently offered during the interview (e.g. names of family members, names of specific officers at the prison), and enter in context from field notes taken during the interview (e.g. phrases for which women in orange used air quotes). The data from the interviews created 1,436 pages of transcripts and field notes, which was analyzed for qualitative themes and codes.

I used an abductive approach to coding, which "refers to a creative inferential process aimed at producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 167). Deductive approaches rely on analyzing whether observations support or refute established theoretical presumptions, and inductive approaches involve an atheoretical entrance into the field, thereby developing theoretical patterns and explanations through iterative observation. In contrast, "abduction is the form of reasoning through which we perceive the phenomenon as related to other observations either in the sense that there is a cause and effect hidden from view, in the sense that the phenomenon is seen as similar to other phenomena already experienced and explained in other situations, or in the sense of creating new general descriptions" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 171). This strategy, therefore, allows me to frame my findings within the extant theoretical knowledge on women in prison while allowing for new theoretical frames to emerge through the strategic analysis of observations that are surprising. Related to grounded theory which "starts with an inductive logic but moves into abductive reasoning as the researcher seeks to understand emergent empirical findings" (Charmaz, 2008, p. 157), this required that I move back and forth between data and theory iteratively.

Listening through and editing the 1,400 pages of AI-generated transcripts allowed me to familiarize myself will all of the data and to establish first stage codes. At this stage, I highlighted sections of text which evidenced themes I expected to find in response to my interview questions, such as examples of whether women in orange were supportive or not, how women in orange expressed their individuality or their gender identity, and adaptations to the prison environment. Additionally, comments were inserted in each Word Document transcript noting instances in which participants referenced other topics that I did not solicit in my interview questions, such as past trauma, that they felt safer in the prison, concerns related to the medical system at Perryville. At this stage, I identified emergent themes including support, feeling lost upon arrival at the prison, femininity, fight versus kite behaviors, descriptions of groups, rehabilitation, trauma history, adaptation, and internalize misogyny.

Second stage coding was accomplished using *NVivo* software. The software helped to further identify and organize empirical topics in my data. I identified a total of 142 codes between 52 themes. For example, themes like "femininity" included codes like *different on the outs,* comprised of ways that women mentioned expressing their gender differently outside of the prison, *do up for visits,* consisting of references made to engaging in feminine appearance efforts specifically when a women in orange was receiving a visit, *in compliance,* which were feminine expressions which did not violate the prison rules of appearance, *little rebellion,* which were expressions of femininity which did violate the rules of appearance, as well as codes for those who were *not feminine,* or *don't care* about expressing femininity in the prison. NVivo also quantifies the frequency that codes are referenced in and across interview narratives as well. The femininity theme, for instance, was coded in 53 of the files, referenced a total of 173 times throughout the narratives. Each code as well was also quantified in this way. This provided a

sense of how prominent each emergent theme was in the data – for example, twenty-three narratives included examples of women in orange who *didn't care* about expressing their femininity in prison, and twenty described ways that women in orange would violate the rules of appearance to express their gender identity via *little rebellions* which I refer to in the later chapters of this dissertation as "modes of friction" to reference Rubin's (2015) work.

After completing NVivo coding, I reread through the coded narratives. In this process, I came to understand the overarching role that care was playing in the codes. For example, the provision of material support was one I expected to be discussed as a reaction to deprivation as existing literature would describe it. However, women in orange discussed the provision of material support as well as emotional support in ways that centered on care. Providing support was indeed a response to deprivations of the prison environment, but also it also centered care as a method of "doing gender" while incarcerated.

Support was interrelated with the theme related to groups as well in ways that further implicated care as a structuring feature at the prison. I had expected to find evidence of pseudofamilies as this is a prominent theme in previous literature with women in prison. However, the ways that women discussed these groups did not fit with the substitution framework offered in early works (Giallombardo, 1966; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). Rather, women in orange contextualized their involvement in these relationships as a form of care in their narratives, explaining the ways that their group members provide one another with supportive care as well as well as how women in orange affirmed a personal identity through their role in the group.

Indeed, several themes overlapped with others in ways that indicated care was prominent among women housed at Perryville. For example, women in orange cited themselves and their neighbors as "natural nurturers" while discussing support, respect, groups, differences between men's and women's prisons, values, and feeling safer at the prison. Therefore, this inherently gendered code which emerged in the narrative data overlapped with many other themes and highlighted the role of care in the personal and interpersonal lives of women in orange. As I began to understand the prominence of care in these data, Carolyn Sufrin's (2017) book on care in a carceral facility proved especially helpful in structuring and thinking about care as a thematic framework for this dissertation.

Statement on positionality

I am a white and feminine presenting woman, a wife in a heterosexual marriage, and a mother. Throughout interviews, several women in orange mentioned that they had friends who had taken part in interviews with me earlier in the study or with whom I would speak soon. Therefore, my demographic characteristics as well as position as a doctoral student studying criminology and criminal justice with the aim of becoming a university professor was likely known by women in orange even before I spoke to them. At the start of our conversation, I introduced myself as a researcher conducting interviews for my dissertation. This, in addition to my non-orange attire and frequent requests for clarification on slang terms or acronyms used by participants affirmed my outsider status throughout the interviews. It is likely that my demographic characteristics and my position as the researcher in these interviews impacted a) which women in orange decided to participate in the interviews, and b) the content of what was discussed in our interview. For example, it is possible that women of color, particularly Black women, may have been less comfortable speaking with me about their racialized experience at

the prison, concerned that I wouldn't understand their experiences or reluctant to spend their energy to educate me on such sensitive matters. The potential impact of my positionality on the information that was shared in interviews, therefore, should not be forgotten as findings are discussed in the following chapters of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: CARE FOR OTHERS

Prisons are regimented spaces, filled with individuals who did not choose to be there and who are held behind barbed wire under the watchful eye of guards. Security and conformity govern life for those in bright orange clothing – and the officers buttoned up in their brown uniforms. Features like these of the prison are designed to set it and its inhabitants apart from the larger society. And yet, prisons are not completely removed from society. Daily routines look different for people in the prison, the community is not chosen and membership to it is not at will, but there are innumerable ways that prison life is a reflection and continuation of life "on the outs."

There are, of course, ample differences as well, deprivations which rightfully have been the focus of so much of the extant literature on prison adaptation. Yet what many of those I spoke with found striking about this institution is how similar it feels and functions to life "on the outs," which is how women in orange referred to the world outside of the prison gates. Based on my interviews at Perryville, it was evident that help and care is known to be available for those who need it. Women often described one another as "natural nurturers" (n=13) and elucidated several avenues for providing nurturing care to others. Women in orange lean on one another in emotionally trying times and yet always lurking behind these nurturing routines was wariness and efforts to protect oneself. This chapter discusses the many ways that women in orange care for their found families, close friends, and prison community members at the prison. Beginning with descriptions of the expectations women in orange had prior to their arrival, the chapter will detail ways that people housed at Perryville have received care from others and adapted to their new environment often through providing care to others, concluding with the

ways that caring for others also served as a form of self-care during incarceration for many of the women in orange with whom I spoke.

Context setting

Before beginning to discuss how care structures life in the prison, it is important to describe the setting in which life takes place at Perryville. For those of us who have not spent time within prison walls, expectations of life in a prison are likely constructed of media depictions or first-hand accounts from loved ones with experience in prison. The women I spoke to at Perryville described their expectations of prison prior to their arrival and more than half (n=30) recalled feeling very scared about an environment they understood to be hostile, violent, and dangerous.[11] These perceptions were typically informed by depictions of men's prisons shown in television shows and movies. Many of the women also shared that they had brothers, fathers, or friends who had shared some of their experiences inside a men's prison (n=13) which also informed what women came into the prison expecting to find. However, the women I spoke to indicated that women's prison is not as they expected. Wendy, a white woman just over thirty years old serving her first sentence on a minimum-security yard described her expectations coming to Perryville.

> From what I've heard and seen on TV, it seemed… I was terrified. I was absolutely terrified of prison. You know, the things that they portray about prison on TV is just fights and stabbings and it's just so scary the stuff that they show you on television.

Similarly, many women cited specific movies and TV shows featuring men's and women's prisons which were wholly inaccurate representations of their time at Perryville (n=25).

[11] Six people I spoke to said that they came to prison without any idea of what to expect. They either didn't realize that women went to prison, or carceral facilities were so far removed from their lives they simply hadn't spent time thinking about life inside a prison before they arrived at Perryville.

The inadequacy of applying what we know about men in prison to women in prison therefore appears to impact not just prison adaptation scholarship, but media representations of women's prisons as well. Wendy had no exposure to prison outside of media depictions and as prison life was foreign to her friends and family members as well, she recalled their fears for her as she was sent to prison. Erica on the other hand had more indirect experiences with prison prior to her arrival at Perryville.[12] She was a Hispanic woman also in her thirties who was about to complete her thirteen-year sentence when we spoke. Erica described how these second-hand accounts colored her expectations of prison.

> I have family members who've been in and out. My mom's been incarcerated before. So, I've actually seen what this place looked like before I began to live here. So, I did get [some] insight to what it was. Most of my family members were in the male facility so prison was talked about from a male perspective. So, coming to women's facility, I was expecting to walk into the same dynamic as a male facility, and it's nothing like that.

Erica's mother spent time at Perryville before her, but she still expected the women's prison to function like men's prisons do. She explained that though her mother served two different sentences at the women's prison, "she shared nothing of her time, nothing of her struggles or her pain." Without accounts from her mother about how the women's prison functions, Erica extrapolated the stories she had heard from her male family members to form her expectations for her prison time, but quickly learned that women's prison is a different environment. In contrast to "scary" prison, the people I interviewed described a place that was structured by rules that governed most aspects of life and filled with untrustworthy strangers, but also a place abundant with care. The women I spoke to described myriad ways that they cared for and were cared for by other women in orange. Maria, a thirty-year-old Hispanic woman halfway

[12] Eighteen women in orange had friends or family members who had experience inside a prison. These indirect prison experiences shaped the expectations women in orange came to Perryville with to varying degrees.

through her five-year sentence explained her fears and experience with care among the other women in orange.

> When I found out for the very first time that I was going to prison, I cried like a little baby. I begged my parents to get me out and they told me "No." So, when I got here - there are people that are that are very caring, and they are very understanding, and they help you and show you what needs to be done and stuff.

Like Maria, many women entered the prison afraid of what – and who – they would find there. The narratives from the women I spoke to frequently described these fears being replaced with surprise at the kindness and care offered to them by other women in orange, however. The ways that women in orange cared for others at the prison will be the bulk of this chapter.

Care for others through the presentation of care packages to newcomers and mentor-like guidance from strangers served to establish the tone of life in the prison. Reliance on peers to learn the norms in prison is common in accounts of people in prison (Kreager, et al., 2017; Goffman, 1961; Owen, 1998). Indeed, at Perryville, without much clear direction from staff regarding the way that life worked in prison, nearly all of the women described sitting back and observing and asking questions of women who had been at the prison longer than them to learn both the official and the informal rules of the unit. More experienced women often take "new numbers" meaning people without much experience at the prison, "under their wing" to learn what behaviors to avoid around certain officers, how to shop on the store, and other nuances of life in the prison. These mentors are often called "mom" by the new numbers learning from them, though it was also very common that women in orange recalled women who helped them "learn the ropes" when they first hit the yard but who they were no longer in contact with. Mentorship therefore can be a fleeting relationship of support and care, or the foundation of a life-long bond.

Found families

Many participants contrasted women's prisons to men's prisons, often noting that "the political stuff" referring to gang involvement and racial separation was not a feature of Perryville (see also Skarbek, 2014). As is found in extant literature on women's prisons, race and ethnicity was not reported to structure life at Perryville. Some women mentioned that cliques or family groups tended to be made up of people of the same race or ethnicity, but all mentioned that instances of ostracization or preferential treatment due to race by other women in orange was a rarity.

One woman explained that "in the men's prison they get involved in gangs, but in women's prison people create families." The creation of pseudofamilies in women's prisons has been described since the earliest ethnographies took place in the 1960s (Heffernan, 1972; Giallombardo, 1966), and at Perryville as well involvement in "found families" was an avenue many women in orange provided and received care at the prison. Twenty-six women in orange identified a person or people at the prison they consider family, some using familial labels and others avoiding this.[13] Most common were women who reported having a "prison mom" or a "prison daughter" (n=15), but other people identified dads, sisters, brothers, cousins, and aunties as well. Additionally, several people I spoke to considered a group of women in orange "like family" (n=7) or "close friends" (n=7), explaining that they had a bond with people they had met during their incarceration that was like a family bond. These found families were not discussed by most as a "play family" (Heffernan, 1972), or as a substitution for family outside of the prison

[13] Four women in orange served at least some of their current sentence with a biological family member. Each noted that their life at the prison was attached to their connection to their mom or sister, such that officers and women in orange knew of their relationship, identified them by that relationship, and that they spent most of their time with this person if they were housed on the same yard.

(Giallombardo, 1966; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). Instead, many of the women in orange who had found families in prison, like Tamara, were still very connected to their biological families on the outs. Tamara was a Black and Hispanic woman in her forties who had been at Perryville for more than a decade at the time of our interview. She described her acclimation to the presence of found families at Perryville.

> It's funny, because when I first came out and people were calling, "Oh, that's my mom." And I'm like, "Well, is that her real mom?" Like, I didn't understand it… They're like, "No, just her prison mom" [and I] was like, why would you disrespect your real mom and call someone else your mom? It always drove me crazy. Like, "That's my mom" and your sister, that's your cousin. Like, I have a real family outside. Why would I disrespect them and have you as a family? But you do create families in here.

When we spoke Tamara had people she considered family, including a "lifelong partner" and a "little girl" who called her mom. Tamara was in contact with her little girl's biological mom through email exchanges and other communication out of the prison and they worked together to love, mentor, and support the young woman.

Tamara went on to explain her shift from thinking that a prison family was disrespectful to one's "real family" to being connected to a found family in prison saying, "Being in here, older, you want to nurture people, you want to show them, you want to help them… we want the best for them, we really do." A source of care and nurturance at the prison, these family groups were often an addition to a woman's family, several women indicating they intended to "take them home with me." This phrase was not used to indicate that women in orange would literally go on to live with their found family members once released, but that they intended to stay in contact with these women for the rest of their lives. Several women in orange lamented at the frequency with which found family members leave prison promising to write but fail to follow through, but it was a common sentiment that the relationships women in orange make in prison

are not just temporary connections. Rebecca was a woman in her mid-forties, half-way through a fifteen-year sentence at Perryville. She, like many of the women I spoke to, did not expect to find herself incarcerated one day and was terrified at the prospect of spending so much time away from her children and in a strange place. Rebecca found a family at the prison and described her relationship with "her girls" as particularly close, filled with a level of affection that surprised her.

> The girls [her prison daughters] I love them dearly. And when I go home, I will keep in touch with them. I told my sisters about them and tell my kids about them. They call me mom and I love them very much. Some of them [women in orange] talk to them [her biological children] on phones like… "Hi, how are you? You know she's crazy? Take care of her…." It's just, I never thought that I could have a love like I do for these girls. And they're not my blood. And I love them just the same as if they were my own daughters.

Like Tamara, Rebecca was in frequent contact with her children outside of the prison. She had already begun to "take the girls home with her" as she included them in her phone calls home to family. As Tamara mentioned, though, many women also refused to adopt a found family as they believed it to be disrespectful to their biological families. Lori was a Hispanic woman whose identity as a mother was vital to her. She had served twenty-five years of a fifty-year sentence and had been separated – but in frequent contact – with her biological children since she was in her early twenties. Lori has a woman in orange she considers a sister and another she calls her daughter. This, however, is not appreciated by one of her biological children, as she explained.

> I've had a few people know that I allow them to call me Mom… My daughter is like "What do you mean they're calling you Mom?" You know she don't like it. My youngest she don't like it, like "You're *my* mom." And I'm like "I am. I'm your Mommy." [But] I do have a girl she calls me Mom. It's just the one.

Lori's account further details the ways in which found families in prison are not created to substitute or replace biological families for many women in orange. Rather, they are additional relationships which create spaces for women to care for others and to be cared for in return.

Women in orange often described their affiliation with a found family as a surprise occurrence, something they didn't seek out and that some even resisted for a time. The decision to be involved in a found family did frequently require that women in orange grapple with their biological family experiences though. People with healthy and loving relationships with family members, like Tamara and Lori, worried that their found family members would threaten the quality of their relationship with supportive family members. People who had family relationships marred by trauma struggled with feeling comfortable with using family labels. For example, Tina, a Hispanic woman in her forties who had served eight years at Perryville, lost her daughter while in prison. In reaction to this trauma, she had only recently accepted the title of "mom" from women in orange.

> These kids call me mom and towards the end of my walk here - in the beginning, I [was] like "My kid's dead. Don't call me mom." But I'm on a spiritual quest right now to soothe my own soul to wake me up a little bit. So, I was like, okay… let's see what it's about. Because I was never open to it any other time.

Tina's acceptance of the "mom" label she identified as part of her grieving and reentry preparation. Though she has offered mentorship to others throughout her time at Perryville, this familial form of care for others was a new development for her, connected in part to her changing self. Additionally, Jamie, a white nonbinary person in their sixties had served twenty-six years of a life sentence. They explained that they were even more reluctant to accept familial labels because of the poor relationship they had with their biological family.

> You know, I tell them right off the bat, the minute you label me as somebody in your family, I'm going to leave because of my past experiences that I don't trust family members. So please don't label me.

Jamie laughed as they continued to explain that despite these strong feelings, they do have women in orange who referred to them using a family label because of their involvement with a woman who was a prison mom to many.

> I've got a few that call me dad, because the woman that I was with for 20 years that left she was mom and she, she enjoyed that role. But she always knew that I was not wanting to take over that role when she left.

Caring within a found family was not an important component of Jamie's prison identity and experience, but they note that it was for their long-term partner. Tina views her recent acceptance of a mother designation as a source of growth and healing, a part of her identity that has only recently started to develop. Several women in orange described their title of mom as a useful way to help others around them, but not intrinsic to their identity, while others considered their mother status to women in orange as essential to getting through their sentence. This is discussed further later in the current dissertation chapter. In short, many women expressed surprise that they found a family at the prison, the importance of having a family that understands what you're going through at the prison, and for a large portion, still remaining connected to their biological family outside of the prison during their time. Each family served different important purposes for women in orange and both provided and required care.

Groups, whether they were referred to as family or friends, consisted of an average of five people[14] at the prison and usually included a woman's cellmate and/or closest neighbors in their living situation. Extant work finds similar grouping tendencies among women in prison which contrast to the ways that men interact with one another in carceral facilities. Indeed, differences in the ways that men and women in prison organize have been documented in previous research. Tittle (1969), for example, found that females maintain more connection to relationships outside, tend to organize into small primary groups (1-5 friends) and consider other people in prison to be some of their best friends. Men tend to develop more symbiotic relationships with other people in prison and are less likely to refer to people in prison with them

[14] Several women in orange only reported one and one woman reported 50 people in her close group of friends.

as friends (Kreager, et al., 2017). That women in prison tend to develop attachments and relationships with one another reflects gender traits such as dependency and social supportive needs which contrast to the gender expectations that men are independent. Furthermore, in addition to considering their people friends or even family, most of the women I spoke to also agreed that they felt they could trust some if not all of the people in their clique (n=27).

Literature also tends to find a strong sense of solidarity among the population of men in prison, despite strong racial lines of segregation, but no such solidarity among women in prison (Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018). Women in orange at Perryville as well rarely described a sense of solidarity among the population at Perryville. A small number of women I interviewed expressed frustration at the lack of solidarity among women there like there is at men's prisons, including Amanda, a twenty-six-year-old Native and Hispanic woman. Amanda was the youngest person I interviewed, and she was housed on a high custody yard where she had completed two years of her five-year sentence. She explained that "I thought maybe the women - I thought we were just kind of all together. But we're not really all together. Like we would stand together, stick together, stick up for ourselves or stick up to the officers just like kind of in the movies. It's not like that." Amanda, like many others, reported that she has a small group through which she gives and receives nurturance. Despite wishing there was more unity among women in orange, she focuses her efforts on herself and her family.

Dawn was also annoyed at difference in unity between men and women in prison. Dawn was a Native and Hispanic woman in her fifties who had served more than twenty years of a life sentence, and she explained that "The men are different. They stick together, though. We don't. Us women do not stick together. Everybody's worried about their cigarettes or their makeup." The unity that exists at men's prisons she described as the reason that men "get away with a lot

more" – for example, she noted that their arts and crafts are less frequently confiscated as contraband.

Julia, a Hispanic woman just over thirty-years-old and nearly finished with her four-and-a-half-year sentence described a similar difference in "sticking together" between those held in men's and women's carceral facilities.

> [On the] men's unit, they stick together, they help each other out. I mean they riot they you know, they're a part of each other. Women are not like that. It's not. It's basically everyone's out for themselves.

Indeed, Dawn, Julia, and Amanda did not describe the majority of women at Perryville as supportive, yet they each had a group of people they cared for and that were a source of support. How, then, does solidarity contrast with care at the women's prison?

While some women in orange reported that men "stick together" and "help each other out," by and large women viewed men's prisons as racially tense, violent places where people had to watch their backs to protect from violent altercations with other people in orange. Women's prisons, on the other hand, were described as rife with pettiness and drama. People being "out for themselves" at the women's prison tended to include acting in the interests of her small group as well. Indeed, women studied in other prisons also report that women aren't trustworthy and act primarily in their own self-interest (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). Yet, as I have and will continue to evidence, women in orange at Perryville do indeed care for others at the prison. Solidarity tends to refer to an affinity to a "prisoner identity" or "in-group" which can result in collective action against one's oppressor as well as lack of association with members of the out-group (see inmate code literature). Solidarity in this sense is common among men in prison, but not among women in prison (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). Care, however, doesn't rely on affirming one's status in a group -

care is provided by women in orange to people who are strangers at the prison as well as people who are considered family. Care, to reiterate, involves feeling concern for another, providing for the needs of someone, or paying close attention to doing something to avoid harm. Solidarity and care for others, therefore, are distinct – and indeed gendered - concepts.

While women in orange are not unified per se against the institution holding and governing them, care for others is a key feature of life in this women's prison. I asked my interviewees if they would consider women at the prison as supportive, and almost all agreed. Miranda, a twenty-nine-year-old Hispanic woman who had completed half of her ten-year sentence explained:

> I've never in my whole time that I've done watched someone just go without you know, like they will always come together and at least make sure you have soap, shampoo, conditioner, you know, something to put in your stomach. Yes, women are supportive. They see you crying, they, you know, at the end of the day, they have hearts. As tough as they seem or as cruel as they can be at the end of the day, we're just women and it's in our nature to be nurturing. It just is.

Miranda's quote captures much of the story of care at Perryville – though women are often described as mean or manipulative or intimidating, there is always someone in the community that will help a person in need on their yard, and Miranda attributes this to a feminine disposition to care for and nurture others. Emotional and material support tended to be provided by a woman's group, the people she considered friends and family at the prison that she felt she could trust. However, it was rare that women "hit the yard" or arrived at their housing assignment at Perryville knowing anyone there. The first exposure to care at Perryville, therefore, typically came from other women in orange to new arrivals on the yard.

Lost upon arrival

To describe how essential the care women in orange offered to one another is, it is important to first understand what women arriving at the prison have experienced between entering the gate for the first time and "hitting the yard." Tamara, a Black and Hispanic woman in her forties who had been at Perryville for more than a decade at the time of our interview described her first experience at prison intake as "degrading" and "belittling":

> So, the first time you come, it's very degrading and you don't know what to expect. They're yelling at you. They're telling you what to do. They're stripping you out. I mean, you get completely naked, they check everywhere, they don't touch you, but you have to open all of your (laughs) look in all of them.

At this, Tamara laughed. "When you've never done that before, you don't even know what that's like. And they're expecting you to know what to do," Tamara continued, reporting that her lack of awareness around the routine of a strip search frustrated the correctional staff.

> And they get irritated when you don't know like, 'Raise your hand so we can see underneath' and all that good stuff. So, then they start yelling at you. Like you're an adult at this time if you're coming to prison here, so having another adult yell at you, like you're a child is very belittling.

Tamara's experience of infantilization, being reprimanded like a child by COs, mirrors prior work on women's incarceration (Haney, 2010; McCorkel, 2013). Tamara went on to detail her first day at intake, receiving her uniform and getting evaluated by a range of doctors, from a dentist to an eye doctor to a gynecologist. This process was also described by Wendy, a white woman in her thirties nearly finished with her five-year sentence. She recalls the intake process being "terrifying," and disorienting.

> They put you in a jumpsuit, they take your picture, you go through all of the intake and even that is terrifying, because you don't know what to do. And the officers are yelling at you, you gotta have your hair up, you got to have this on, you gotta have that on. They're rushing you through everything. And you're just so lost. It's terrifying. It really is.

Indeed, accounts of officers yelling at new arrivals and feeling pushed through intake processing that is both fast-paced and long-lasting were common when women were asked to recall their first day at the prison. Between transport from a county jail, undergoing all of the medical, mental health, and other required screenings and intake protocols, women reported that their processing took up to twelve hours before they finally arrived in their lonely temporary cell. Wendy continued to describe her experience in this holding space.

> Once you get to your room, you're locked in there with nothing, you don't have a TV, you don't have food yet you don't have anything except for what state issue gives you… And then you're shoved in a room, and you're maybe out an hour to 15 minutes to shower, do what you need to do and go back into your room. It's complete isolation for a long time. And it's rough because all you have is your thoughts. You can't call your family yet because you're not on the visitation. You're not on the phone. You're not approved yet. So, you're just there. You're just there thinking about everything. It's horrible.

Even the earliest ethnographies of people in prison often report the experience of entry to the prison as disorienting and a source of uncertainty and apprehension (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Ward and Kassebaum, 1965). To further illustrate this experience at Perryville, Erica, a Hispanic woman in her thirties who had nearly finished her thirteen-year sentence elaborated on the time women in orange spend waiting in intake.

> I didn't know the simplest things of how to clean my cell, or how to do my laundry…. I don't even know what to do with my own self… And I'm a strong believer in two things that you should not be in prison is helpless and hopeless. And when you come into a prison and you're back there [in intake] that is what you feel. Because you don't know anything from the toilet paper to toothpaste, from the jacket to the bras to the underwear, pads, tampons, everything. How do I get them? When is the next meal? Does anybody know answers? There's no answers for anybody.

Following the tumultuous experience of being moved from jail to the prison and being thrust through processing, women are left in isolation in their intake cell. Throughout this process, new arrivals receive little sensitivity, care, or respectful treatment from staff and have limited contact

with other women in orange. Tamara assessed the experience in intake as "dehumanizing" and lacking compassion.

> I think that the unsensitivity's so dehumanizing… they [officers] just expect you to know everything. And they're so degrading, so belittling. So that was a sharp, like, I wanted someone to hold my hand, honestly… But no… you have to find your own way, because no one's going to tell you what to do.

Some women asserted that there is neither an orientation nor an instruction manual given to new arrivals. Others explained that orientation is provided to women in orange while they are housed in intake, but that they had been at the prison for over a week before receiving instruction regarding rules on appearance, smoking sections, and the daily schedule. To address this discrepancy, towards the end of my interviews I started asking women if they specifically recalled receiving a list of rules and expectations. Most said they couldn't recall ever seeing rules posted or receiving a manual outlining the expectations of people housed at Perryville. However, two women in orange – Tina and Erica – were currently running a new orientation program for women at intake. Tina was a woman in her forties who had served eight years at Perryville. She explained that the people running orientation "tell them how to live, what to expect. We give a little bit of our story in hopes to catch them before they hit a yard before they are classified and shipped off to wherever they're going to." She assured that "Yes, there's a handbook to everything that they need to know rules, regulations, grooming everything. There's a handbook and we make sure that it's handed out to them before they leave." I explained that many women I spoke to expressed confusion about the rules on the yard.[15] Tina reiterated that orientation provides people with the information they need to know but added that "we look at it in a standpoint as to where when they get there [to the yard], follow the lead of your bunkie if you

[15] many of whom had gone through intake prior to Tina and her partner running this orientation.

don't know. Yes, grow up and follow the lead." Kathy, a white woman in her forties who had served nearly two years of a short sentence described feeling lost when she left intake and arrived on her assigned yard.

> There's no orientation, you really don't know what you're doing. They're [officers] just kind of like, this is where your bed is. This is where all your stuff goes. They don't tell you anything. You have orientation about a week and a half after you get to the yard. So, all of the other inmates are the ones that are telling you what to do, how to do it and all that stuff.

Kathy did not receive the orientation that Tina and others offer, and continued to explain the myriad rules she was unaware of, including what time women in orange are expected to be in their designated space for count (the scheduled tally by officers to account for each women in orange on the housing yard), rules regarding "appearance in compliance" (discussed more in chapter 5), what time meals were offered, and when and where smoking as acceptable. Violating any of these rules can result in a ticket, or a disciplinary infraction. A ticket could result in loss of visitation privileges, delay a woman in orange from "phasing up" or earning additional privileges at the prison (e.g. increased store purchase allowance, increased wage potential, etc.), or mandate a move to a higher security housing yard. Having a person at the prison who can "hold your hand" as Tamara described it or "show you the ropes" as others called it, is essential for avoiding tickets and acclimating to the strange prison environment. In short then, whether the women currently housed at Perryville received an orientation and explanation of the rules at the prison when they arrived or not, it is expected that "bunkies" or a person's roommate, and other women in orange already housed on the various yards provide instruction and care to new arrivals.

Feelings of confusion, belittlement, and being expected to know what to do in a new, whirlwind experience were described by many of the individuals that I spoke to. Being lost upon

arrival tended to occur during this intake process, but many also described feeling these same emotions again once they were admitted to the general population. This transition was referred to as “hitting the yard,” and though it was still described as a disorienting experience, the caring role of women in orange was apparent in many accounts. Sadie, a Native woman, was twenty-eight years old when we spoke and had already served over five years of a fourteen-year sentence on high custody yards. Her account of hitting the yard illustrates the uncertain experience and the essential role of older numbers.

> You get your net bag [a nesh bag containing one’s possessions], you go to the yard that you're on and you ask the officer what's going to be your housing location. So, then they give you have room number, and you just kind of like knock on the door and you say, “Hey, I'm gonna be your bunkie today” and then that person then if you're new, kind of becomes the person who's like in charge of telling you how the rundown is in prison. So, if you get a good one, they'll tell you the do's and don'ts.

As Sadie alluded to in saying “if you get a good one,” this kind of mentorship or care is not always provided happily by older numbers. Kathy also noted that “a lot of them [other women in orange] aren't nice about it because they don't want new people around them.” Throughout the interviews, women described the care they received from other women in orange in varying ways, often considering it warm and nurturing (as in a found family), but care can also be provided by women in orange begrudgingly. It is important to note, however, that while women were expected to figure things out for themselves while surrounded by officers in intake, once they were around other women in orange they received answers to their questions, guidance, and indeed care.

In response to the degrading experience of intake brought about by correctional staff, many women discussed the care they received by other incarcerated women. Receiving such material support was guaranteed if you “had people” in the prison, or knew people that were already housed on your yard when you arrived, but giving to strangers was not described as

uncommon on any of the yards. Anna was Black woman in her forties who had completed most of her fifteen-year sentence. She had spent all of her time on higher custody yards and explained that new arrivals are always taken care of.

> There are a lot that will give away… the one thing that we all have in common, regardless of why we're here and how long we're here - We all came in the same way. We all came through [intake], we all know what it is to not have your money be on your account when you first get here and you're waiting for a month. You have no soap, no lotion, no shampoo, no nothing. No matter what, when you're first here doesn't matter what you look like, what you're here for, somebody on the yard is going to give you that bar of soap. Somebody's going to give you a comb. Somebody's going to offer to braid your hair. So, I think that in those moments when people are first here, like a lot of people step up to help.

Providing material support to women who are new to the yard was the most commonly discussed example of women caring for others at the prison. For women who have been on the yard for some time and have had the chance to earn money, learn the ropes, and "get their feet under them" as Anna described it, support was likely to only come from her family – biological on the outs or found within the prison. Anna admitted that she personally doesn't often give goods to strangers, as her own resources are quite limited, but one person who does is Tamara. On both the yards she'd been housed on Tamara and a friend asked other women in orange to donate essential items like soap, coffee, and hair ties to create what she called "God boxes" as an expression of her faith and identity. With the addition of a copy of the Bible, these God boxes are given to new arrivals to the yard "because the prison gives you nothing when you get here." Indeed, the prison does not provide essential hygiene items beyond pads and tampons to the women in orange once they leave intake; all other hygiene items must be purchased from the prison store.

Another example of women caring for others through the provision of material support came from Carrie. Carrie was a Native woman just over fifty serving a twenty-one-year sentence.

She was housed on a medium-security yard when we spoke, but she spent most of her eleven years at Perryville on close custody. Contact between women in orange is extremely limited on these yards, yet Carrie's account highlights the lengths people will go through to care for others at the women's prison. Carrie needed to submit some legal paperwork while she was housed in close custody but was unable to obtain it from the officers she had asked. Other women in orange overheard her need, had copies of the forms in their cells, and would sneak the paperwork into the shower with them. Though they were accompanied by officers to and from the shower, they were left to shower in relative privacy with the door closed. Women placed the legal forms in a plastic bag, hung the bag on the inside of the door, and left it out of eyesight of the officers for Carrie to retrieve when she later went to shower. Furthermore, Carrie was unable to access any money on her account to purchase essential items and her requests for indigent care were not fulfilled for unknown reasons. She was left without means for nine months. After several weeks she started to receive informal indigent care packages from CO-IIIs who took pity on her situation and helped her out "for the time being." This eventually provided her with a small amount of shower items and toothpaste. However, other items to provide a modicum of comfort in her single cell, like food items and lotion, were provided by women in neighboring cells through an elaborate system using the ventilation grates between cells.

> They have vents in the corner [of the cells] but in [close custody] there's a grid, and it's got to be about a half an inch hole in the grid with all these little holes in them covering the vents. So, we would make fishing poles - roll up paper and cut our shampoo labels to tape it and put them together… and they would just interlock and you have a fishing pole. And we'd fish letters, notes, whatever. But I had a friend that used to crunch me up a soup almost to a powder, a ramen soup, and she would get her saran wrap from her sack [bagged sandwich lunch provided for weekend meals]. And she would open it all up and make a big line of the powder, sprinkle the seasoning on it and roll it up really small and put it on the fishing pole. And she would run it through the vent and then I would slowly pull it out and it will be long, like about eight feet long… Put hot water in it and I would have a soup to eat. We

> did that with salsa. We did that with coffee. We did that with everything. If you can make it into a powder, you can pass it through that vent.

In Carrie's account, the saran wrap that was used to wrap the sandwiches provided as weekend lunches was kept and repurposed to provide care to close custody neighbors. For security reasons, I was not able to interview any women currently housed on close custody, but Carrie's narrative indicates that while women in orange in these extreme security housing situations rarely saw one another face-to-face, they care for others in a covert way.

"Don't take the chips"

Sharing commissary items was much easier on lower security yards, but regardless of the yard, materials goods were shared between women in orange frequently. However, it is against policy for women to sell or gift any items to one another, a rule that is meant to reduce the potential for debts and coercive behaviors between women in orange. Warnings about taking items offered from other women in orange are provided during intake orientation as well, in the form of what the women called "the PREA video." The Prison Rape Elimination Act was passed in by Congress in 2003 to address sexual assault in US carceral institutions. The PREA video shown to new arrivals to Perryville is ostensibly meant to advance this mission at the women's prison. I requested but was not given access to the video, but Tamara provided an overview: "It's part of orientation. It's funny. And it's just a common thing, like when someone comes to borrow a bag of chips from someone it's like 'Oh don't take the chips!'" Tamara laughed at this inside joke women in orange have with one another and continued.

> So, you watch the PREA video, which is "don't take the chips." So, saying all sex isn't consensual. But there's this big – It's so stereotypical. The video has this big black woman, and she's a boyish woman. And she's like, [in low voice] 'Hey, baby, you're new to prison, and I'm gonna leave this bag of chips on your bed.' And then the woman's like, [in a high voice] 'Oh, thank you' this little cute little white

> woman, (laughs) this cute little white girl. Then she takes the chips and the black girl comes back like 'That's my girl' (laughs) Its such silly video.

Tamara concluded her description of the PREA video laughing. Throughout my interviews, women referred to this video mockingly, citing "don't take the chips," the warning offered by the video so women could avoid sexual abuse and exploitation during their sentence, as a joke with their friends. Shannon, a nonbinary white person just over fifty who had served twenty-three years of a life sentence, for example, laughed as they shared "And it's funny because like, I actually always make this joke like… because people will just kind of throw that out there as a joke - 'don't take the chips'. And like, I'll always make this joke like, I've been here so long I give the chips!" Shannon explained that they may give items to other people at the prison, but that it was never done with sexually coercive intentions. Amanda, the twenty-six-year-old woman I interviewed said that in her experience, there may indeed be an expectation attached to the receipt of material goods however. The following excerpt from our interview details her concerns.

> *Amanda:* If anybody's told you about "don't take the chips," literally don't take the chips, because there's always something that they want in return.
>
> *Me:* Okay, and is it like in the PREA video, don't take the chips, that's what they want in return or
>
> *Amanda:* No, it's just something else. Like they just want more of what you've already given. And it's just hard because some people will take and take and take and take and keep expecting what you give, give, give.
>
> *Me:* And you're talking mostly about material things?
>
> *Amanda:* Or even like it doesn't even have to be like just materialistic things. It could just be like, they can tell you to go and do something. And if you finally realize… they're just using me because they want me to go be a runner and they want me to go do this. They want me to go and confront that person.

Amanda explained that "being a runner" or "doing for other people" was a way they tried to find acceptance with the "cool kids" at the prison. A few other women in orange identified a similar

group of people at the prison and warned against them continually asking you buy things for them or do things for them like Amanda described, though none reported that they affiliated with this group.

Common on the higher security yards was a "don't take the chips" related warning about getting involved in "two-for-ones." Some women on these yards accumulated commissary items and ran their own store among the orange population. Women who did not have the means or were otherwise ineligible to shop on the official prison store could borrow one bag of coffee, for example, with the understanding that the following week they owed their borrower two bags of coffee. Almost all of the women that described this trade reported it was a well-informed exchange – in other words, women knew the debt they were incurring when they were given the bag of coffee and knew of the timeframe they were expected to pay it back. Though the process of the two-for-exchange was made clear to me, the sentiment surrounding it differed between women I spoke to. Shannon, for example, noted that women would arrive on the yard seeking out a two-for-one while they waited for their spending account to activate. In this account, two-for-ones were merely one option for obtaining material goods without relying on charity from others. In contrast, Renee, a Native woman nearly sixty-years-old who had spent sixteen years at the prison expressed outrage at women who run two-for-one stores.

> Who wants to sit there before you can shop two weeks later with no soap? Yeah, I can't brush my teeth because I don't have a toothbrush. You know? Nope. "Oh, here's a toothbrush. Pay me back when you get your store?" No! That's not right. It's not how it's supposed to work.

Renee had only recently moved to a lower custody yard and therefore spent most of her sentence on the higher custody yards where two-for-ones are more common. Renee identified strongly as a mother and nurturer at the prison (which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter) and explained that she never gave to women in orange expecting anything in return, especially for

essential hygiene items. In her account, care is something one is meant to provide to those in need, not a business transaction. Other women advised against two-for-ones for the borrower's sake. For example, Emily, a white and Native woman in her early thirties who had served a year of her current sentence, warned "don't be getting into those two-for-ones because then you don't pay that week, they add taxes on." She explained that if a borrower doesn't pay their lender back on the next store opportunity, the debt of two coffees increases to four and this can quickly spiral out of control.

Further complicating the two-for-one debt issue is the fact that women in orange at phase one level privileges are limited to spending up to $60 on the store per week. New arrivals are always phase one and have to wait sometimes weeks until their spending account has been activated. Emily explained that women who arrive from intake can get themselves into a difficult debt situation with these restrictions coupled with their considerable material needs. She explained "you're only able to shop if you're a phase one $60, so now you go get $30 worth of store from somebody you owe out your whole bag on your first week that you're never going to be able to catch up." Unpaid two-for-one debts could result in violence from the disgruntled lender who wasn't paid back or simply being cut off and earning the reputation of an untrustworthy borrower on the yard, unable to rely on help from other women in orange when they needed it. In short, warnings against the consequences of sharing goods between people in orange were sometimes jokes, sometimes words-to-the-wise about not spending outside of one's means, and sometimes a warning about "doing your own time" while serving one's sentence.

Returning to the PREA video referenced by the phrase "don't take the chips," there are two important topics to discuss in relation to this video. First, sexual coercion between women in orange was not common in the descriptions of sex and relationships at Perryville. Several women

mentioned officers engaging in “inappropriate relationships” with a woman in orange. None of the women I spoke with reported any personal involvement in intimate relationships with officers, but it should be noted that literature on women in prison does find that assault from officers is more common than assault from other women in prison (Beck, Rantala, & Rexroat, 2014). Alicia, a white Hispanic woman just over forty serving a short sentence pointed out that “some officers that try to be flirtatious and I've seen men get walked off the yard because of having relationships, you know getting head in the maintenance closet…. They prey on our vulnerability.” These second-hand accounts of sexual assault were unanimously vilified, but my interviewees often added that women in orange sometimes manipulated the officers in these situations as well. For example, Melanie, a Hispanic woman nearly sixty years old who had served a little less than two years of her five-year sentence shared that, “there's officers that are really bad, that are screwing with the women, you know, messing with the women or the women messing with them. I think it's more the officers getting taken advantage of by the woman. I'll be honest. That's my opinion.” Extant literature also reports that women in prison are likely to blame women for their in-prison victimizations (Trammell, 2012).

Additional insight on the topic of sex between “orange and brown” was provided by Susan, a sixty-year-old white woman who had spent two years at Perryville. She worked a job driving the transport tram that drove officers between buildings in the prison complex and this was the setting in which came to understand the frequency of these relationships.

> There are definitely COs here who engage in you know, sex with inmates, bringing inmates things in, having inappropriate relations. I used to drive the tram, so I would drive all the officers around and there's a lot of very inappropriate relations…. It goes on a lot, both with female and male officers. So that's what surprised me. And it's very prevalent. Not as much physical abuse as much as I think there's a lot just very inappropriate, sexual, physical stuff…

Though Susan reported that most officers were respectful, she recalled that some, like those she referenced in the above quote, were abusive. She went on to assess the reasons women in orange engaged in inappropriate relationships, noting that "I've never seen anyone forced to do it. I've never seen like raped or anything like that. It's always been, you know, I want this, give me this." She also evaluated the reasons officers "got involved" with women in prison.

> I just think that it's it has to be a psychological thing. Because why would you do that? You know, as a CO. Why? I'm sure there's plenty of available people on the outs. So, to me, it shows some kind of psychological problem with the people who are doing it. Not with the women…

Susan's explanation here addresses the power dynamics at play in relationships between officers and people confined in prison and why these intimacies are so problematic. Like Melanie, though, she doesn't think the women in orange are always faultless in these couplings.

> But it may be coercive on the women's part too, because they can manipulate people once they get information about them or threaten them, "I'm going to tell on you" or whatever. So, it can go both ways. But to me, I just never see that it's okay on a professional's part to do that with an inmate. I just don't see it."

Susan's account concludes by putting the onus on the officers as they are the professionals in this environment, and indeed despite whatever capacity women in orange may have to "manipulate" officers as Melanie and Susan have described it, officers hold the formal power at the prison. There are no official reports of the frequency at which officers are reprimanded for engaging in sex with people held in ADCRR facilities. I asked Melanie if such liaisons were common, and she replied "From what I hear. There's certain I heard one officer just got taken off the yard in handcuffs. I don't know, that's orange.com. I don't know if it's true." Susan's account, though still indirect, suggests that these assaults are somewhat common.

In terms of what "don't take the chips" is warning against, many women assured me that they had never seen anything they would consider coercive sex between women in orange.

Shannon, for example, said they hadn't seen a situation like that occur in the two decades they'd been at Perryville. Maria was serving a five-year sentence at Perryville when we spoke. She was two years in and had also served a previous term at Perryville. Maria also had never seen an instance of sexual assault or coercion but said "I think it may have happened here but I mean, that video's [the PREA video] from like 1902 so things have evolved since that video… it doesn't really happen like that here anymore I don't think." There also are no official reports of the frequency of sexual assaults between women in orange at Perryville, but my interviews indicate it is exceedingly rare. However, Stacy, a white woman in her mid-fifties about to complete her five-year sentence recalled observing a situation wherein a woman in orange was distressed after receiving sexual advances from other woman at the prison.

> I remember the young lady come in and she [was] being approached in the shower. This woman wanted to be her girlfriend and stuff. And she said she didn't want to be with her. She didn't know what to do. She was crying. She's like, 'I don't know what to do. She scares me.'

Stacy went on to explain that women in orange don't involve prison staff when serious situations like this arise, saying "Nobody's gonna go to an officer. If these women do go to an officer, it's over petty things. It's over stupid things to tell on somebody or it's stupid. But not when it's really needed." Stacy continued by describing the frequency with which relationships between women in orange were controlling and abusive, but she did not reveal what ended up happening to the woman in this situation.

Though women did not describe many situations involving sexual threat at the prison, it should be noted that as this is a sensitive subject, underreporting is to be expected. PREA requires that prisons undergo regular investigations to assess whether the facility complies with PREA regulations and provides summary reporting of the frequency of sexual assault and harassment allegations filed at an institution. A PREA Annual Report from January of 2023 at

ASPC-Perryville reported the total numbers of sexual assault and abuse victimization allegations and investigations reported in 2022 (PREA, 2023). For the year, a total of 52 allegations of sexual abuse were reported, 26 of which a staff member was the perpetrator and 26 of which another person in orange was the perpetrator. Investigation outcomes were reported for only 9 of these allegations, 7 of which were ongoing (n=2 "inmate-on-inmate"; n=5 "staff-on-inmate"), and 2 of which were referred for criminal prosecution (both "staff-on-inmate" cases).[16] Though multiple allegations could have been filed per person, with an average population of 3,090 people housed at Perryville throughout the year, nearly 2% of people in orange at Perryville formally reported experiencing a situation involving sexual misconduct.

The second point to be made regarding the PREA video is how shockingly apparent the racialization of sexual threats at the prison are made in the PREA video.[17] Though Tamara was laughing at the absurdity of the film while describing it to me, it is important to highlight the impact that exposure to this video has for women coming to Perryville. Recall Tamara's imitation of the video's dialogue – the black woman was "boyish," framed as a potential perpetrator of sexual coercion, and Tamara used a low voice while reporting her lines. In contrast, the white woman was described as "cute" and "little" and was mimicked using a high-pitched voice. This depiction of racialized violence is also described in extant literature (Lempert, 2016).

[16] There were another nine allegations of sexual harassment in which staff was the perpetrator, though these were reported to be either unfounded (n=2) or unsubstantiated (n=7) after administrative investigation.

[17] Note that Section 30301, Chapter 303, Finding (9) of The Prison Rape Elimination Act reads "The frequently interracial character of prison sexual assaults significantly exacerbates interracial tensions, both within prison and, upon release of perpetrators and victims from prison, in the community at large." The depiction of an interracial sexually coercive exchange in the video was therefore certainly purposeful. How reflective such a depiction is for women in prison is not addressed in PREA and my interviews as well as the body of literature on women's prisons suggest that this depiction is far from accurate.
https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title34/subtitle3/chapter303&edition=prelim

When I spoke with Sarah she was just over forty-years-old and was serving a short sentence on a minimum-security yard. This was not her first time at Perryville, but she recalled her first day at the prison at twenty-three years of age. As a white woman who had never experienced incarceration before, her fears arriving at the prison included racialized violence and sexual assault. She also cited the PREA video in her account of those feelings:

> My first day, I was scared. You always hear stories about if you're white, you have to watch out from the big black women. They're gonna make you their woman, they're gonna rape you with broom sticks, they're gonna do this and that. So, I was scared… And when I first walked on the yard, oh and they say "don't accept the chips" [referencing the PREA video] … I go into my room, and it's a big white girl with a big black girlfriend and they're giving me these packages. And I'm like, "Oh, no. No, thank you. No, thank you." And they're like, "We know you watch the video, but it's okay" …. But those two women turned out to be amazing women. They weren't out to hurt anybody. So, like a lot of the stories you hear, they're not true.

Other women, like Sarah, signaled that such notions of (often racialized) sexual threat were something they either arrived at the prison harboring or were primed to expect because of exposure to this video. Though it was a salient fear for many women who expected prison to be a dangerous and violent place, these fears dissipated fairly quickly for most of the people with whom I spoke. Stacy cited the PREA video, which she recalled warning about "rapes and all kinds of things." In response, she explained that arriving on the yard, "You put on a very rough exterior, you know you put on put up a wall and you put up that that persona." Primed to protect herself against harm, she explained one of the first interactions she had with other women in orange.

> I got to [the yard] and some women came up and said, "You from [intake]?" I said "Yeah," and then they offered me some paper, envelopes, a pair of shoes, shampoo, conditioner, tobacco, things like that. They offered it like this little package. And I told them no, I didn't want it. And they're like, "You don't want it?" And I said "No. We're not supposed to take anything. I don't want it." And they started laughing. And they said "Okay, we're gonna ask you one more time. There's no strings attached. It's just because you're new on the yard. It's gonna be a while before you

> can shop and this is just a care package for people who are new" and so I thought about it I said "Yeah, okay, I'll take it" and I know we're not allowed to, but I did anyway, and I went to my cell.

Stacy used the information that was provided to her at orientation through the PREA to attempt to protect herself from assault and tickets. However, when women who had been there longer than her detailed the situation she was entering, she ultimately took their advice and their assistance. Care packages or individual essential hygiene items were regularly given by women in orange to people arriving on the yards. Indeed, the "don't take the chips" caution was ultimately ignored by every woman I spoke to. Its violation is arguably necessary – though women are provided single use soaps and shampoos while held in intake, once they arrive on the yard, they are given no supplies beyond pads and tampons. Women are expected to purchase toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, laundry detergent, and hair combs from the store, but it takes weeks for their commissary account to be activated.

Many of the women I spoke with at Perryville worked jobs at the prison, which they explained was partly to pass the time but largely to have money "on their books" to purchase these essential items. Women who arrive at Perryville start as "phase ones" which means, among other restrictions (e.g. limits on the amount a person can spend shopping on the store, frequency of phone calls outside of the prison, etc.) that they can only earn base pay for their job. The base pay for women in orange is $0.10 per hour and that wages are subject to fees. For example, for people with a release date, 25% of wages are automatically deposited into a Dedicated Discharge Account until that account reaches a balance of $250, an account the women in orange referred to as one's "gate fee." Additionally, women who own electrical appliances, such as a television or a fan are charged a utility fee of $2 per month.[18] Women have the opportunity to "phase up"

[18] See https://corrections.az.gov/sites/default/files/documents/policies/900/0905.pdf for more information.

every six months, and doing so is contingent on several administrative rules[19], including remaining ticket-free.

Funds can also be added to a person's account by people outside of the prison. Many women in orange expressed appreciation for the fact that their family members had the means and the ability to provide them with occasional money gifts or regular stipends while they served their time. However, many also explained to me that they felt obligated to stretch their income or gifted funds as much as they could to avoid overburdening their loved ones on the outside. One such woman was Kathy, a white woman in her forties serving a three-and-a-half-year sentence. She said "I work for my money, because I don't want my daughters and my family to have to put money on my books." Kathy didn't regularly use funds from her family, but rather lived off of the wages she received from her prison job because she worried about her incarceration stressing the lives of her family more than necessary.

Jill, a white woman in her fifties serving a sentence of around four years did not work a prison job when we spoke, but she too was cognizant of the strain money given to her could put on her family. She said that to rely on her family for funds, it "has to come out of their pocket' and that "I'm trying to be considerate of what they're going through. They still have bills." Additionally, she noted that she was already relying on her family to care for and financially support her children while she was away, saying "I still have a 15- and 17-year-old out there that my sister is taking care of. So, I just got to be considerate."

[19] Women who are at Perryville for a parole violation are ineligible to move beyond phase one during their sentence, as are women who refused to sign the Integrated Housing Policy in which they agree to be housed with someone of a different race than them.

Women who are unable to work and do not receive funds from people outside of the prison qualify to receive "indigent supply" which women report are the same items provided to people in intake. These supplies are meant to be distributed every two weeks, but everyone I spoke to with experience using this service reported frequent issues in receiving their hygiene items.[20] Furthermore, the supplies are not free – women explained to me that each indigent supply distribution charged a commissary account a debt of $12 which would be charged when the individual did eventually receive funds. The lack of provision of essential hygiene items coupled with the prohibition of sharing such items between prison community members highlights one of several contradictions women in orange encounter as they adjust to living in the prison. As one example, "appearance in compliance" rules require that women in orange have their hair tied back away from their face, but they are not provided with hair ties which must be purchased from the store. Without the prevalence of caring and experienced individuals who are willing to provide material goods often to strangers in direct violation of prison rules, it's difficult to imagine what life at Perryville would look like.

Money was indeed a stressor for most of the women I spoke to and was universally recognized as something that was essential to making it through one's sentence, both for the essential hygiene items as well as for the items that served to make the prison slightly more comfortable, such as coffee, candies, or a television set. However, even once money is put into the account by family members or from wages from a prison job, women in orange shop the store once a week and receive their items the following week. The warning offered to Stacy that

[20] An ADCRR Department Order Manual from May 2022 provides a list of hygiene items that indigent people held in ADCRR facilities can request on a weekly (e.g., comb, toothpaste and toothbrush, denture supplies) and monthly basis (e.g., all-in-one soap for hair and body, deodorant, disposable razors). Find the list at https://corrections.az.gov/sites/default/files/documents/policies/900/0905.pdf.

"it's gonna be a while before you can shop" certainly appears accurate based on my many conversations.

Emotional care

Caring for others involved the provision of material goods, mentorship and guidance (whether through a long-lasting found family relationship or the more fleeting experience of being taught the ropes from a bunkie), as well as the provision of emotional support. There are big roles that women in orange take on, such as mother, teacher, or spiritual leader, to care for the emotional needs of their small groups in this community. Emotional care for others also came in other smaller ways. Engaging in emotional labor is an aspect of doing gender recognized in the literature (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

One commonly described method of caring came from cooking for and feeding others. Femininity, cooking, and caring are certainly linked concepts outside of the prison. As Elizabeth Fürst explains, "Food is an important expression of identity, and the giving of food seems to be closely related to femininity and the subjective experience of being a woman (1997, p. 441)." Cooking for others indeed serves to meet a material need, but inherent in making a meal for someone is an emotional component. Food is provided to women in orange from the prison kitchen, but no one spoke of these meals in an endearing way. However, when women discussed their cooking routines, their experiences preparing and sharing meals with one another in their rooms, and providing specialty items for special occasions, the emotional characteristic of cooking in prison was apparent.

Stories about food served in the kitchens at Perryville were rarely complimentary, many citing rodent infestations, having been served spoiled food, and overall that the meals offered were unappetizing. As the kitchen was often considered "really bad," people in orange regularly

cooked for themselves and their close friends using items bought from the store. As all dishes cooked on the yard required the purchase of relatively expensive ingredients,[21] women most often worked together, combining one person's cream cheese with another's rice noodles and another's expertise with the microwave or an immersion heater called a "stinger" to create meals that women described as surprisingly delicious - albeit fattening. The creativity of the dishes made using "gas station ingredients" are regularly referenced in ethnographies of prisons (see Smoyer, 2013). Descriptions of mealtimes – typically dinner – brought forth familiar images of home: starting with family groups deciding whose turn it was to cook and ending with everyone sitting together in front of the television enjoying a meal together. Some women identified themselves as the "cook" of the group and happily shared their unique recipes with me.

In addition to being a daily feature of life at the prison, the creation of specialty meals using commissary foods items were common ways that women celebrated special occasions. Indeed, celebrations for holidays and birthdays were recounted by many of the women in orange and involved the creation of "pop up" cards, festive paper decorations, and small group activities. Sarah had recently celebrated a birthday when we spoke. She described the efforts women in orange went through to make her day special: "I woke up with some pop ups saying happy birthday on my locker. I got presents, some soda, candies. People made me dinner. Everybody sang Happy Birthday, and throughout the day, people said 'Happy Birthday.' It was pretty cool." Cheesecakes made with cream cheese, coffee creamer, lemon-lime soda, and crushed cookies were common birthday cake creations. For holidays and birthdays, gifts were often exchanged which included frequently used food and hygiene items like coffee or shampoo,

[21] I was unable to obtain a list of store items and their prices, but one woman shared that one package of ramen noodles cost $0.66 on the store, and a bag of coffee cost "a few bucks." These items were typically considered essential food items, while things like cream cheese, meat products, and other ingredients in many of the creative meals were referred to simply as "expensive."

treats purchased from commissary like the soda and candy Sarah received, and sometimes personalized clothing items as well. Tammy, for example received a pair of canvas shoes called "deck shoes" for her birthday last year which a friend had customized to look like Vans shoes using permanent markers.[22]

Holiday celebrations often included activities organized by the women. Interviewees recalled a Halloween makeup contest with a prize basket of food and makeup items for the winner and large group meals created for and shared with everyone on the yard for Christmas. The thoughtfulness of these activities was meant to create a sense of home[23] and care for a community of people separated from their true homes at times when this separation was particularly painful. Miranda, a twenty-nine-year-old Hispanic woman who had served five years explained "When days are rough, and it's the holidays everybody's just cheerful - as cheerful as you can be. Especially at times like those when everyone's missing home the most." Special occasion celebrations therefore provided material support to people, but also tapped into a deep connection to the emotional support available between women at Perryville. When the deprivations of the prison environment were most salient for women in orange (Foster, 2012), care for others was particularly prominent.

One additional holiday celebration deserves additional attention. Two different women housed in different units described similar Easter activities. In both Tammy and Tina's accounts,

[22] The day after receiving her customized shoes, however, an officer warned her that they could be considered "escape paraphernalia." To avoid a potential ticket, she threw them away.

[23] Many of the women in orange pointed out in our interview that they do not view Perryville as home, rather a place where they are living for now. This distinction was discussed as a boundary they'd put in their minds to avoid becoming institutionalized, a concept was discussed with dread or shame.

women in orange organized an Easter egg hunt to award indigent women with hygiene supplies. Their accounts of these events follow.

> *Tammy*: Anybody that was indigent, we went around, found out if they were indigent [and] did like an Easter egg hunt. [We hid] painted rocks and if they found this rock they got this big basket that we had had everybody donate [to]. We made like 25 of them. It was pretty cool.
>
> *Tina:* We make eggs out of construction paper, and we asked one of the officers [to] let us out before the doors pop when count clears, but leave them [the other women in orange] still locked down. And we went around the yard everywhere hiding them and we gave instructions to the ones that, the kids that don't have nothing and we would show the prize like three prize packs full of hygiene, snacks. And so they'll run around looking for it. It's just to me it's just the most joyous thing.

Tammy and Tina have both served more than five years at Perryville on higher custody yards. Both described the egg hunts for indigent women as examples of how people care for women in orange at the prison, both in providing material goods and in providing a feeling of excitement and fun for participants. However, Tina's use of the term "kids" highlights the infantilizing nature of the institution. Indeed, many of the older numbers referred to new numbers as "kids" "little girls" and "babies," typically in an endearing manner. Though I spoke with women who put on these events, none of the women I spoke to reported that they participated in such activities. The sentiment behind the Easter egg hunts for indigent women was care and compassion, but viewed through a critical lens, the impact may have been belittling for the women in orange who participated. Care for others often came from family-style relationships and women in orange recalled "mothering" other adult women at the prison. Various forms of infantilization, therefore, were not uncommon.

The institution may also set a precedent for this infantilization. Researchers as early as Sykes (1958) noted that an institution which purposefully deprives people of their autonomy reduces people to a child-like status during their incarceration. Extant literature on women's

carceral facilities often finds that correctional staff and other criminal justice actors infantilize women in prison, describing and treating them as whiny, emotionally fragile children who don't know how to act in their own best interests and require frequent correction (Rafter, 2004; McCorkel, 2013; Pollock, 2002; Sufrin, 2017). Women in Pollock's study, for example, complained that officers "treat them like children by calling them girls and scolding or patronizing them concerning dress, behavior, language, cleanliness, and other trivial issues in a heavy-handed maternal way (2002, p. 192). Many women in my interviews expressed frustration at the strict enforcement of minor infractions, such as how they wear their clothing or hair (discussed more in chapter 5). Mary, a white woman in her mid-sixties who had served twenty-five years of a life sentence also expressed her frustration at being not being treated like an adult and with respect by officers. She shared that "Many COs kind of treat you as though you're ignorant, honestly. And it's hard sometimes to not want to say, 'Excuse me, but I'm really not. I'm not stupid, okay?'."

Caring for others at the prison did not typically aim to treat women in orange like children. Again, even the descriptions of the Easter-egg hunt were offered as an example of ways that women cared for people around them that were in need. Still, it is important to recognize the ways that the paternalism of the institution interacts with the care offered by women in prison.

Concerns about manipulation

The treatment women in orange receive from officers likely impacts the ways that they treat one another. In describing the intake experience, Tamara complained that "There's no compassion whatsoever." Not only does this make the chaotic intake process more uncomfortable for women in orange, as previously described, but Tamara also noted that its

consequential for people's behavior on the yard. "I think that sets the precedent for the women when they come in. Like compassion, kindness, and humanity is out. Don't feel those because you'll be an outcast. That's how it's set up." Tamara explained that such compassionate outcasts may suffer ridicule and suspicion from other women in orange. She continued "People want to pick on you or 'You think you're better than everyone' or 'Oh, why are you being so nice? What do you want?' Or 'You're trying to get something out of people.'" Tamara has however established herself as a caring person at the prison with her provision of the God Boxes. She said this was in part because she had served so much time and also because she proved herself to be a "solid person" who doesn't involve herself in drama, doesn't try to manipulate people, and is trustworthy.

As Tamara explained, caring for others, though a norm among women in orange, can also be risky. No one mentioned receiving a ticket for sharing (or even selling) goods to other women in orange, but a person who gives too much or is seen as one who can be taken advantage of is considered weak at the prison. Rhonda, a fifty-five-year-old white woman halfway through her six-year sentence, described how she has learned to avoid being taken advantage of at the prison.

> They want a cup of coffee. Oh ho! As much as you want to be nice and "Here you go," well, once you say once yes, forget it. It's like black mold - you can't get rid of it and it gets annoying… They'll come every day and then you gotta get kinda rude like, "Don't come to me anymore."

Rhonda continued, explaining that being "rude" to people in order to stop their asking for things is not something she is comfortable with. She has learned to be rude in these situations as an adaptation to prison but such behavior does not fit with her personal identity. "I don't like to do that, and that's just not me. I'm not rude. I'm not mean." Rhonda has not cut herself off from everyone at the prison, though. She's become selective about who she trades goods with, explaining "I know who I can share with and then I know the ones that, no. Gotta be careful."

Rhonda continued her warning, explaining that some women in orange will "look for the ones they think are kind of weak… Like the one girl next to me is she's not strong willed, [a] strong personality like I am... I keep telling her "Would you tell her no?" because she don't have much." Rhonda's neighbor is considered weak because of her ability to be taken advantage of by women in orange who ask for commissary items for free. Maria also described a friend of hers in this way, calling her a "fairy godmother" because she too handed out scarce hygiene or food items to anyone who asked to the point where she would go without. My interviewees explained that weak women are unable to say no and women in orange living in deprivation will capitalize on this to meet their material needs. Rhonda, in contrast, with her "strong personality" explained that avoiding such manipulation takes persistence but is possible. She shared with me the advice she offered to her neighbor: "Just say no. As you notice, these people don't come to me. A couple of times, they'll quit coming out." Therefore, the provision of care for others at the prison, though indeed common, still requires contemplation and adaptations to protect oneself as well. Previous research with women in prison similarly report that often beneficial, friendship and trust in prison can also be dangerous and devastating (Dye & Aday, 2019; Young & Haynie, 2022).

Concerns about the ubiquity of manipulation among women in orange extended beyond the capacity of some to secure material goods from others. Though giving care was common, at the same time, concerns about people taking advantage of the care they are given or otherwise proving themselves untrustworthy through backstabbing, gossiping, and manipulation were also present in almost all of the descriptions of women in orange as well.

The Internalized Misogyny Subscale (IMS) is a 17-item scale used in gender equity research to evaluate a woman's internalized devaluation of women (Szymanski, Gupta, &

Stewart, 2009). I did not measure the internalized misogyny of my participants during our interview, but items from this scale were frequently mentioned by women in orange. Manipulation is not explicitly mentioned in the items, but the concept is certainly intertwined with items like the belief that *a lot of women are deceitful* and that *women lie to get ahead.* Tamara's narrative sheds light on this topic as well. In her earlier quote detailing the intake process, she asserted that kindness and compassion were a rarity. I asked what the more common characteristic was at Perryville. She said "Manipulation. I'm gonna say that's number one, because someone's always trying to get something for nothing out of someone…" She continued, explaining that a person loses their identity when they come to prison and in trying to reestablish an identity, they rely on manipulation, seeking as she says "'How can I feel special?' Or 'How can I have someone want me?' because at the end of the day, we're women and we do have those feelings that we need." In Tamara's account, then, she noted ways that women manipulate those around them to feel special or to feel wanted. Other women used more stereotypical language when describing the women they lived around. Dawn, for example, explained that "there's just a lot of fakeness, a lot of backstabbing. We're women. A lot of women are conniving, jealous, envious." Similarly, Julia shared that "women are very dramatic and ruthless to be honest. I mean, smile on your face and talk behind your back" and that this was something women in orange had to navigate "on a daily basis." Backstabbing was cited by other women as well when they discussed women who share information with staff. This kind of 'conniving' behavior was noted to be more common on the lower security yards. Christina, a white woman in her early thirties halfway through a six-year sentence, talked about women making things up, either to staff or among women in orange, for self-serving purposes.

> A lot of women try to over exaggerate things, or make things up when they just need that little bit of extra attention. They try to over dramatize things when they

> don't need to be. And so it's hard, it's really hard [and] it's frustrating at times. Women are just, they can be extra. They can be petty, they can be just evil and rude, they really can be.

Christina's account describes women lying to get ahead, whether that includes securing more attention from other women in orange at the prison – a type of power in this depriving environment – or filing false reports with officers to get a woman in trouble and perhaps even removed from her current housing yard. Extant literature also finds that women in prison identify learning to live alongside so many other women as a salient difficulty of their incarceration, many citing misogynistic and negative stereotypes about women who are backstabbing, conniving, or manipulative (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). Again, women in orange must grapple with the perceived risks involved in caring for others while incarcerated.

In addition to declarations about women lying to or manipulating people around them to "get ahead," women in orange also signaled internalization of additional IMS items. The belief that *women are too easily offended* was discussed many, including Rachel who noted that women overreact to minor issues. She noted that women "worry about smaller things and their reactions are more intense because girls, they'll get emotional and get mad at things you won't even expect. You don't even know why they're mad." In contrast, she explained that "guys, they just brush stuff off." The contrasts between how men and women react to small issues was mentioned by other interviewees as well, including Ashley. Ashley was a twenty-seven-year-old white woman halfway through her five-year sentence. She told me that outside of prison she had very few female friends and has had to learn to adapt to interacting with women every day.

> I'm a very, like, direct person. I don't like to sugarcoat things. So, it's been a learning experience here, because not everybody is that way. I feel like sometimes I hurt people's feelings. Because guys, they just kind of blow it off, like, "Whatever." And women, I feel have more, not necessarily insecurities, but they're like, "Oh, my gosh, I can't believe that you would just come out with it like that.

A nearly identical story came from Janet, an Asian woman in her mid-forties who had served five years.

> When I used to be out there, before I broke the law, I used to only really hang around guys. I'm not always necessarily a super sensitive person. So, I've learned that in here. I don't even know how to say - like sugarcoat things, so you don't hurt somebody's feelings. I've actually learned more than that being in here being around women a lot, because you do have to be more sensitive, because they do get offended more easy, as opposed to a guy, guys just, you know, most of them just laugh it off. Living around a bunch of women, you kind of have to adjust.

Both Ashley and Janet have learned to address their neighbors more gently than they are inclined to avoid offending other women during their incarceration. Their affinity for friends that are men on the outs also signals agreement with an additional IMS item: preferring to work with (or in this case hang out with) men. Six of my participants shared that they prefer to spend their time with men, and that they had to learn to be more sensitive as to not hurt feelings or cause drama at the prison. Adaptations like these are therefore another facet of care for others in prison, as women in orange report paying close attention to the ways that they respond to other women in orange to avoid not only causing drama for themselves, but also to avoid hurting the women they are housed around.

Manipulation, gossip, "snitching," and involvement in tumultuous romantic relationships were common on all yards and were often cited as the source of drama. Drama could result in tickets, hurt feelings, shouting matches, bullying, and occasionally physical fights as well. Caring for others in providing mentorship often includes guiding new numbers in ways to avoid drama. Tamara, for example, explained,

> I take on the role of trying to, I guess, mentor - but that's a strong word - the younger people that are here. "Okay, let's not do that unnecessary drama. Let's not get into a relationship that you're [in] just because you feel like I need to be loved right now. Let's try to focus on your life that's going to happen out there."

Advice to avoid drama were offered by at least ten of the women I spoke to who shared warnings like “keep your head down,” “watch your surroundings,” and “be careful, because you never know who you're gonna piss off.” In addition, most women in orange could recall a situation wherein they trusted someone with personal information to later wish they had not. Prior research with women in prison similarly report that while friendship and emotionally-supportive relationships while incarcerated are beneficial, women must be selective in determining who to involve in these caring relationships (Dye & Aday, 2019; Young & Haynie, 2022).

Indeed, information is a commodity at Perryville and for some it can be a weapon. Gossip between women in orange could ruin reputations, cause drama, and sometimes even lead to tickets when officers were informed. Several of my interviewees reported that other women sometimes fabricated stories to report to officers so that a woman they didn’t like or who they were in a dispute with would get in disciplinary trouble. Extant literature also report that gossip, snitching, and manipulation are more salient concerns for women in prison than fear of physical violence, which is typically the primary concern of men in prison (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003, 2005; Owen, 1998; Trammel, 2012).

Many women explained that prison was nothing like they had expected, finding that it was more like high school or a summer camp (n=20) than a typical prison. Indeed, rather than referencing prison movies to describe life at Perryville to me, three women in orange specifically cited the movie *Mean Girls*. Veronica explains this high school atmosphere more:

> Honestly, it's just like being in high school. I think it's worse than being in high school. Women are so catty. Women like to gossip. There's a lot of like, there's a lot of like jealousy and pettiness… Everybody's you know, cliqued up you know, it might not be as political as it is with, the men but here like I've noticed that they’re kind of cliqued up like in high school. You have like the popular people and you

> have like, sort of like the outcasts and we have people who are mentally incapacitated…. You have like the loners. You have like the rebels, you know, that that's just how it is in here. And then we have people like myself who I don't do cliques or crowds.

Gossip, pettiness, informing officers or "snitching," and drama were present on all yards at Perryville to varying degrees. The social reaction of the prison community to violations of trust and respect like these, but despite many interviewees warning of betrayal or manipulation by women in orange, this does not negate the presence of care at the prison. In short, care at Perryville is a paradox in that care for others can – and indeed does – exist alongside pervasive concerns about trust and self-protection among women in prison.

Institutional disruption of caring networks

Cultivating caring networks was a way that women in orange responded to the deprivations inherent to the prison environment. For many, found families served as their caring network, as previously described. In light of the care paradox previously described, I asked women in orange about the longevity or stability of these families and other caring relationships at Perryville. Susan was one interviewee who explained that "there are people who have had, you know, a sister a mom, whatever, for years" but that "we get broken up, we get moved from yard to yard, you know, is the problem." Interviewees often described people they were very close to, whom they lived with for years, or who they trusted deeply that they were no longer in frequent contact with. Typically, these changes were explained as a product of a housing assignment change.

Housing moves could occur for several reasons. Women who were within five years of their release date were typically moved from a higher custody to a minimum-security unit. Women who received disciplinary infractions could be moved to higher custody yards as a consequence for their violations of prison rules. Several women in orange also described

administrative moves which disrupted the living situation for large numbers of women at a time. Rearranging housing assignments in response to COVID was one such cited move. In early 2020, women were reassigned roommates and housing yards based on their job title, ostensibly an effort to limit the spread of the virus. For example, Kelly was a white woman in her thirties serving a twenty-year sentence. She had been at Perryville for eleven years when we spoke and had lived with the same person in the same room for six years prior to COVID. "And then all of a sudden," she explained "now I have a different roommate every month, and I'm moving to this yard, moving to this yard and like it was just, it was a lot." She continued to describe the unsettled feeling she and others experienced during this time,

> We felt like we were like chess pawns on a chessboard based on your job, because now we're being moved all over the yard by our jobs, because no matter what, we have to be able to go to work. … But then it's it was just constantly being moved by your job because of COVID. So, like you just couldn't get comfortable.

Indeed, lack of comfort and uncertainty are prevalent features of life in many previous ethnographic and interview accounts of people held in carceral facilities (Sykes, 1958; Owens, 1998; Lempert, 2016). Whether they were consequences of disciplinary action, proximity to a release date, or decisions made by administration, housing moves were discussed as a pain of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) by several of the women I spoke to. Janet, for example, had recently been moved to a privilege yard and explained some of her frustrations with the move: "When you move to this yard and they don't ask you first or you know maybe make you feel like you're having an option." Susan described this "total lack of control" being very difficult for her.

> The total lack of power, the total lack of options, the total lack of control, sometimes it's still very difficult for me to process. Where you want to leave, you've got to get out of here. You know what I mean? Or, you know, you're getting moved to another yard and you have no control, you have no say.

In addition to the housing transfers, she also noted that lack of control over the job that one holds and the hours that one works contributes to this lack of autonomy.

Housing movements often demonstrated the lack of control women in orange have in their daily lives, and disrupted the relationships and found families they had created in response to the depriving environment. Renee, for example, shared that she has around fifty people who call her Mom and whom she considers daughters. Some of them have left the prison and others have transferred yards. Despite their lack of physical proximity to one another, when Renee and her daughters do come into contact again, she explained that "But they'll still come up to me and say 'Hi, Mom, how you doing?'" and Renee still offers mentorship and advice to them even in these short and infrequent conversations.

Rebecca also described a friend with whom she was close, but with whom her relationship has changed since they no longer live in proximity to one another: "We used to live side by side each other, but they did a move. We still see each other but not as close as we were." Rebecca is close with her "little girls" at the prison, but explained that with her daughters, the care network was more maternalistic, with Rebecca providing more care to her daughters than she received from them. In contrast, the relationship with this friend was one in which "She can count on me for anything, and I can count on her for anything And I mean, anything." Rebecca asserted that "we're still there for one another" though they don't see one another as often since they were moved.

It is important to note that women in orange are not allowed to communicate with one another on different yards for security reasons. Christina noted this prohibition in our interview, also sharing that when "girls will move yards, and it's like, 'Hey, find my sister. Tell her I love her.' You know? Short little messages like that." In contrast to the opportunity for connection and communication with loved ones outside of the prison, therefore, women in orange who have

been separated from one another through moves rarely have the opportunity to get in touch with the people to whom they gave and received care from in the prison.

While Janet recognized that the privilege yard was a better housing situation because of the perks it offered, like higher paying jobs, she noted that "A lot of people go back once they get to this yard, they don't like it and they go back. And it's not the jobs or you know. They just, when you're doing time with certain people for a long time, and they don't come with you." Being separated from one's group was a reason she cited "about 50% of the people stay on this yard, the other 50% find a way to go back." In response to the deprivation of autonomy as well as the disruption of care networks formed within the prison, some women "find a way to go back" to their former housing assignments, a topic which is discussed more in chapter 6 as an example of system knowledge and manipulation.

In short, the creation of small, tight-knit groups were identified by many women in orange as an essential part of making it through one's sentence, even for those that had close connections to family outside of the prison. However, these close friendships, found family groups, and partnerships were strained, disintegrated, or replaced in large part because of the disruptions caused by releases from the prison and in-prison transfers to different housing yards or units.

Care for community members at Perryville

The prison is a community of people housed together involuntarily and removed from the broader society. Whether through found families, mentoring, or through presentation of care packages, care for others was indeed present on all housing yards and units at Perryville. However, women in orange often described differences between yards in terms of conduct expectations, frequency as well as reaction to conflicts, and attitudes of people grouped by

housing yard. Yards, more so than Perryville as a whole, were often described as communities, as these were the people women in orange ate, shopped, took medication, and showered alongside. Security-level of the unit was the primary feature women in orange used to indicate differences in community in terms of norms, customs, and attitudes. It is therefore important that a description of these smaller yard-bound communities be had to provide a clearer picture of the ways that women in orange care for one another.

The prison as a community or a "society within a society" is not a new concept in the literature (Sykes, 1958) and it was referenced in this way by many of the women in orange I spoke with. In addition to the many formal rules, the prison also has its own norms, customs, and informal expectations for community members. Community connotes not just a group of people living in proximity to one another, but implies that there are common attitudes and agreement in goals.

There are indeed similarities as well as differences in the features and norms of communities across housing yards within the Perryville community. Recall that all minimum yards house women who will be released within five years and who have few disciplinary infractions in large bay style housing (see Data and Methods chapter for a description of the housing styles). Additionally, the population size of Minimum A is much larger compared to Minimum B and C. These latter two yards are considered "privilege yards" for women without any disciplinary infractions. Privileges of the yard include formal privileges, like access to high paying jobs, laundry machines, and smaller bay sizes. Because these yards house a smaller number of women, there are indirect perks as well, such as shorter wait times for meals and store shopping as well as fewer people to make noise while one is trying to sleep. Women in orange on these yards are required to have a job and are not eligible if they are prescribed psychotropic

medication. Many of the complaints I heard from women with experience on other yards related to noisy neighbors who either had serious mental health issues that the prison did not adequately address (discussed later in this chapter), or people who were considered "just disrespectful."

Women on the privilege yards, though, were cognizant that their neighbors all worked a variety of shifts and therefore emphasized acting as respectful roommates. For example, Cheryl, a white woman in her sixties who had served three years at Perryville, explained that:

> When you have a program and a job, you're not willing to risk losing those things, because they're hard to come by, you know, you have to earn them. And then you have to stay out of trouble to keep them. So, fighting and arguing and acting up it's not an option on these yards, it really isn't.

Cheryl continued to explain that people who are brought to Minimum B or C who do engage in fights and other behaviors that will get them in disciplinary trouble are "shipped off very quickly on because they [the officers] just don't tolerate it." Not only did this tendency discourage fights and "acting up" but it also altered the enforcement of minor rule violations and the drama women in the community experienced. As one example, women in orange often explained that enforcement of appearance in compliance rules were stricter the minimum-security yards, particularly the privilege yards. Erica explained why this difference occurs:

> The staff have much more serious problems to worry about like fighting [on higher custody yards], so the violence is what they have to focus on more versus going down to a minimum yard, there's none of that there. So they're gonna nitpick. 'Tuck in your shirt. Put up your hair. Where's your ID? Why are you out of area?' Those are major things for minimum because that's their biggest problem.

Kathy had recently moved from Minimum A to a privilege yard and said, "it was a complete change, because you go from 1400 girls to 200 girls." She noted that the population size was part of the reason for the differences in drama and "chaos" on the yard, as well as the fact that she's on a yard where people spend their time working rather than idle. She continued to say that "it's just completely different here. I think there's been two arguments in the last ten or

eleven months here." Tamara, a resident of a privilege yard with experience on high custody yards explained "here you know, you're going home soon, and you've got to prepare and do everything you can to get out these gates so you don't come back." The focus on these yards was on earning money, staying on the yard by avoiding tickets, and planning for reentry.

Several women in orange I spoke with described yards as different communities. Christina, for example, contrasted the lack of familiarity with the large population held on Minimum A with the frequent interactions among people housed on a privilege yard.

> On [Minimum A], it's like its own little community. That's like 12, 1300 women there. I was there for a couple months, I would still run into people and be like, 'I've never seen you before. Who are you?' And they're like, 'Oh, I been here 6 months'… Like, there's are so many people. But at [Minimum B/C], there's only a couple hundred of us. So, it's a smaller community. People are more bored, more drama. But then there's also you don't have as many options of people to hang out with.

Population size contributed to a sense of community, with larger more transient communities like Minimum A having fewer shared expectations and goals than other yards, according to women like Christina who had experience living on multiple yards. Janet echoes some of Christina's notes, saying "you get to know everybody's name and you know, things like that living in this small community like this. You kind of know everybody after a few months. Everybody knows you." Rather than a source of drama, Janet continued to describe this familiarity as a "good thing" in comparison to the turmoil of the larger minimum yard. Care for members of the community on privilege yards was related to conduct expectations like being a respectful neighbor to women in orange who worked jobs on different shifts, as previously described.

Sam described the mixed-high custody yard as its "own community" as well. Rather than a shared goal of reentry preparation or working a job, though, they described this yard by saying that "you have a lot of lifers there. So, they're never getting off that yard that is their home. So, as long as you show them that you're not trying to disrespect them, and you know, you're not

trying to mess up their house… then you're good." They continued by explaining that new numbers who "don't listen" can disrupt the lives of people on this yard. "Some of these youngsters they come in, and are like, 'Why do I have to listen to you? You're old.' And that just creates a lot of havoc with the officers and with the inmates." Care for the community members on mixed-high custody, therefore, focused on behaviors that didn't jeopardize the daily lives of women in orange who would continue to live on the yard for many years. In both cases, however, women in orange cared for others by acting in ways that sought to protect the "peace and relative comfort" of life for community residents.

Mentorship is a way that women in orange care for others and establish or affirm a personal identity, as previously described, but it also is a means of caring for the community on the prison yard more broadly. Teaching newcomers how things work reduces the likelihood that they engage in behavior that gets the whole yard punished. Many women in orange decried the frequent use of blanket punishment by officers on the population of a yard. One example of behavior which impacts one's prison community came from Gretchen. I asked her for a piece of advice she would give to someone coming to Perryville. She offered "don't go to the bathroom during count." On minimum yards, women are not locked in a cell while officers verify that the correct people are held on their yard. She explained that not being in one's room during this time will result in an "out of area" ticket for the individual, but also delays the time for count to "clear." Until count clears, women are not allowed to leave their area to go to meals, get to their jobs, or attend their classes. Delays like these which may occur because a newcomer is unaware of count time protocol can affect her whole bay. Tina described the importance of concealing physical fights when women in orange seek to resolve interpersonal disputes with one another on higher custody yards (discussed in more detail in chapter 6). She contrasted women who engage

in fights in a private room with women who fight in public, saying "be an adult about it." Tina continued by explaining that the latter scenario would get the entire yard locked down which "its just a hassle." Women who have learned how to resolve personal disputes in a private space "like an adult" therefore, avoid causing problems for a whole yard. Stern conversations or frank warnings about the potential consequences of certain conduct were typical between mentors, moms, and friends to redirect new numbers who were "acting out of character" or behaving in an unacceptable manner.

Care was described by women in orange not just as part of a close relationship or found family group. Care for others was also reported to be a part of the community of people living at Perryville. One example comes from Stacy who described a friend who was undergoing cancer treatment at the prison. They had become friends when she arrived at the prison twenty years ago, but they lived in different bays "So I wasn't able to take care of her" when she started to develop symptoms. Stacy described the ways the other women in orange in a different housing bay cared for her friend:

> The women gathered around her and they helped her so much. She told me that they would help her to the bathroom, and they would help her back to bed. They would help make her bed, they would go get her water, they made hot water bottles, you know, for her stomach when she was in pain and everything. And then finally we found out it was the cancer. When she had her surgery, everybody, all the women around her helped her.

Stacy's friend didn't refer to these neighbors as friends or family members but did note the ways that they offered care for her when they saw that she was in need. Stacy and her friend were recently reunited in the same housing section, and she explained that she noticed similar caring behavior with other women who "needed assistance" as well. She said "It just seemed like all those women would come together and just help each and every one of them. You know, it was it

was nice to see." Stacy concluded, explaining that "We've built a network of caring for each other and uplifting" at the prison.

Care for women with serious mental health issues

A distinct form of care for others was provided by women in orange to other women with serious mental health issues at Perryville. Women with experience in the criminal legal system disproportionately struggle with mental health problems (Braithwaite, et al., 2006; Frost, et al., 2006). Indeed, fifteen people discussed concerns specifically about the population of people with serious mental illness, referred to as "SMI." Kelly shares:

> We have a lot of people walking around here who really don't belong in a prison, they belong in a hospital. You know what I mean? And sometimes, people don't understand how to treat someone like that, or how to interact with someone like that. And so that's another unfortunate part is, you know, sometimes people like that get bullied, but they also are well taken care of by others, too… We do our best to protect people like that. Doesn't always work.

Various women also expressed a combination of sadness and fear at being housed around women whose behavior was unpredictable and who weren't receiving the care they truly needed. Several other women in orange – including one woman who identified herself as SMI – described that the majority of the community engage in behavior that protects women with debilitating mental health issues. Women who otherwise kept out of drama often explained that they would get involved if they encountered bullying or belittling of women with these kinds of health issues. This is distinct from the kinds of care for others behavior previously described. Women offer material support to SMI people and sanction bad behavior from women in orange who bully them, but women with serious mental illness are rarely mentored or included in found family groups. A handful of women explained that they and others had tried to get an individual to keep to a hygiene schedule or to "take them under their wing" in other ways, but with little success. Instead, women with serious mental health concerns were typically "left alone." Care

for people with serious mental illnesses was typically described as routine care offered by the community, rather than in the relationship styles referenced earlier in the chapter.

When necessary, women in orange would get officers involved when they were concerned about the physical wellbeing of a person in mental health crisis. However, officers involved in interactions with SMI people on the yard were typically discussed as uncaring and harmful. Tara explains her concerns with the treatment of SMI women:

> They don't belong in prison. They belong getting they need help. They need actual help somewhere that they actually get help. This place is not helping them. Because when they act out when they get tickets, and it just, it raises their custody level, so then they go to close custody. And then those officers over there are just gonna treat them like shit.

Officers were typically described as part of the problem, treating unwell women with cruelty or writing tickets for admittedly inappropriate behavior, but which SMI women could not avoid. Indeed, Jackie, a woman with serious mental illnesses described her arrival to a medium custody yard despite only serving a one-year sentence for exactly this reason: she amassed too many tickets for behavior she couldn't avoid. She described her experience prior to her reclassification:

> With my disorder I talk to myself… but when I was there [on Minimum A], I actually got into several arguments because I'd be waking people up, because we all sleep in a warehouse type facility. Or I would offend people because I was using words of expression like the F word or the B word type thing. And that actually happened to me - I got a ticket because I was talking to myself and a Sergeant was behind me, and he was telling everybody to get out of the smoking section and I had made a comment to myself as to "Why do you have to be such a bitch?" Cuz I was thinking in my head and he [was] behind me, he thought I was talking to him so then he asked for my ID. So, I got a ticket.

Jackie explained to me that she was doing better on the higher custody yard because life was more regimented and she required reminders to go receive her daily medication or go to the kitchen to eat. However, a higher custody level presented additional issues for Jackie. For example, each yard at Perryville requires all people in orange to be in their space or cell twice a day so officers can get an accurate count of the number of people on the yard, a process simply

called “count.” Count on higher security yards involves locking women in orange inside their assigned cell until count “clears” – in other words, the number of bodies counted matches the number of women assigned to the yard. Jackie explained that she had to work very hard to not panic while locked down for count in her room. Certainly, for other women in orange struggling with serious mental illness too, high-security prison yards are not the healthiest place for them to be.

Women in orange with serious mental health issues were described by most not as part of the prison community like other women, but also not removed from it. SMI women were somewhat exempt from some of the conduct expectations among women in orange. For instance, women in interviews expressed frustration at disruptions caused by women in mental health crisis or the inability of some to maintain cleanliness of communal spaces, but these women were not subject to informal behavior correction efforts like others at the prison (such as fighting discussed more in chapter 6). They were not usually “taken under someone’s wing,” but instead it was an expectation of the prison community that women with serious mental health issues were monitored, assisted, and protected, albeit at arm’s length.

Taking care after a fight

While care is indeed a consistent value of members of the Perryville community, care and conflict are not mutually exclusive in this space. This paradox is evidenced not only in the ways that women in orange determine who to trust and offer family-style support to, but also in the aftermath of physical fights that occur at Perryville. Fighting is discussed in more detail in chapter 6, but interview participants described a phenomenon of paradoxical care occurring to conceal physical conflicts between women in orange which I refer to as ‘taking care behavior.’

Taking care behavior exhibits care for self, others, and the peace of the community that

exists in connection with violent and frightening fight situations. Several women in orange described similar types of caring behavior in the aftermath of a fight that have not been described in any previous literature on women's (or men's) prisons. One such woman, Tamara, recalled a situation wherein a woman was injured by another woman in orange.

> It was really bad. Two huge black eyes she couldn't even open her eyes like her nose was completely split open. The girl that actually had done the original beating had like set her nose back in place. Like it was really bad. So, she had a job, but they [other women in orange] would go check in for her. So, "She's really sick. She can't come to work today…." And I'm sure she was upset and ashamed, and just sad too. She just knew not to come out of her room. So, they made sure that she had food, not in a nice way just "Here's your meal" so you don't come out, because once you come out and they [the officers] see that they have to, they will do something about it. Like they'll try to figure out what happened. It's not like they'll turn a blind eye to something like that.

Tamara's account describes a situation of physical violence as well as care between women in orange. This kind of taking care behavior was described by many women who had spent time on higher custody yards. I use the term "taking care" to refer to people involved in a violent altercation concealing the physical damage they endured for the primary purpose of avoiding detection by officers. Kelly explains the rationale in this behavior more.

> For the most part, yeah. I mean, if you do have a black eye, you don't want anyone to see it. Because A, you don't want the inmate population to see it, because you don't want them to tell on you and B, you don't want obviously the officers to see it because you're getting a ticket. You know what I mean? So that definitely, I mean, if something like that happens then you try to avoid any attention."

Victims and perpetrators alike wear sunglasses and make-up to conceal their bruises after a fight. Interviewees recalled women who they never see wearing makeup around the yard one day wearing a full face of makeup, which they recognized as a concealment effort to take care of themselves. This is done primarily to avoid receiving a ticket, but for some victims who feel shame over the behavior that led to their injuries (women often cited snitches and thieves in this case) wanting to avoid detection by other women in orange as well.

Women in orange take care of themselves after a fight, but in some cases they also take care of one another in the aftermath of violence. Returning to Tamara's story, taking care after a fight also includes a woman with injuries from a fight not leaving her cell until she is healed, particularly for those with injuries that can't yet be concealed with makeup. In these situations, women are brought food by friends or roommates so they can avoid officers' eyes in the kitchen and coworkers explain fictious reasons why a woman is unable to work for the day. This conduct is certainly a type of caring but toes the line between compassion and threat. The perpetrator in Tamara's story reset her victim's nose as she describes – an example of care – but instructed her friend to take care of her and keep her in her cell for the time being – an order that is laden with threat. Indeed, intimidation was most commonly cited by interviewees as the rationale for an assaulted woman not leaving her cell.

Concealing fights was more common on higher custody yards, reportedly because of the privacy afforded by the two-person cells. As Tamara and others described, fights typically occur in those rooms, out of the eyesight of officers. Between the higher custody yards, elaborate taking care efforts appear slightly more common on medium custody. On mixed-high custody where fights are reportedly the most common, several of my interviewees said that people just walk around "owning" their black eye. When asked by officers what happened, women said they lie. Maria explains:

> Say they have to go to the kitchen to go eat. We're not allowed to wear hats or sunglasses inside the chow hall, so those things have to be taken off. So, they're not really concealed anymore. And an officer comes by like "Hey, what happened?" or whatever, and try to do an investigation. And you know, if the person is a solid person, meaning that they're not gonna say anything, they'll be like "Oh I tripped and fell, hit my head on the bunk" or something, you know they're gonna say something stupid and really, the officers can't do anything because they weren't present. The officer wasn't present at that moment in time when the incident happened, and that inmate is not willing to give up the grapes [share the details of what happened].

These elaborate “taking care of women” situations are not documented in accounts of men in prison and several interviewees noted that they understood this behavior to be common at women’s prisons in other states as well, at least anecdotally. This is likely related to the fact that women in prison get in fewer fights than men in prison (Harer & Langan, 2001; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003). So just as Tamara and Maria noted, when it’s clear that something violent happened, staff can and do respond to the relatively infrequent incidents with more vigor than perhaps they do at men’s prisons. Indeed, extant literature finds that women in prison receive more disciplinary infractions or “tickets” than men, but they are on average for far less violent issues, such as “being out of compliance” rather than being involved in a fight (Harer & Langan, 2001).

Taking care behavior after a fight foremost allows women in orange to engage in violence as interviewees argued was sometimes unavoidable without reaping the disciplinary consequences from staff. Though the violence and the intimidation inherent to the situation may be regarded as masculine behaivor, accounts of these circumstances also included some feminine description of care – most commonly ensuring that assaulted women were fed. Tina, for the example, also discussed women who were not involved in the fight following up with the victim of a fight, primarily if she were a new number. Tina described respecting women who walked into a room “knowing they were gonna get their ass handed to you” because they were accepting the consequences of their actions. She explained “To us even though the ass whopping was needed, we will still turn around and be like, ‘Hey, come here.’ You know, ‘You got hurt. Hey, don't do that again’.” Following a violent altercation then, victims in orange may receive caring behavior from friends and other members of the prison community. The provision of this care, like examples discussed in earlier chapters, is an aspect of doing femininity in a prison context.

In addition to protecting the people directly involved in the violence from receiving tickets, taking care behaivor and otherwise concealing a fight also protects the prison community on the yard from undergoing lockdowns and "knuckle checks," examining the hands of women in orange for evidence that they had been involved in a violent altercation. Marissa mentioned this protocol, explaining that "we will get locked down because they want to do knuckle checks because they fight real quick, and then they walk away. So they'd lock the whole yard down and go around and check." These were efforts by officers to determine who had been involved in the fight, and women in orange typically referred to these actions as annoying and disruptive. Tina, for example, expressed frustration at women who fight out in the open rather than concealed in a private room, explaining that "it'll get you locked down. It's just a hassle. I mean, come on, be an adult about it." By not abiding by the expected conduct to react to conflict in the prison, women in orange could disrupt the peaceful living of their community members, in effect failing to care for their community.

Care for others as care for the self

Caring for others was indeed an essential part of life at Perryville – for newcomers to learn the "ways of the prison," to meet their material needs, navigate the rules of the institution and as one woman put it "to learn who's to mess with and who's not to mess with." However, providing care for others not only assisted those around a woman in orange, but also served to fulfil roles and identities that were important to women outside of the prison as well. In Tamara's previous quotes, she explained that as she's gotten older, she's sought to love other people through mentorship and compassionate care. She also shared that she believes much of the manipulation and self-interested behavior that women in orange exhibit are a result of one's loss of identity in the prison.

> I don't know the correct word for it, but people are always pretending to be something they're not. And I think that comes with trying to find your identity in here, because we are just a number in here… from them [officers] treating us like that and that's what it has to be [to avoid inappropriately close relationships between officers and inmates], then you do lose your whole identity and that becomes hard trying to find that.

As Tamara described, women in orange often struggle to establish an identity in a foreign place at the prison, feelings which were echoed by other women in orange. Identity in a regimented space is discussed in detail in chapters 5 and 6, but one avenue by which identity is asserted by women in orange is in the care they provide to others. For Tamara, her identity was intricately linked to the care she provided to others - comprised of her provision of God Boxes to care for newcomers and in mentoring and mothering women in orange. Becoming a "prison mom," a spiritual leader, or a peer-led recovery program leader were common methods that women cared for others and established an identity for themselves at the prison. Caring roles like these gave women the feeling that their time spent in the prison was not wasted – they found a way to give back, to help others, and to learn more about themselves in the process.

Kathy, for example, teaches conflict resolution classes to other women in orange. These classes serve several purposes for her.

> I fill up my time with taking classes and trying to help other people. Because, you know, I'm a mom, I'm such a mom, you know what I mean? And so I think it's easy for me to just bring up those harder conversations with women and be like, "Why are you feeling like that?"

As a teacher, Kathy explained that she helps other women establish healthy boundaries and deal with difficult aspects of their past that may be impacting how they respond to conflict. But providing this kind of care also serves her – it helps her to both pass her time during her sentence and is an avenue by which she utilizes skills she established as a mother. Kathy does not have

anyone at the prison she considers family, but being a mom is important to her identity. Providing guidance to women in orange through her classroom fulfils part of this identity. Indeed, motherhood was mentioned by many women in orange as the reason behind the care they provide to others at the prison. Tamara, for example, assessed that "As you get older, you need to feel like you're helping and you're motherly." She explained this was the reason she mentored newer women at the prison, and further assessed that "I guess when you're younger, you're looking for love. And then when you're older now I'm trying to give love." Mentoring, mothering, and in other ways caring for others were often described as nurturing. Renee, who has almost completed her seventeen-year sentence, explained the purpose of nurturing in prison:

> There's other people on this yard that are moms. And I think with it being a long time down or whatever, and your family's out there it's just like, an instinct or something that makes you care.

Drawing on the idea of an "instinct," Renee indicated that her "prison mom" status came from how she parented on the outside. Herself a mother of five children, 15 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, Renee's deeply cherished her maternal identity on the outside. Renee continued:

> I've been down a long time, and I've missed out a lot on my kids' lives. And it's kind of like, you're nurturing children that are here, away from their families and away from their children… They need that shoulder to cry on or that person to direct them in a more positive way…. Maybe they did have that mother type thing, they're just missing their mom and they need somebody.

Taking on a maternal role for other women in prison not only allowed Renee to embody her motherhood, but she viewed it as an opportunity to mentor younger women. She reflected on this approach by saying she found it to be her "solace": "I think for me, it's because I've missed out

on a lot on my own children's lives that I find my solace." Women like Renee enacted their roles as mothers in prison, demonstrating both care for others and care for themselves.

Throughout my interviews, participants referred to women as "natural nurturers," (n=13) typically as they described the ways that women supported and cared for one another. Like Renee, several women in orange noted that since many of these natural nurturers were deeply hurting from missing out on raising their children and being with their biological families, the close connection to a small family-sized group fulfilled some of the needs of women in orange. They explained that they were thankful that someone else was willing to care for their biological children while they are separated from them and provided care for someone else's child in the prison out of respect and appreciation for this exchange. Again, care in prison serves those receiving care as well as those providing the care.

Summary

To summarize, women in orange were described as both caring and supportive, and manipulative and backstabbing. Women living in an environment with limited resources and a regular influx of new strangers had to learn to navigate who they could trust with their emotional needs and which people in need they could provide care to without being taken advantage of. Nearly a dozen women in orange described the atmosphere of the prison as one in which a person is on high alert and has to "watch your back" because one doesn't know what the women around them are capable of (see also Young & Haynie, 2022). However, most commonly, women in orange described the prison as "not that bad" and not at all what they had expected prior to their arrival. One woman summarized the atmosphere of Perryville by telling me "It's a horrible place to be, but it's not that bad."

Mentors and prison moms offered emotional and material support, as well as guidance in how best to do one's time to avoid violating formal and informal rules. Such deep, warm, and nurturing care was not extended by all women in orange to all others at the prison, but indications of care for others inside the prison were present in each interviewee's narrative. For women with serious mental illnesses, for instance, care did not often come through membership in a found family or mentoring relationship, but rather through protection offered to such women by the community of women at Perryville. The actions of women in this prison clearly are informed by their gender socialization – the ways that a woman may "do gender" outside of the prison walls are common methods by which women in orange react to the deprivations of the prison environment. Nurturing, care, and emotional work were clearly evident in the interview narratives and women in orange described many social supports and relationship styles that are distinct from those described in research with men in prison.

The ways that women in orange cared for one another were similar throughout Perryville, but also differed slightly between housing yards. Members of these communities had distinct goals related to their living situations and requirements, as well as expectations of conduct to ensure peace and comfort for community members. Finally, caring for others served not just the women in orange who were receiving support, but also served as a form of self-care and identity maintenance for women themselves. The next chapter focuses more closely on care for the self in terms of maintaining one's individuality and dignity in the regimented prison space.

CHAPTER 5: CARE FOR THE SELF

Narratives from the women in orange who I interviewed were full of examples of the ways in which care structures life in this women's prison. The previous chapter detailed the ways that care was given and received between women in orange in the prison community. In addition to interpersonal nurturance and care, women in orange also recounted the ways that they cared for themselves while incarcerated. In the current chapter, I turn to concepts of self-care among women in orange which was accomplished in a variety of ways by the women at Perryville. Mainstream understandings of self-care refer to a social movement which emphasizes holistic well-being and broadly refers to intentional actions a person does to be physically, mentally, and emotionally well (Myers et al., 2011). As will be discussed in detail, self-care among women in orange included attending to one's hygiene and cleanliness, navigating institutional rules regarding appearance to express one's individuality and femininity, and engaging in creative outlets to maintain a sense of wellbeing while confined.

Prisons are often understood to be total institutions, which seek to strip people of their identity (Goffman, 1961). Rather than recognizing people held in the prison as individuals, people in orange are often made to feel like a number in a system, devoid of unique identity. Wendy explained that officers "They don't care. You're just another person in orange to them… you're just a number to them. You're nobody." Though she said she didn't expect to be treated particularly well when she came to prison, the degree to which she felt she was stripped down to nothing by people working in the institution surprised her.

Appearance in compliance

Goffman also explained that inherent to the total institution is the removal of persons' identity tool kit – the items they used to express and assert their individuality. Individuality is

replaced by conformity, enforced by myriad rules within the institution. Many of the women I spoke to recognized that "breaking you down" and enforcing conformity were indeed goals of the prison. Stacy explained:

> They want us to conform. The clothes are the same, the hair is the same. Well one of the officers will tell you to conform, to blend in. Shouldn't notice you across the yard. You should not stand out. You're to conform to what they want you to be here. Your individualism is stripped from you and they do that to break you down I guess.

Like Stacy's account, regulations related to "appearance in compliance" were cited by most of the women as examples of the prison denying women in orange individuality. Appearance in compliance rules require that women in orange tie their hair back away from their eyes and ears, wear unaltered, rolled, or folded "oranges" with their shirts tucked into to their pants neatly, prison-issued photo ID visible on a lanyard, and other small attire mandates.[24] Acquiring tattoos, piercings, hair coloring, or other expressions of individuality at the prison are strictly forbidden. Women with dermal piercings recounted frequently being stopped by officers who questioned whether their piercing was in violation of regulation or not.[25] Indeed, just as Stacy explained, anything that made a person "stand out" was an invitation for harassment by officers over whether or not a woman's appearance warranted disciplinary action. Women with grey hair or colorfully dyed hair that was faded and outgrown often expressed frustration at their inability to color their hair. Tamara explained that some found creative solutions to this problem, however.

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[24] For example, wearing flip flops anywhere but in the shower, wearing shorts on the yard or outside of the bunk area, or not removing hats and sunglasses while inside buildings could result in a ticket for being "out of compliance".

[25] A dermal piercing is a single-point piercing embedded in the skin without an exit point. These piercings cannot be removed without medical, surgical intervention and therefore are typically allowed among individuals who arrive to the prison with the piercing. See https://cldc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Transdermal-Subdermal-Piercings.updated.pdf for more information.

> There are women who you know they color their hair with Kool-Aid, because the juice packets will stain your hair red. [Or] trying to cover up your gray with the coffee. There's things that people do especially as we get older because we're getting gray hair.

Hair color is certainly a piece of a person's identity toolkit, linked to self-expression and identity or individuality. When I asked Kathy if she did anything to express her femininity at the prison, she explained that she was partly relieved that she didn't feel pressure to do her makeup every day at the prison, but complained about her grey hair, saying "I wish I could dye my hair, but I can't." For some, therefore, this inability to maintain one's hair color of choice was a detraction from their femininity.

Regulations on appearance also restricted haircuts and styles. All people housed at Perryville are required to have their hair tied back away from their eyes and ears, and many expressed frustrations that there were "only so many ways to do your hair up". Several women explained that unless one arrives to the prison with short cut hair – "like a boy" as they described it – shaving one's head could result in a ticket because it had "altered your appearance." Other hairstyles like a mohawk or an undercut were considered "radical hairstyles" and were also strictly forbidden by policies related to "appearance in compliance." Shannon has been incarcerated since they were seventeen years old. Now in their forties, they described to me their long waging battle against the rules regarding "radical hairstyles."

> I have been messed with because of my hair so many times. Because they're always trying to say that I try to do radical hairstyles and radical hairstyles are not allowed. And the funny thing to me is that in policy, all it says is "no radical hairstyles," but that is so vastly left up to interpretation by the individual. So, like what one person considers radical somebody else considers totally normal, you know what I mean?

While many of the rules regarding appearance left little room for interpretation (e.g. shirt tucked in, hair away from the face), women in orange and officers didn't have a definition to rely on for assessing whether a hairstyle qualified as "radical." Enforcement of this rule, therefore, was at

the discretion of the officer and the uncertainty was frustrating to people in orange like Shannon. Prison research often recounts the ways by which uncertainty in the prison presents a deprivation of security (Sykes, 1958; Owen, 1998).

Enforcing conformity in hairstyle is certainly a feature of the total institution Goffman (1961) had described, but Shannon continued to explain how they have been able to express their identity and personal style through their hair while also avoiding arguments with officers. For example, at one point, they wore their hair in an undercut fashion, where "[the top] was longer and it was like, in a ponytail and like, [the sides] was shaved. And I would do like super cute little things with it." However, because the length of hair differed so drastically, Shannon was told their hair violated rules regarding appearance. "I've had to tame it down to you know, because they want to threaten you with tickets for so called radical hairstyles." To remedy the violation presented by their undercut, they kept the sides shaved but shorted the length of the hair at the top of their head. However, still they faced harassment from officers who "were trying to say that it was a mohawk." Begrudgingly, Shannon next let the sides of their hair grow in and has kept it in more of a subtle fade hairstyle. Wearing their hair in this way had not yet attracted attention from officers concerned about radical hairstyles. Shannon's lengthy struggle to find a hairstyle that they were comfortable in and that allowed them to live comfortably avoiding pestering from officers is an example of the ways that people in orange care for themselves and their identity in a regimented space like prison which seeks to enforce conformity in appearance.

Indeed, hair style is an important expression of identity for many and is one component of a person's identity tool kit that is diminished if not eliminated in a prison. Some of my interviewees noted that hair styling was also one way that race moderated the ways that women in orange lived in prison. Women reported that they were only able to wear their hair in more

than one braid if they were Native or Black, which they claim was not a part of official prison policy, but a rule enforced by officers at their discretion. Therefore, a few of the women I spoke to who identified as mixed race recounted frequent harassment while wearing braids by officers who did not recognize them as one of these "appropriate" races. Monica describes this predicament:

> What's annoying is when we want to have, like, your hair braided into like pigtails or whatever or multiple braids that they tell you that you're not allowed to because of our race. Like, you have to be like African American or Native and I looked at them and I'd be like, "I am Native." And they just looked at me, just because I look like I'm full white. So, they're very discriminating.

Women like Monica who did not fit into officers' expectations of racial appearance were cut-off from expressing their racial identity through the wearing of braids. Therefore, caring for one's racial identity and self-expression could be a struggle in the prison as well.

While most of the women in orange described maintaining a sense of identity in the regimented, authoritarian prison space as difficult, some simply explained "I'm just me", indicating that while they couldn't dress, talk, and do things the way they would have preferred, maintaining a sense of self wasn't an arduous endeavor. Indeed, eleven women asserted that the prison does *not* strip a person's identity, unless perhaps the person let it. These women explained that in contrast to other women, they had "strong personalities" and that women who feel the institution strips them of their identity are likely either "weak minded" or people who need to be stripped down to rehabilitate. Rhonda exemplifies some of these sentiments, sharing:

> I still have little pieces of me in here…. It's just your outside appearance that they take from you. But the rest of it they can't. They can't take your mind. They can't take your heart. They can't take your values. They can't take - I mean maybe if you let them or if you get caught up with certain people in here you I guess you could change for the worse, but just keep it real you know? You know who you are when you come in here unless there's things that need to change. Just stay the same person. I just don't have nice shoes or a pedicure.

Rhonda's account is powerful. She previously described herself as "strong-willed" and while

recognizing that there is the potential for people to lose themselves in the prison, she asserts that caring for oneself by staying true to oneself is possible while doing time. Her ability to preserve her identity in this way is an example of self-care in prison. She acknowledges the ways that the prison attempts to take a person's individuality and identity but points out that the rules of the institution are limited to enforcing conformity in appearance.

The capacity of the prison to regulate conformity and examples of resistance to these efforts by people in prison have been documented in much of the prison adaptation literature. Again, rather than framing these actions as agency, substitution, or resistance, we might interpret these actions as self-care. Many women explained that they did not attempt to express individuality or femininity through their appearance because they didn't see it as worth the effort or worth the risk of a ticket. Carrie, a woman who has spent many of her eleven years at Perryville on close custody explained, "I'm always in compliance, like they don't even - it's easier for me to live in peace and relative comfort if I don't have officers always having to correct me." Despite their conformity, though, women in compliance did not view themselves as mere numbers in the prison, stripped of their identity and dignity. Rather, their conformity to the rules was a form of self-care wherein they chose to prioritize their "peace and relative comfort," to spend their time engaged in school, work, programming, or self-transformation (discussed in chapter 6) rather than in maintaining the social expectations of appearance that were still often important to them on the outside. Research on women in prison have framed similar examples of conformity as agency and compliance as a method of accomplishing personal – rather than institutional – goals while incarcerated (Lempert, 2016). Most of the "compliant" women in orange, like Carrie, did not frame compliance as a sacrifice of identity or acceptance of conformity to the prison regime. Again, care for the self in a prison which is designed to strip

one's identity is not only accomplished via modes of friction (Rubin, 2015) or resistance. For some, self-care is the decision to appear in compliance to avoid confrontations with staff and tickets which threaten access to privileges during one's sentence.

Femininity in prison

Existing works frequently report ways in which people confined in prisons who are stripped of their identities find creative ways to exert some control over their self-presentation and demonstrate their gender via clothes, hair, and accessories despite institutional regulations (Dye & Aday, 2019; Giallombardo, 1966; Kunzel, 2008; Owen, 1998). Self-expression is indeed self-care, whether it is an expression of personality, racial, ethnic, sexual, or gender identity, or other aspects of individuality. Traditional femininity includes being "loving, caring, and nurturing" (Schaffner, 2006, p. 123) and these methods of "doing gender" have been described in chapter 4 in how women in orange care for others. Femininity also can be expressed not just through caring for others, but also in caring for the self through appearance. Indeed, "emphasized femininity" in particular involves doing gender by appearing attractive (Connell, 1987) and some of the women at Perryville did value "looking good." However, roughly half of the interview participants described feminine self-care by other means. Seven of my participants did not identify as feminine, but of those who did identify as feminine, many women in orange told me they "didn't care" about expressing femininity in prison (n=23 out of 49), most citing their nonuse of makeup as testimony. Many of these women in orange engaged in feminine displays on the outs, but not in prison.

Femininity and self-care were described as connected in many interview narratives. For example, Anna explained that she understood "the body washed and the smelling good stuff" that could be purchased in the prison "those are self-care" but went on the describe their overlap

with femininity as well. “I feel like that’s femininity, in particular like the retinol cream and they offer like a dark spot remover, like yes, that's cosmetic, and you want to take care of that, but also I feel like that's good skincare.” The interplay of femininity and self-care in appearance is discussed further in this section.

Feminine self-care at Perryville was accomplished in two (mutually non-exclusive) avenues: in compliance or ‘modes of friction’ (Rubin, 2015). Femininity in compliance was accomplished by utilizing the products available for purchase on the store and often involved some customization of the products to improve their quality for an individual. Women in orange must have their hair tied back and for those that prefer to keep their hair slicked back while tied up, their access to effective products were limited. Veronica described her roommates’ innovative use of denture cream to care for her hair while incarcerated.

> Because her hair’s so thick and coarse she improvises and instead of using gel she uses denture cream... She gets really hot water and she gets the denture cream and she kind of makes it like a paste… But for her hair to stay in place she literally has to use denture cream.

The hair gel and denture cream that Veronica mentioned are products available for purchase on the store. She also noted that some women use toothpaste rather than the hair gel or melt down Jolly Rancher candies to use in place of the hairspray available on the store. Complaints about the quality and effectiveness of hair and body care products on the store were common in my interviews.

The most common examples of expressing femininity in one’s appearance while remaining in compliance was through the use of makeup, fragrance, and “matching oranges.” Though access to cosmetics is not a right of people in carceral facilities protected by any federal policy, the provision of cosmetics in prisons is often cited by advocates and people in prison as essential to maintaining one’s self-esteem and dignity (see Kanner-Mascolo, 2023). Some of the

women in orange echoed these claims, like Veronica who frequently did her makeup. She explains:

> Makeup makes me feel good. It makes me feel human. It makes me feel like you know, I'm somebody you know?... For me, it's like my motivation, so to speak. You know what I mean? Like it makes me feel good about me. It makes me you know, especially because I am bipolar, manic depressive and my moods fluctuate and stuff like that. I like to do my hair and do my makeup and make myself feel real.

Veronica viewed her hair and makeup routine as part of self-care for her mental health and self-esteem. Prison is a difficult place to cope in, – especially for a person with a serious mental illness as Veronica described herself – but engaging in a hyperfeminine routine helped some to "feel real" or "like somebody" in a space that could strip a person down to their inmate number. Five women in orange reported that they regularly wear makeup on the yard, including Jill, a white woman in her mid-fifties who was new to the prison. She also equated her use of makeup to self-care.

> I don't act my age and I don't like to look my age. I have, you know, like I say all my kids and my grandkids I try to stay as young as I can for their benefit. And I don't want to just let myself go. You know? I gotta you got to - I've been through a lot. I have to try to look at the best way I can. If that's what makes me feel good, then that's what I do.

Jill explains that her use of makeup is self-care because it "makes her feel good" but also she cites her maternal identity as rationale for her use of cosmetics. Structured action theory asserts that "doing gender" is not only unavoidable in social contexts, but that "we are accountable to others for our gendered actions" (Messerschmitt, 1995, p. 171). Appearing feminine and looking "the best way one can" for Jill accomplishes self-care in that it "makes her feel good" but also accomplishes gender action in the social context of visitation with her family. For Lori, looking her best during visits was something she did for her children more than herself. Lori was a woman in her fifties who, despite being separated from her children for more than two decades,

spoke about her identity as a mother as of paramount importance to her throughout our interview. She explained her use of makeup in this way:

> Whenever I have visitation, of course, I do, you know, wear my makeup. You know, you have to represent when your family comes to see you, you have to represent who you are. No matter how you feel. You have to put that poker face on. Because your family when they come, they got to see you as you. You can't be this it's broken-down, beat-up person. Even if you feel that way cannot go up there like that.

To Lori, makeup was essential to demonstrate to her children that their mother was healthy and strong and had not been "broken down" by her time in prison, even if sometimes it was just a façade. In this way, feminine self-care was used as a signal to others that one cares for that a person is doing well.

Several women explained that due to the low quality of the makeup, busy prison life schedules, and having "no one to impress," they typically only "got ready" or engaged in feminine hair and make-up routines for job interviews, visitation with loved ones, and for our interview. Kelly was a woman in her thirties who has been incarcerated for most of her adult life. She described herself as a feminine person, but as she worked a manual labor job at the prison, she prioritized functionality rather than femininity in her daily appearance. "During the week, I just go to work and come home, you know what I mean," Kelly began. To remind herself of her femininity while incarcerated, she described her weekend routine with friends:

> On the weekends, me and my friends have always had this tradition of like, we get ready on the weekends, we put makeup on, we do our hair, we put on, you know, decent clothes. And it's just, it's not like we can go anywhere. But just to kind of, like, get that sense of like, okay, it's Saturday. And we're gonna we're just going to go play cards. You know what I mean? But we're gonna look our best while we do it, because we have to remember that we can still look good.

Kelly's weekend routine allowed she and her friends to engage in feminine routines they enjoyed while outside of prison. 'Getting ready' by putting on makeup and wearing orange clothes that

were nicer than their work clothes donned during the week was an opportunity to express their femininity and care for their sense of self by reminding them that they "can still look good."

Doing gender (Messerschmidt, 1993) is indeed a framework by which femininity is accomplished within the prison regulations on appearance. However, the decisions made by feminine women in orange regarding their appearance were not universally centered around feminine appearance. For example, when Kelly worked other office jobs at the prison in the past, she would spend time in her morning routine doing her hair and makeup to look "professional," but not unlike one would expect of a woman on the outside, she didn't see the point of "getting ready" (which is how many women in orange referred to the feminine make-up/hair routine) to work a "dirty" job. Indeed, it was common that women, especially those who didn't work off the prison yard, said they didn't care about looking feminine through the use of make-up and hairstyling (n=23). Many shared with me that there was "no one to impress here." As each woman lived around and interacted with hundreds of other people every day living in the prison, I asked several for clarification on this feeling. Some explained that they didn't care about the opinion of "criminals," others noted that everyone looks pretty much the same anyway since all are required to appear "in compliance." A few explained that these are the people they live with and there was no reason to "get ready" when every day is the same routine around the same people. Carol, a white woman in her forties who had been at the prison for a year, expands on these feelings:

> I feel like there's nobody to impress here. Not like I'm trying to impress anybody out there. But let's say you have to go for a job interview or you're going into public or so you have to make an impression a little bit. In here, there's nobody that I feel I need to impress. I mean, you see those people every day. So, it's like, they see you when you wake up with stinky breath, you know, before you take a shower coming home dirty from work. Basically, every which way they see you. When you're sleeping, drooling, you know, like there's no reason to try and impress anybody.

Goffman (1961) described the ways that persons held in total institutions experience a

"mortification of the self," meaning that one's identity is degraded because of the restrictions imposed by the rules regarding appearance and conduct. I came to understand that, just as women outside don't typically do their hair and makeup to spend time around their home with their cohabitants, even for women in orange who valued feminine displays on the outs, ignoring these displays inside wasn't necessarily a "mortification" of their femininity. Neither does the "doing gender" (Messerschmidt, 1993; 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987) framework explain such actions. Rather, it was a rational decision that sought to carve out as much comfort as possible in an environment that was largely devoid of it – an act of self-care.

Makeup is a way that many women in orange expressed their individuality, engaged in familiar feminine routines, and improved their confidence while in prison. In our interviews, women mentioned eyeshadow, mascara, and foundation most commonly – items that were available for regular purchase on the store. However, these offerings often overlooked the needs of women of color. While many of the women I spoke to mentioned enjoying the fact that they were able to buy make-up while incarcerated, it was roughly halfway through my interviews before I spoke to Tamara, a Black Hispanic woman who has spent six years of an eleven and half year sentence on different housing units at Perryville. She noted that she couldn't wear the foundation they offered as the store only carried foundation for light skin.[26] She went on to explain:

> Sometimes we have ethnic fundraisers, is what they call it (laughs). Those are really expensive. It will be like selling beauty supplies in the ethnic section. And then we get products for our hair and stuff that you can't buy off the store because the store is really geared for just for white people. Like even the hair products. We can't get hair products for us.

[26] Admittedly, the issue of access to darker shades of foundation has been a criticism of the beauty industry – not just Perryville prison – for decades (see Werle, 2019 for more).

Race, therefore, impacted the ability of women in orange to utilize makeup and access hair care products to express femininity or engage in self-care at the prison.[27] Most women relied on fundraisers to stock up on higher quality shampoos, soaps, and deodorants, but for women, especially Black women, the fundraisers were even more essential for providing them access to products such as foundation that matched their skin tone. Fundraisers were offered approximately once a quarter and the products offered varied. Many were hygiene fundraisers through which women could buy brand-name hair and skin care products (some of which offered an "ethnic section") while others offered unique food items, linens, or other products.

Femininity expression was not limited to the use of cosmetics or the styling of one's hair, however. Other aspects of personal grooming were also mentioned in interviews. Some women complained that they couldn't engage in nail care like they did outside of prison. Interviewees told me that fingernails must be kept short so they cannot be used as weapons in a fight. Fingernails cannot be painted, though no one indicated why this was the policy. Nail polish or acrylic paints that could potentially be used as varnish were not allowed in the prison. Women in orange have access to safety razors and a few mentioned removing hair from their legs and underarms as part of their feminine grooming routine. Very common among my participants was eyebrow grooming. Women in orange are not permitted to have tweezers, but they had found an innovative solution to continue manicuring their eyebrows. The only hygiene products women in orange are provided at no cost are feminine hygiene products including tampons. Kelly explained that "if you open up a tampon and you spread it, there's a little part at the top where you can pull, it releases the string. There's thread inside of the tampon string, and you can pull it all out and

[27] The prison store did sell durags, which help protect curly hair, and hair relaxers or "perms," which aim to break down the curl of hair.

it's the perfect eyebrow string." Using this thread, women learn a threading technique to sculpt their eyebrows and remove other unwanted hairs. Caring for one's feminine appearance was indeed limited by the prison, but women in orange found ways to care for themselves in this way while incarcerated.

Another avenue women in orange made their appearance more feminine while staying within the bounds of compliance was to "match their oranges." An informational handbook from ADCRR's website stated that:

> ADC issues all State clothing items, including boxer shorts, socks, underwear, T-shirts, bras, smocks, pants, and work boots as well as lined coats during the winter months. An inmate may purchase additional clothing items from the inmate store. Upon release, the inmate may not take these clothing items home (*Constituent Services Informational Handbook,* 2022, p. 15).

A few women explained that they refused to waste money on the cheap clothing items that they were allowed to purchase. Many others believed this to be an essential practice though, some expressing disgust at the thought of wearing used undergarments and others describing the grim state of many of the state-issued clothing items. Purchasing clothes, therefore, offered a sense of control in a place that was largely devoid of feelings of ownership. Almost all women in orange reminded me that the shirts, pants, and shoes were all unisex sizes, made to fit men but assigned to women as well. Purchasing clothes also offered the opportunity to find items that happened to fit slightly better than others or with varying shades of orange. This is the process of "matching oranges" that was described to me by many of my interviewees. Erica engaged in this orange matching process and explained some nuances of the matching process.

> So, I know the color orange is the color orange. However, there's different kinds of oranges. So, you have a matching outfit… We have our visitation outfit, we have our yard outfit, we have our work outfit, we have our workout outfits, we have different outfits for different occasions…, but it's all still the same color, but a different kind of orange.

Within the limits on color, women in orange pay close attention to the shade of their clothes to create intentional outfits, a way to care for their appearance and exert some control over their ensemble. Erica continued to explain that this attention to detail in outfit curating wasn't limited only to the shade of the orange, but also to the fit of the clothing items.

> Like for work, my pants are a little bit more loose so I can move around more comfortably. And my visitation clothes [are] more snug because I'm a woman, I'm a mother and I need my children to know that I'm still your mom….

Erica touched on two different points in the above quote. First, she explained the way that she uses the size and fit of her clothes to create an outfit that matches. She also notes that her outfits are curated to serve different purposes. Like Erica, others explained that her work clothes fit looser on her body to improve her range of movement while she had "nicer oranges" which tended to be brighter and fit more attractively. Nicer oranges were reserved for visitation, photo opportunities during holidays, and, at least for one woman, her college graduation at the prison. Matching oranges allowed women to feel more comfortable and confident while wearing clothes they were not able to choose. Erica continued to describe her clothes in this way.

> And so I'm comfortable in my clothes, but however it has let me know if I can look this good in this color orange in the same outfit everyday pretty much, can you imagine… how I'm gonna look in my attire out there? If you look this good in prison, you can look this good or better out there.

Erica laughed as she said this, but her point is salient – by working within the confines of the prison attire regulations, women in orange used their outfits to express themselves, "do gender," improve their comfort, and feel more confident.

Outfit curation in prison is not as straight forward as it is for people shopping in a department store, however. Women in orange don't shop for clothes off of racks, but rather by filling out their "bubble sheet" to order items from the store. Items varied in fit, material, and shade, so women often had to purchase several of the same product to curate their matching

outfits. Robbie, a transman who had spent five years at the prison explains the process of finding desirable shirts:

> When you buy clothes here, you never know what you're gonna get because they come in various like, materials and sizes and stuff. So, I go like, there's certain shirts that I like, because they're like a thicker material... And so I'll be like buying shirts trying to get those shirts.

Like makeup and hairstyling, matching oranges served as self-care in improving a person's self-image and allowing some autonomy into a mostly regimented life. It also, like Erica described, served to signal to people on the outs during visitation that a woman in orange was managing her confinement without losing herself.

Fragrance was a common way that women in orange expressed their femininity - or masculinity for those who identified as such - in prison. Some women used religious essential oils that were available for purchase on the store for their feminine fragrances. One woman, Mary, even used these oils to create perfumes.

> We're able to buy these essential oils, they're actually mainly for religious purpose, but they're wonderful to mix and make perfumes and also scents for your room. And so, I do that because I feel more feminine whenever I know that I smell nice (laughs). Yeah, so I make, I try different combinations and sometimes I'll look through magazines, and let's say, you know, some magazine is talking about some of the ingredients that that particular scent has. And so, I'll try to duplicate it…

Fragrance is a way to perform femininity and also is an indicator of self-care. Julia, a Hispanic woman just over thirty years old who had served four years said that she used the essential oils like Mary had and that she also would buy and dilute bodywashes to extend the use of the feminine and clean scent they provide.

> We kind of make our own concoctions… to make us smell nice. We try to be as feminine as possible. It's just to me, I'm very hygienic. So, hygiene to me it goes hand in hand with femininity, because I want to make sure I smell good, look good, feel good.

Julia explained that for her, like many women, the specialty hygiene items that could be

purchased on occasional fundraisers which smelled good made her feel better and even cleaner than the standard hygiene items available for purchase on the store. Many women, like Julia, mentioned seeking out these fundraiser body washes with hyperfeminine scents (or Old Spice for a masculine scent) which they often diluted with water in an old hairspray bottle to create body and room sprays.

Indeed, the use of fragrance in carceral facilities has also been discussed in extant literature. For example, an officer mentioned in Sufrin's (2017) book explained that she enticed women at the jail who resisted taking a shower to take care of their hygiene by providing them with "hyperfeminine upgrades" such as Bath and Body Works soaps. Furthermore, Baer (2005) notes the importance of air fresheners in some young male carceral facilities in the UK, positing that they serve as a connection to a familiar scent as well as to declare that the resident of this cell values cleanliness, which make the products worthy of display. The fragrance of a familiar scent may also provide a temporary escape from the prison (Sloan, 2012). Indeed, even women on yards without washing machines would often purchase dryer sheets to hang in their cells as air fresheners as it made their room smell "like home".

Women bought familiar product brands like Olay, Dove, and Old Spice, often at a massive markup on the fundraisers because the scent was familiar and feminine. Rhonda was one of the women in orange who explained the fundraiser pricing to me. "What they do is they double the price because it's fundraiser. So, shampoo is 16, 17 bucks, and then they're gonna charge you another 17 bucks on top of that." This price-doubling was how the fundraiser raised money for the charities they were put on to support, but it meant, as Rhonda continued to describe, that "One bottle [of] Garnier shampoo, it's 35 bucks just for the shampoo. So, you're spending 70 bucks for a bottle of shampoo and a bottle of conditioner." Though many women

explained to me that they relied on these expensive products for the scent they provide and also for the higher quality of the product, they also noted that numerous women were not able to afford these items without receiving funds from people outside of the prison. For context, people held in ADCRR facilities can make between 10 and 50 cents per hour working jobs within the prison, such as groundskeeping, maintenance, janitors, and kitchen workers.[28] It would therefore take 700 hours of work for women earning an entry-level salary without outside financial assistance to purchase the Garnier shampoo and conditioner Rhonda mentioned.

Women in orange also found modes of friction (Rubin, 2015) against the rules of appearance to care for themselves by expressing some individuality, feeling more confident and feminine in what they were wearing, and overall to improve their mood and self-esteem. Such violations of the rules of the prison have been described as "secondary adjustment" (Goffman, 1961), and "resistance" (Bosworth, 2000; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Lempert, 2016). Ashley Rubin, however, uses the term friction to refer to these "reactive behaviors that occur when people find themselves in highly controlled environments" (2015, p. 24). While resistance may refer to actions that seek to dismantle and undermine the goals of order within the prison system (e.g. protests, riots, etc.), she argues that modes of friction are actions that "render power incomplete" in a regimented space, but which don't fall at such an extreme end of the resistance spectrum. This concept of friction, therefore, can be used to describe the self-care actions people in confinement, including the women in orange I spoke with, engage in to endure their sentence.

One such mode of friction identified by women in orange was regarding appearance in compliance, commonly through altering one's clothes. It is against policy to roll, fold or tailor

[28] A small number of people qualify for 'retention jobs' which are contracts with companies outside of the prison through Arizona Correctional Industries. These positions provide workers with larger wages. For example, one industry mentioned by several of my participants, Televerde, pays incarcerated employees the state-minimum wage of $12.80 per hour.

prison clothes, even those that a woman has purchased herself. Many interviewees reported that women will tailor their pants to be "like skinny jeans" which is sometimes overlooked but can result in a ticket for destruction of state property and being out of compliance. Only one woman I spoke to shared that she had all of her clothes tailored. Melissa, a white woman in her thirties who had been at the prison about a year, chuckled as she told me about her tailored wardrobe. She explained that she paid other women in orange to have her shirts brought in along the sides to be a tight fitted style and her pants tightened to be in the skinny jean style.[29] She also wore her hair down and her stocking cap on during our interview. Several other women shared that they used to own altered clothes – often they were given them from friends on the yard – but explained that they got rid of them after they came too close to receiving a ticket.

Others explained that they wore altered clothes, but not tight fitting with the goal of showing off their silhouette like skinny jean pants and fitted shirts do. Instead, it was a necessary adaptation to the poor fit of the clothing items offered. Jill explained "I wear my pants to fit but I don't want them to look like they're my pants are painted on." She continued to disconnect her clothes altering from femininity as well, saying, "it's not so much feminine, but it just, nobody wants to be walking around with the crotch part of your pants hanging down to your knees, they want to be comfortable and they want clothes that fit." Other women, like Jill, explained that without minor tailoring their pant legs would drag on the ground because they were too long for their legs or they would resemble "hammer pants" or "clown pants" as the legs were also very wide. Monica, for example, said that while she used to alter her clothes, she has since limited her use of tailored clothing items to avoid getting in trouble.

[29] Melissa reported that she paid roughly $3 to have each pair of pants altered, and $2 per shirt on the informal tailoring market. Women in orange do not have access to sewing machines at Perryville, so tailoring is done by hand.

> I still do my pants but not my shirts because I rather not get that ticket no more. But I'm very tiny, so I just decide to do my pants and my shirts the way they are, but my sweat suit, yes I have to. It's like a parachute if I don't.

Monica wore her t-shirts and pants as they arrived from state-issue, but the sweatpants that she purchased she explained she has tailored to fit her because they arrive too large for her small frame. Altering clothes for most women in orange, like Monica, was simply so the woman didn't look "ridiculous" in the clothing she was required to wear. Therefore, this mode of friction provided women in orange with some dignity and cared for the self.

Melissa not only wore only altered clothes, but she also wore her hair down and kept her hat on while inside during our interview. Each of these choices regarding her appearance could "catch her a ticket" – especially because she was housed on a minimum yard – but the risk was worth it to her because it "makes me feel more like I'm on the outside." Indeed, some officers were stricter about enforcing appearance in compliance rules and these rules were universally reported to be enforced more heavily on the minimum-security yards. In an earlier quote, Erica explained why this difference occurs, asserting that staff on higher custody yards "have much more serious problems to worry about" but that minor appearance violations "are major things for minimum because that's their biggest problem."

Emily was living on a higher security yard when we spoke. She, like others explained that not having to worry about the "nitpicking" from officers about appearance in compliance rules was a perk of the higher custody level. She said "On the weekends, most of the time, no, I don't wear my hair up. I go out to smoke and I go back into my room. And I'm low key, I don't cause no problems." Though this mode of friction did leave the potential for an officer to exercise their discretion and give a woman a ticket, accounts on higher-security yards suggest this was not a frequent issue. Erica pointed out that this leniency was limited to within a person's

housing yard, though. She explained that “to leave out of our yard, yeah, your hair has to be tied back, because if a sergeant sees you, most likely you're gonna be getting a ticket.” Women housed on higher-security yards did not routinely leave the gates of their yard for things like work assignments or medication. This level of captivity was one reason Erica and others gave for the leniency from officers – their opportunity to escape was low and therefore the risk presented by being slightly out of compliance was also deemed low by officers. Therefore, expressing one’s femininity or other identity by ignoring these conformity rules was a more accessible self-care option for women housed on higher security units.

Another mode of friction came from personalizing other uniform items. Though Susan did not personally do anything that constituted this kind of friction, she noted several examples she had seen in her time at Perryville, such as people who had “put a design on their cup or put a sticker on their television... color in the stripes on their flip flops or whatever.” She continued to compare these modes of friction to those engaged in by school children as well. “I think about boarding school or whatever, you know, parochial school where you do stuff with your uniform. It's the same thing. Just all different things just to, you know, have a little individuality.” Susan’s assessment highlights that self-care through modes of friction are not unique to prisons, but, as Rubin (2015) posited, to persons held in controlled environments, including those who attend school with uniform requirements. Another example of friction within the uniform was provided by Anna who had put a sticker on the back of her ID that read “fearless female.” The juxtaposition of this tiny decoration adorning the reminder that she was viewed by the institution as another number in the system is a salient example of how friction actions are indeed self-care.

Several women also explained how they made their glasses more fashionable. Women who entered the prison with glasses were allowed to keep them, so glasses wearers who served

short sentences at Perryville may have unique frames that they had selected and purchased prior to their sentence. However, for those who need glasses issued to them while at Perryville, the options for frames were limited, typically with thin reddish-brown frames that most didn't consider ideal choices. One innovative solution was for women in orange to purchase sunglasses available on the prison store, which came with thick black wayfarer style frames. Women who had prison-issued eyeglasses could then pop the lenses out of the undesirable reddish-brown eyeglasses' frames and fit them perfectly into the more pleasant sunglasses frames. Though this alteration of the eyeglasses was not allowed by the prison, no one I interviewed recalled a situation where this frequently used modification resulted in a ticket. This too is an example of exerting control over self-appearance in a space that restricts self-care through appearance.

Expressions of femininity, whether they were rebellious or in compliance were described by some of the older women as "for the youngsters." While discussing altering clothes, Stacy explains:

> I don't think there's anything wrong with feeling pretty, you know, and wearing clothes that fit you like a sack is not, you know, it's not their idea. But I'm old, I don't give a shit. I sure as hell am not going to put on makeup and dress up in prison. I don't care enough. This is this my vacation time. But for the younger ones, it makes them have a sense of self-worth so I don't understand why officers will go off on them for having their pant legs rolled or tucked or you know? Oh come on. What is wrong with that?

Stacy said that outside of prison she would wear a skirt and heels when she went to work and refers to her time in prison as her "vacation time," suggesting that prison offered her a break from the gendered expectations of appearance prevalent outside of the prison. While incarcerated, she didn't need to put on makeup or try to get dressed up to feel presentable. Stacy's self-care while in prison, therefore involved not engaging in feminine displays. However, her account recognizes the importance of these modes of friction for other women in orange.

Cleanliness

One area of self-care that was universally described as important to women in orange was hygiene and cleanliness. This was partly an element of community culture and shared expectations – living in such close quarters, poor hygiene or room cleanliness impacts not just the one person – and it was also another regulation aspect of prison life. Women in orange who failed to make their bed, keep their room's trashcan empty, and organize their few possessions neatly risked receiving a "704 violation," which referred to the institutional code used by officers on tickets. Beyond these requirements though, many of the women I spoke to described a routine which included showering, cleaning their cell floor, and doing laundry daily.[30] One small study of cleanliness in a men's prison indicates that extreme cleaning of one's space in prison could be a method of exerting ownership of the space. Jennifer Sloan writes:

> "…adding a fresh coat of paint… gave the appearance of newness thereby mitigating the impact of the numerous previous occupants in terms of undermining the individuality of the cell's current occupant. This enabled the participant to exert a form of control and ownership over the space that promoted his personality within the collective context. This was added to through the employment of personal possessions and signifiers of self, such as pictures of the family or religious markers which acted as reminders of the outside and positive experiences, coping mechanisms, and indicators of personal identity – thus a form of ownership of space. (2012, p. 405-406)."

Though women in orange did not have the opportunity to paint their cell walls, caring for one's living space through regular cleaning may still accomplish the same sense of ownership. Women in orange who failed to maintain cleanliness of themselves or the communal spaces (e.g. showers) were described as either people who "didn't care about anything" or, more commonly, people who were dealing with serious mental illnesses and who couldn't manage such hygienic practices. Furthermore, women did indeed display personal items such as photos of family,

[30] Several women described the cleaning schedule they had worked out with their bunkie which dictated who washed the floors or did their laundry on which days or which times of each day to ensure mutual order and cleanliness.

drawings, even occasionally empty containers from products purchased at the prison as a means of decorating the space.[31] Care was part of these décor decisions as well. For instance, women in orange had to weigh the likelihood that officers would use their discretion to remove – and sometimes destroy – the artwork or holiday decorations they chose to display. Such items could be considered contraband at the discretion of the officer. Additionally, a handful of women explained that they only had virtual pictures of their children on their tablets as they were wary of the women who were in prison with them for child crimes. Indeed, child crimes were the only crime type which women in orange reported receiving social shunning at the Perryville. Women therefore explained that they had to contemplate whether they could trust the women around them to view pictures of their children.

The customs around washing laundry at Perryville reflected women's desire for cleanliness. Almost all women described doing their own laundry, even on higher custody yards that lacked laundry machines for personal use. These women recounted washing their clothes typically every other day (as well as bedding as needed) in the showers or in their personal trash cans. This is a time-consuming task but is also against prison policy. Women at Perryville (without access to the laundry machines available only on minimum yards) are required to send their laundry out to be washed in the communal machines, but almost none of the women I spoke to used this service. Carrie was one woman who did not utilize the laundry service. She explained some of the flaws in the laundry system.

> You have to bag your laundry up and send it out to laundry, and it's good in theory, but a lot of times your laundry don't come back. The laundry that's washed here comes back smelling really bad… And it's just washed with everything else. It definitely doesn't go back smelling like soap and it's dried so whatever that funk is it's cooked in your clothes and it's sent back to you.

[31] Baer's (2005) small study describes the display of personal hygiene items and air fresheners as a means of decorating a space and expressing identity, status, and commitment to cleanliness in men's carceral facilities.

Other women described the communal laundry as “gross” and complained that the clothes don’t get clean enough, rarely come back dry, and one risks receiving clothing items that belong to another woman rather than the items they purchased or curated for themselves. Instead of using the untrustworthy laundry service, many women spend considerable time and effort learning which officers let this violation slide, the best way to hang your clothing items to dry without detection and navigating a wash schedule with their bunkies to avoid having too many items hanging in the cell at one time. Carrie, for example, had previously shared that she is always in full and complete compliance to avoid harassment from officers. However, one concession she made was with laundry, something she said she would continue to do even if she were to receive a ticket for it. “I've always done my laundry. I've never gotten a ticket for it, but I'm also careful how I do my laundry.” She described her routine to avoid potential tickets, explaining that “even if I have to wash one article at a time and I've constantly got my laundry going, it doesn't look like a big old laundromat with lines everywhere and stuff like that.”

Carrie has spent more than a decade in prison and she values her ability to do her own laundry. To avoid tickets, she has learned a laundry routine that violates the rules of the prison but doesn’t threaten the order of the prison. She further explained her covert routine and the ways that her mode of friction avoided challenging officers.

> Not every officer is going to ding you on it. It might be one officer’s pet peeve out of 100… If I know that one person don't like clotheslines, I just don't do laundry while he's working… There's been times when I wait till after 8:30 count at night. And then I'll do my laundry and hang it up because the lights are off and graveyard [shift] flashes their lighting in my house, my laundry can hang and the chances of them giving me problems about it are less because we're locked down.

Carrie concluded by saying that she was a compliant person. Her knowledge of the officers and her stealthy routine allowed her to continue to care for herself by cleaning her laundry in her

room while also avoiding harassment from officers about her violation of the laundry rule.

Creative expression

The last avenues by which women in orange expressed their identity and cared for themselves while incarcerated were through creativity. Indeed, creative expression is a commonly cited practice in self-care literature and media (Myers et al., 2011). Several examples of ways that women in orange used creativity to tailor the limited (and reportedly poor quality) make-up and hair care products to serve a woman's unique needs have already been reported in this chapter (e.g. denture cream as hair gel, tampon strings for eyebrow threading; perfume creation). Additionally, some described the process of squeezing the ink from washable Crayola markers in the eyeshadow palettes to create bright and unique eyeshadow colors.

Arts and crafts were cited by some women as ways that they expressed their individuality while incarcerated. Some, like Wendy, used their artistic skills to create the birthday pop-ups which are a staple of birthday celebrations at Perryville. She explains the card creation process "which is basically you get the watercolor paper, and you cut them into squares, and they make like little pop ups like this." Tina described the stuffed animals she and other women would make out of tube socks stuffed with feminine hygiene pads. Women in orange would often "purchase" these craft items to send out to loved ones for holidays or special occasions, thereby providing creative women at the prison with extra commissary items. Several women during our interview showed me the rings, bracelets, and charms they had purchased through this bartering system. Sadie explained this creation process:

> At night on the weekends, we get fed from sacks and every like your sandwich, your bread, your meat or whatever, it all comes in, like Saran wrap. So, there's a really creative girl who takes that Saran Wrap, colors it with marker or you know, whatever she colors it with paints or glitter or something and she rolled them up.

> And she does like some kind of like, twisty thing. And she gets to make like a little ring.

Rings and other accessories like these were often made by reusing the plastic wrap that sandwich lunches came wrapped in, though some also used the materials inside of shoes laces to braid and create with. Lastly, Tara recalled a woman who had made both a DeLorean with functioning doors and a sailboat "bigger than my arms" out of toilet paper roll paper mâché.

Though these examples are clear expressions of individuality and activities which care for the self, many women also shared with me that they no longer engaged in arts and crafts as they were frustrated at prison policies against displaying such creations. Tammy, for example said "you can do arts and crafts here, but you can't display any of them… so there's definitely like, what's the point of doing art if you can't put it up?" Robbie recalled officers who appear to enjoy destroying creative property like arts and crafts.

> There's people here who do like the most amazing, beautiful, like, arts and crafts and things, you know,… like beautiful things that are causing no harm to anyone just like, decorative, heartfelt things. And when they come and do searches or whatever, like the officers, their favorite thing to do is like, rip down, you know, people's cards, and I mean, stuff that people spend hours making and stuff. And so that is just like, a real slap in the face, I think, to people's like, individuality and creativity.

He continued to explain that officers "don't just take the stuff they'll like, rip it up and throw it out on the tier, you know, with enthusiasm." Like Robbie, Tammy also explained that officers are "supposed to give you a ceased property slip, and then you have the option of having it destroyed or mailing it out. But a lot of times, they just take it, and you just lose it." Though their display violates prison policy rules, the wanton removal of decorations like these which may have taken "hours to make" is another example of the ways by which officers belittle and dehumanize women in orange.

Beyond arts and crafts, other women expressed themselves through creative or reflective writing. More than one woman I spoke with had written books during their incarceration. Since these creative expressions were less noticeable than arts and crafts, writers faced less harassment and destruction from officers, but, as Brenda explained, they too are not immune. She recalled that when she tried to send the manuscript to a friend outside of the prison "they already tried to take it from me." Written materials sent out of the prison are subject to monitoring and she explained that "they thought it was about the prison. It had nothing to do with the prison whatsoever." Brenda was clearly frustrated as she recalled this situation but continued to write as it provided a means of caring for and expressing herself.

Shannon, too, had enjoyed writing for as long as they could remember. In addition to journaling and poetry writing, they also mentioned their exercise routine as essential to their mental health. "I found that that really helps with like, depression, anxiety, you know what I mean? Things like that. So, you know, I try to keep on that as much as possible." Self-care literature also commonly cited exercise routines as a key feature of self-care (Myer et al., 2011). Creative expression also through painting was a way Shannon cared for their well-being, "because I just kind of go into like a Zen state and just, you know, get lost in the painting." Shannon had engaged in many forms of creative expression and self-care while incarcerated for the previous two decades. Nancy, another woman who had served decades at Perryville bemoaned the loss of creative expression options available to her and others at the prison. She shared that women at Perryville "used to be able to crochet in our room and knit and everything. And I love doing that. And they took that away from us.... And I miss those things." Though she personally did not feel stripped of her identity at the prison, she went on to say that "I understand why they can say, you know, they've taken my dignity away because they have. I've seen so

much in 35 years that they've taken away." Removal of creative expression tools, like knitting or the acrylic paints other women mentioned recently losing access to, were understood by Nancy as a means by which a person's dignity was removed as well.

Summary

Women in orange cared for themselves in ways that fell within the bounds of compliance expectations at the prison as well as via modes of friction. Care for the self was accomplished via feminine grooming routines, comfortable familiar fragrances, curating personalized outfits, creative expressions and exercise routines. Their self-care involved creative expression, hygiene and cleanliness routines, and decisions around feminine appearance while confined at the prison.

The ways that women in orange expressed femininity in prison is partly explained by the doing gender framework, but this theoretical lens appears to fall short. Women in prison described caring for themselves in ways that would signal to loved ones that they were still "a mom" for example, but for many in their daily routines, feminine displays that were prioritized on the outs were abandoned. Importantly, this was not understood by most women as the institution stripping their feminine identity, but rather a means of living comfortably while removed from many of society's expectations of feminine presentation. Care for the self, therefore, best frames the actions related to creative expression, feminine identity maintenance, and hygienic self-care.

Previous chapters have explored the ways that care structures life at Perryville's women's prison. Narratives from the people I interviewed certainly describe examples of personal and interpersonal nurturance and support among people confined at Perryville. However, also evident in these narratives were adaptation strategies that support theoretical frameworks posited in previous work with women in prison. The next chapter will address other adaptation techniques

utilized by women in orange at this prison and discuss the ways that the care framework interacts with existing theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER 6: OTHER ADAPTATION STYLES

As I have evidenced, the primary feature structuring life at Perryville was care. More specifically, the women I spoke to described ways that they cared for themselves – an important skill in an institution that removes much of one's autonomy – as well as examples of how they care for and were cared for by other women in orange at the prison. However, care is not the only method by which women in orange adapted to life at Perryville. Indeed, there are some actions of women in orange described in the interview narratives which do not fit within the care framework. Previous research with women involved in crime and in prisons provide explanations for these actions. Extant theoretical lenses which describe other adaptation styles, including fighting and snitching, actions related to maintaining or transforming one's identity while incarcerated, and actions of resistance against the institution by women in orange. Additionally, I will discuss structured action theory and how this theoretical framework assists in understanding the ways that people in orange exhibit gender at Perryville. To begin, I will provide an overview of one aspect of life at this women's prison that does not align with the care framework established earlier in the dissertation – the presence of physical violence and fighting.

Fighting at Perryville

Chapter 4 described one way that care was provided paradoxically within the context of fights at Perryville. However, the broader social landscape related to physical fights in this prison is not well-explained using the framework of care provided among women in orange. The cause for fights most cited by women in orange in interviews were theft, cutting in line and similar disrespectful behavior, bad behavior with a woman's romantic partner, and people "having your name in their mouth" or gossiping with other women in orange. Overall, women on all yards noted that fighting – including verbal or physical assaults – were common at Perryville.

However, a prominent difference between yards at Perryville was the frequency, intensity, and social factors connected to fights across yards. Kathy was serving a short sentence on one of the privilege yards. She shared that fights occurred roughly once a week and involved "screaming and yelling, and maybe one or two hits." Women on other minimum-security yards also typically reported that fights happened a few times a month and were primarily verbal altercations, though occasionally involved physical violence as well. Kathy elaborated, explaining that "they're not like, knockdown, drag out fights, [where] people are getting hurt, or, you know, knifed. I've never seen a shank in prison or anything like that, but I also haven't been on a more hardcore yard. So, I don't know what's there." Kathy didn't have experience on higher custody yards where many women in orange believed fighting was more common.

Indeed, many of the women in orange I spoke to spoke of the higher security yards, particularly of the mixed-high custody unit, as more fearful places than the place they were housed, often citing concerns about fighting. I asked Tara to describe the reputation of the mixed-high custody unit and she said "Oh, that it's so horrible. It's just a horrible place to be. It's [a] close custody unit. There's always fights." She had recently moved off of that yard onto a minimum-security yard when we spoke. Sam also used to be housed on the mixed-high custody unit but was living on a minimum yard at the time of our interview. They too referenced this fear, saying "you would expect going to [that yard] would be where most people get into the fights and believe me, there were a lot. I mean, just it was it was pretty bad over there…" Like Sam, Tamara was living on a lower yard but had served much of her sentence on the mixed-high unit. Both reported that fights occurred "multiple times every day," or around "three or four times a day."

Shannon, however, had spent more than twenty years on the mixed-high custody unit. They too described fights as a chronic feature of prison life, but not as more frequent than on other yards. “I wouldn't even say like, even once a week, but it seems like sometimes there are certain times where like, they'll just be like a cluster of them like, for whatever reason, I don't know.” They mused “Maybe it's like the full moon or sometimes it's the heat. It’s just making everybody cranky.” Carrie’s account from this unit also indicates that the frequency of fights is not consistent, but rather occurs “in rounds.” She said “Sometimes it doesn't seem like you hear too many fights at all. And then just last week, there was three incidents, and three separate things involving shanks, you know?” Carrie continued, explaining that while there recently had been a rash of serious altercations, fights on the mixed-high unit were “usually it's catfights, you know, its hair pulling.” There is, therefore, ambiguity in the frequency of fights throughout Perryville, particularly on the mixed-high custody yard. There are no official reports from ADCRR indicating the frequency that fights occur at ASPC-Perryville, nor per housing unit at the prison.

Recall that the mixed-high custody unit includes close custody, intake, and medium security yards. Sam, Tamara, and Shannon lived on medium security yards while on the mixed-high unit. Miranda had spent time on close custody as well as medium security on this yard. Her account indicated a significant difference in fighting within this unit by the security level of the yard. She said that on close custody “It’s like, three, four times a week” that fights occurred. She continued “but on a medium yard? No, once every couple of weeks.” The other people I spoke to who had served time on close custody too reported without variation that fights occurred more frequently on close custody. Sadie, for example, had served five years of her fourteen-year

sentence on medium and close custody yards. She contrasted fights on the two yards in the following way:

> On close custody they are like, once a day, like somebody's always getting in a fight, whether it's about "That's my seat in the chow hall" because that happens, to I mean, "You disrespected me and my lady", and or "You're looking at me some type of way." It definitely does happen. More commonly, though, on the close custody with the ones who are acting out constantly. On medium custody, you'll have it probably once a month here.

Other people in orange with past experience on close custody similarly described the people held in these yards as those with more frequent disciplinary issues and who engage in more fights. Daily violence on close custody was reported by at least four of the five people I interviewed with recent experience on close custody. Sadie reported that fights on another high security yard were roughly once a month, a frequency similar to that reported on the rest of the yards at Perryville. Therefore, with the exclusion of close custody and with some ambiguity, fights occurred a few times a month among the Perryville community. These fights often involved verbal assaults and simple assault behaviors like hair pulling, slapping, and hitting which causes minor injury. They very rarely resulted in serious injury like broken bones or injuries requiring stitches. Indeed, researchers have found in previous literature that violence among women in prison tends to be less physically damaging than that which occurs in men's prisons (Harer & Langan, 2001).

On one level, frequent conflict should be expected from having so many people living in such proximity to one another and with a somewhat transient population. Indeed, early ethnographies of the prison community identify conflict among a constantly changing population as a feature of the prison (Clemmer, 1940). However, Kelly noted that though fights do occur at the prison – roughly every other day – they are not a constant presence.

> It's crazy to see when you throw that many people from different backgrounds and different walks of life, and different ethnicities and ages, and you know, what I

> mean? When you throw them all into a mixing pot, it really is shocking how well they get along. You would think that it's like a constant catfight and it's really not. I think that you know, people make the best effort they can to live in peace. Sometimes it's not possible, but I think they make the best effort that they can, you know?

Kelly's optimistic perception of the prison was not shared by all of the women in orange I spoke to, but it is worth noting again that fights occur much less frequently in women's prisons than they do in men's prisons. Many of the women in orange came to the prison expecting it to be a violent place and most quickly learned that most people at Perryville don't engage in or receive physical harm. Kelly explains that "people make the best effort they can to live in peace." Clemmer (1940) also observed in his work that despite a regularly changing population, there is stability in the values and informal controls in the prison community.

Fighting does not fit within the care framework posited in this dissertation that structures other aspects of life at Perryville. How may theoretical lenses established in extant literature explain the norms and culture around fighting – as well as other adaptive actions – among women in this prison?

Inmate code

One theoretical framework is provided by the inmate code. Literature has defined the inmate code as consisting of several conduct expectations: 1) Do not share information/snitch, 2) Do not respect or be friendly with correctional staff, 3) Do not show weakness or vulnerability/be tough, 4) Stay out of the business of other people in prison/mind your own business, 5) Do not exploit other people in prison/do your time (Mitchell et al., 2018; Wellford, 1967). This code encourages an "us versus them" mentality with correctional staff. To avoid getting staff involved in conflicts between people in prison and to avoid being perceived in the community as weak, incarcerated individuals are also encouraged by the tenets of the code to

resolve any interpersonal disputes with people in the prison using violence. Inmate code has been theorized as an imported characteristic as it resembles tenets of street code (Mears et al. 2013) as well as a community response to the deprivations of prison life (Clemmer, 1940).

The scholarship on inmate code focuses on explaining the use of violence in prisons and is primarily based on research with men in prison. Women in prison often reference "the code" in previous research, and indeed the women in orange at Perryville did as well. In their descriptions, women in this prison cited "minding your own business," "doing your own time," "don't be a punk", and to a far lesser degree "don't talk to the cops" meaning the officers at the prison. However, at Perryville just as noted by Pollack (2002), inmate code is unevenly adhered to by women in prison. Pollack reported that women in prison often reference "doing your own time" though gossip and "snitching" is pervasive (discussed more below) and I come to similar conclusions from the interviews conducted at Perryville. "Minding your own business" was most commonly referenced as an important feature of serving time in the prison, yet the speed at which information spread across yards (and indeed to different yards) was mentioned by almost everyone with whom I spoke. As mentioned in previous chapters as well, solidarity among the incarcerated population – a core tenet of the inmate code - is not prevalent at Perryville. Fighting at Perryville, therefore, may be explained using the inmate code framework, but the frequent violations of this code require alternative theoretical lenses, which will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Street code

Inmate code has been used in previous scholarship to address violence in women's prisons. The connection between violent crime commission and gender has been the focus of much criminological work, often recognizing that violence is typically understood socially to be

a masculine enterprise, yet women who engage in violence frequently maintain a feminine identity (Jones, 2010; Messerschmidt, 1995). One theoretical lens is provided by the code of the street. Though street code was also developed primarily as a framework to explain violence among men in high crime neighborhoods, a body of literature has extended this code of conduct to explain the use of violence by women in these contexts as well.

Similar to the inmate code, code of the street identifies fighting as a sometimes-necessary action to discourage future challenges to one's respect from others in the community. Code of the street is described in Anderson's (1999) work primarily as a code of conduct for men and boys in high crime disadvantaged communities. Street code emphasizes gaining and maintaining respect often by using violence to establish a tough identity and protect one from physical victimization in dangerous neighborhoods. The balance of femininity and violence is discussed by Nikki Jones' (2010) book with adolescent girls in high-crime inner city neighborhoods. Her work addresses how teenaged girls negotiate the code of the street in their social institutions. The girls in Jones' work navigate street code tenets to protect themselves from victimization but also retain a feminine identity despite engaging in physical violence that is primarily understood to be a masculine gender action. Jones explains this juxtaposition in the following quote:

> "Conventional wisdom suggests that girls and women, whether prompted by nature, socialization, or a combination of the two, generally avoid physically aggressive or violent behavior: girls are expected to use relational aggression and fight with words and tears, not fists or knives. Inner-city girls, like most American girls, feel pressure to be "good," "decent," and "respectable." Yet, like some inner-city boys, they may also feel pressure to "go for bad" (Katz 1988) or to establish a "tough front" (Anderson 1999; Dance 2002) in order to deter potential challengers on the street or in the school setting. They too may believe that "sometimes you do got to fight"—and sometimes they do" (Jones, 2010, p. 9).

Embodying street code through the use of violence to protect oneself may risk a gender assessment as more masculine or as one who does not embody "respectable femininity" since

fighting is not typical feminine behavior. These findings from Jones' (2010) work offer some insight into why violence occurs in this women's prison.

Fighting was typically described by people in orange at Perryville as a product of the prison environment and an expected response to conflicts and disputes between people confined there. Several women explained, like those in Jones' (2010) work, that sometimes fights are unavoidable. Wendy recounted a fight she was involved in shortly after her arrival to the prison. She was a thirty-five-year-old white woman who had nearly completed her five-year sentence when we spoke, and she shared that "I came into prison not knowing how things work… So when I was thrown on to a giant yard with lots of people I made enemies. Girls get jealous, you know how that is." She continued, explaining that one day a disgruntled woman in orange approached her. Wendy said "I did everything I could to tell her I didn't want to fight her. I honestly stepped back and was like 'I don't want to fight you you're gonna get my privileges taken'." Being involved in a fight is a major disciplinary violation which typically resulted in "loss of privileges" as Wendy alludes to. She valued being able to call home to family every day and understood that a physical altercation would likely mean that she would be prohibited from calling home, among other consequences, for a period of time. She continued to describe the fight.

> She grabbed my throat and the only thing I could do is just swing back. Because I swung back, it automatically made it look like I was the aggressor, even though she grabbed me first. If I would have curled up into a ball I would have been fine… But because I fought back and stood up for myself I got the most heat out of it.

Wendy as well as other women I spoke with expressed frustration at their inability to avoid fights. While discussing ways to avoid drama and protect oneself in the prison, Crystal, a Black and Native woman in her late thirties who had served thirteen years of her more than thirty-year

sentence warned that “You may get into conflict even if you don't want to, and it may not even be your fault.”

Women in orange also expressed frustration that they are unable to defend themselves and avoid a ticket if they find themselves being physically victimized in prison. In the above account Wendy said, “If I would have curled up into a ball I would have been fine” and this statement was echoed by Crystal. Crystal explained that “there's no self-defense in here. Somebody can punch you and you're supposed get into a fetal position, otherwise you get a disciplinary.” Sadie, too, shared that if one is being attacked, the prison’s expectation is that the victim “roll down into a ball and just kind of like block yourself. That's the only defense you have.” Women in orange recognized that this was the only way to avoid a ticket if one found themselves involved in a fight, but also conveyed that this was not feasible in the prison. Wendy, for example, further explained her engagement in the fight by saying “You're not gonna let somebody punk you in here. That's the one thing you don't let people punk you because it makes you look weak. And you can't look weak in here. People take advantage a weak people.., and I didn't want to look weak, so I fought back.” At Perryville, the term “punk” refers to people who can be disrespected without consequence or otherwise taken advantage of. Statements like this from Wendy resemble principles of street and inmate code discussed in extant literature (Anderson, 1999; Jones, 2010; Wellford, 1967) – fighting to avoid future victimization.

In contrast to the identity implications that fighting may have for the girls on the street in other works, however, women in orange who engaged in fights were not referenced in interview narratives as acting masculine or otherwise violating the expectations of “respectable” femininity (Jones, 2010). At Perryville, women across the femininity spectrum described their histories of fighting within the prison. Their engagement in these behaviors was not offered as evidence of

their feminine identity nor as a contrast to a feminine identity. Women in orange did often mention that more fighting occurred in men's prisons in part *because they are men,* but instances of violence at Perryville were not connected to gender identities or gender action in interviews. Additionally, some statements from women in orange reflect "code-style" beliefs, but aside from violence being unavoidable and a means of protection, there appear to be far more examples of violations of these codes than adherence to them. Certainly, however, violence was used by women in orange as a means of responding to and protecting themselves from unavoidable conflict, an explanation in line with street code tenets.

Respect through intimidation

Fighting was not the only behavior described by women in orange at this prison which is better described by these codes of conduct than the care framework. Intimidating behavior was described by several of the interview participants as a means by which one could garner respect in the prison. Respect is a key feature of street and inmate codes, accomplished primarily through intimidation and violence. Adherence to these code-style tenets were not common among the women I spoke to at Perryville, but some narratives did align with the code. Tina is one such woman. She was in her forties and had been on high custody yards at Perryville for eight years. Much of her narrative reflected code style or what other women in orange described as "old school" ideologies of conduct and respect in prison. The following excerpt from our interview illustrates this.

> Unless you know me, you shouldn't have my name in your mouth, because it's nobody's business. So that's one of the biggest things as to where I'm going to correct you. You know, physically if it comes down to it on a challenging note. But normally, I don't really like to go that route. I see a lot of my kids in these people. But realistically, on a standpoint of a prisoner. Yes, most definitely. If you let your guard down once, they're gonna think you're a punk. And that's just the dynamic of it. They're going to talk all kinds of crap. They will look at the smallest person that

> goes to fight this bigger woman. Even if you get your ass handed to you, you'll get props because you walked in.

Other women, like Tina, also discussed a person "having my name in their mouth" as disrespectful, gossiping or snitching, and a violation of the code expectation that people in prison mind their own business. Tina explained that while she was reluctant to engage in physical violence because she "see[s] a lot of my kids in these people," when she challenged, she will respond in the way that the prison "dynamic" dictates. She referenced her maternal identity while also explaining that failing to establish respect through a willingness to fight may label her a "punk."

Also connected to respect according to some of the people I spoke to at Perryville was concealing a fight. They explained that failing to conceal the evidence of a fight and therefore inviting questions from an officer could be interpreted as snitching, since a woman should expect that officers will investigate suspicious situations. This belief was particularly salient from the few individuals in orange I spoke to who had served long stretches of time on high custody yards and those who had a history of fight experience themselves. Sam, an individual who fit into both categories explained:

> Well, that's where the respect and whatnot comes in. You know, if you end up telling on [the perpetrator] - you know for one, you did something to get your ass beat, okay? Two, if you want to talk about what it means that you got your ass beat [talk about what occurred], then it's going to happen multiple times, probably once a day, twice a day, whatever they deem fit, it's going to happen. So, you just you know, keep your mouth quiet. And if you weren't involved in that and then you went and told? Well, now you're involved and now you're going to reap the consequences.

Snitching is indeed considered disrespectful, even if it is fairly common at Perryville. Sam's quote highlights two different kinds of snitching – informing officers about violence one personally experienced and informing on violence one witnessed or heard about through the rumor mill. From Sam's perspective, both could result in consequences. For most of the people

in orange I spoke to, fights were talked about as second-hand experience and hearsay as most had very few (and many had no) personal experience with physical fights.

Sam's description also seemed to illustrate "old school behavior," rather than what may be more common on the high custody yards today. They hadn't been involved in fights for more than a decade and stories like Sam's that reflected these kinds of inmate code-style consequences (Clemmer, 1940) were mostly described by people who had been at Perryville decades ago. This is not to say that fights don't occur like this anymore at Perryville, but many of the people who spoke about fights explained that fights used to be a way to handle disputes "like adults" and such informal consequences for disrespectful behavior were more common and accepted among the population. Some explained that today, fighting is done in the open more often (and therefore more likely to be seen by an officer), that you can't expect that people involved in a fight that officers didn't see to "act like an adult" and keep it to themselves anymore, and that new numbers mostly just shout verbal abuses at one another and overall, less frequently handle disputes with respect and discreet violence. Monica, a woman in her late 20s with an extensive history of fighting over her six years at Perryville, touches on some of the differences between new and old numbers in terms of fight expectations:

> *Monica:* It depends on kind of what custody level you're at. There's some of us that are like old numbers that don't play like that but these new numbers that come in are like young kids. They think they could be whatever.
>
> *Interviewer:* So, do the young kids fight more or snitch more?
>
> *Monica:* Both. Like there's been a situation in my past that I thought we'd go in a room, and they were willing to go fight me but turned around and snitched.

Though Monica thought engaging in a fight would resolve the dispute in a way that she understood to be the social expectation in her community, the woman she assaulted reported the incident to officers. Monica, therefore, received disciplinary consequences for this fight.

An additional illustration of "old number" expectations of fights contrasted to behavior that is more common today is provided by Tina.

> *Tina:* When it's a personal thing, so [if] somebody's having a problem like "Step in my room. Let's get it over with now." I'll shake your hand and walk out… clean yourself up. As opposed to being on the basketball court or on the run screaming "You bitch!" Absolutely not.
>
> *Interviewer:* Because that'll get everyone in trouble?
>
> *Tina:* Yeah, well, it'll get you locked down. It's just a hassle. I mean, come on, be an adult about it. You know, it kind of sucks to be quite honest with you… but the aggressiveness in us, nobody wants to be a punk, whatever… not saying that we go around punking anybody but some of us do go here. So, they [other women in orange] don't even want to go there with us. But if it happens to go there, none of us want to get disciplinary, none of us want assaults, but at the end of the day, if something has to be done, then it will.

The language that Tina used I did not hear from many other women, but several referenced the fact that some women like her – old numbers who demand respect and will "put you in line" if they need to – were present primarily on high custody yards. "Punking" means intimidating other women in orange simply to be feared by them. Nine of the women I spoke to cited this kind of behavior as a way respect can be earned in the prison. When Tina says, "some of us do go here," she means some people consider the prison their home – at least for now – and they have established expectations about what conduct is acceptable and what is not. Because of their tenure at the prison, they are particularly committed to curtailing disrespectful behavior and reasserting the conduct expectations to protect what long-term comfort they can on the yard.

Women at Perryville often cited issues related to respect, though these examples of using intimidation to achieve it was not reported to be particularly common. Only nine interview narratives discussed intimidation as a means of earning respect. Crystal explained that "a lot of women here only respect what they fear." Crystal described herself as a former vigilante who doesn't fight anymore but used to. Because she has a reputation as a person who is capable of

fighting, she explained that she is still respected in the prison community. Sam similarly shared that "my first time [in prison] I had gotten in quite a bit of fights so nobody messes with me." Neither Sam nor Crystal engage in fights anymore, yet they both explained that they still are viewed as intimidating and respected. They also noted this was in part related to their larger stature, an aspect cited by other women in orange as well as a reason someone may be considered intimidating and deserving of respect.

Though intimidation was a way that at least some women in orange earned respect, many of the women I spoke to explained that they didn't admire women in orange who attained their respect in this way. Amanda, for example said that "There has to be a reason why you're being so intimidating. Now if you're being intimidating for a reason? That's okay. That's understandable. But just to be like that, just to be like that? No." She continued by explaining that a good reason to be intimidating is because one was responding to a situation which required confrontation, such as theft or other bad behavior. Being intimidating "just to be like that" to garner respect is referred to by other women at Perryville as "punking." Though this behavior may get people to avoid upsetting a person, it was not discussed as well-earned respect. Indeed, Nancy mentioned people who "run the yard," something that a handful of women reported occurring on higher security yards. She said that these women are feared because people "know what they're capable of" but that "they are not respected." She continued by saying that "This is gonna sound crazy. But they're not respected, but they are respected." Explaining this seemingly contradictory statement, she said "it's not the respect that you would get from somebody really caring about you." Respect through intimidation garnering a different type of respect was also discussed by Mary who said "it's a totally different kind of respect. It's kind of it's very sad actually to see it, because, you know… it's obvious that they don't value themselves." She explained that women

who are respected because they are intimidating are connected to dangerous groups in the prison, often get into disciplinary trouble, and she believes they don't realize that they are ultimately harming themselves. Other women in orange referred to people who "punk" or engage in intimidation to earn respect as "institutionalized" or as people with "nothing to lose."

Respect, therefore, was described occasionally as being accomplished through intimidation or being "hard," methods which are encouraged by the inmate or street code. However, mostly women described common courtesy and manners as the way respect is cultivated in prison. Many of the issues dealing with respect would be topics of concern in any communal living situation. Cutting in line for meals, being loud on the run outside of people's cells, smoking in the communal bathrooms, or not cleaning up one's used menstrual products from the shower were common examples of people demonstrating disrespect.

A few of the women I interviewed engaged in "hard" behavior like frequent fighting at the start of their time at Perryville, but each described "growing up" and no longer "doing their time hard" like they used to. Conforming to the rules, helping the new numbers around them learn to adapt to prison life, and avoiding drama and tickets were ways most of the women I spoke to managed to live in "peace and relative comfort." Monica advised "Don't learn the hard way like I did. I chose to do my time the hard way and get in trouble. Just listen and do what you got to do. Don't make your time more difficult than it already is going to be." Therefore, while behaviors which align with the inmate and street codes indeed exist at the prison, most of the women in orange I spoke with did not ultimately recommend adhering to these codes of conduct as a means of adapting to prison.

Kiting

Avoiding and/or punishing snitching is an important aspect of inmate code as it is understood in men's prisons. As noted in the previous section and in extant literature however, informing correctional staff of rule violations of incarcerated persons is not uncommon in women's prisons (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003, 2005; Owen, 1998; Trammel, 2012). At Perryville, though fighting was not uncommon, informing through the writing of "kites" was described as much more prevalent. Commonly, women in orange in interviews contrasted "kiting and fighting" as responses to interpersonal conflict. Kite writing refers to the use of formal reports of behavior in violation of prison rules to staff. These kites, also called inmate letters, are submitted by women in orange electronically through the tablets each person was issued by the prison. These tablets are also a means of communicating via email messages to people outside of the prison, a source for podcasts to listen to, video games to purchase, and movies for rent. Since their introduction to Perryville roughly three years prior to my interviews, their use had become ubiquitous among the orange population. A few women I spoke to suggested that kites had become more common after the tablets were introduced because submitting an inmate letter was more inconspicuous than it had been when kites were written on paper and submitted by hand.

Just as there were differences between yards in terms of fighting, kiting also differed throughout Perryville. Kelly described the differences in kiting versus fighting between security levels. She said that on minimum, "everyone is going home… and most of them are going home within a year." She assessed that "you write 100 kites on someone and go home, it is what it is, right?" The consequences for writing kites were less detrimental to one's reputation on lower security yards, as Kelly indicates, because people don't live in the prison community for very long periods of time there. In contrast, Kelly explained that on the higher security yard she was

living on, “It’s very different. You are going to be stuck with these exact same people for a very long time.” Rather than being able to “do what you want” and then go home like on minimum, she said on high custody “People remember, it doesn't just go away.”

Indeed, the mantra on higher security yards was “we don’t kite, we fight,” which was affirmed more or less by the women I spoke to on these yards. Kites indeed were still written, but the likelihood that this behavior was considered snitching and may result in a physical altercation was much higher on these yards. Several women on higher yards asserted that snitching would get you “hit”, and recounted stories of violence involved women in orange who were brutalized because they had be labeled a “snitch.” However, reports from women in orange indicate that there is ambiguity in the social reactions to snitching on higher custody yards as well. A few women, like Erica, assessed that such retribution was not how things work at the prison anymore. Erica explained that retaliation for snitching was “the way they used to run it back in the day, but I feel like [the yard] has like evolved.” She said, “there’s a community of us women that are wanting to change” and that women in orange today were seeking ways to not make their time harder – which being involved in fights for any reason would do.

Kelly also shared that when she began her time at Perryville, snitching was “something you don't do, or you're gonna get hit, or something bad will happen.” In contrast, she explained “Now, it's almost, I won't say allowed, because you will be a social pariah, but nothing's really done about it anymore. And it’s not uncommon.” Kelly and Erica’s accounts suggest that the social reaction to kiting behavior may no longer differ significantly between security levels. It was, however, not discussed by any of the women in orange as a respected behavior and was discussed as a primary way that drama is introduced to a yard. Previous works with women in

prison as well note that people who cause undue trouble for their fellow people in orange are not respected (Owen, 1998).

Another consequence of snitching cited by interviewees was social ostracization, yet this didn't seem to reflect reality at the prison either. With gossip and snitching so common, rather than identifying and avoiding the people that have a history of snitching, women typically identified a small number of people they could trust, as discussed in chapter 4. As most women in orange were considered suspicious and untrustworthy with personal information, the focus in the prison community was more on finding the few "good people" that one could share personal details with, rather than avoiding the "bad ones."

All of the women I spoke to explained that snitching is disparaged on all yards but described differences between units in the likelihood that a "snitch" would receive injury for behavior that was considered a betrayal. Nonetheless, informing guards was reported to happen frequently. How might extant literature explain the prevalence of kiting in this prison?

Like fighting, kiting is also not explained through the care framework posited earlier in this dissertation. Both fighting and kiting are indeed methods of responding to interpersonal conflict in the prison environment and both were present in varying degrees across all of the housing yards at Perryville. However, while fighting aligns with code-style tenets previously described, kiting is a method of "snitching" – a behavior clearly discouraged by the codes. Extant literature as well commonly finds that women in prison report that "no snitching," an inmate code expectation, was a primary expectation of incarcerated women (Giallombardo, 1966; Owen, 1998; Ward & Kassebaum, 1966), and the literature also notes that violation of this tenet is common.

Rather than as a way to maintain safety in the prison, kites often were weaponized, meaning they were understood by women in orange to be self-serving and a way to use the mechanisms of the institution to punish someone they felt offended or disgruntled by. Kite writing was described as petty and manipulative by the women I spoke to, but their use was common, particularly on the minimum-security yards. Julia, for example, said that the reason people write kites is "always based on a selfish purpose, you know, a lot of times they rat on someone to get out of something." According to her and other women in orange, kites were written to either punish someone who had disrespected a woman or to avoid the fallout of drama. Carol touches on this latter point, explaining that kites are a means of "telling on the person that's trying to have an altercation," thereby avoiding a physical fight.

Kiting in the prison context could perhaps be a method of fighting without physical violence. Jones (2010) notes that fighting with words rather than fists is a means of doing gender for women in the face of conflict. Additional research also finds that conflicts in prison are addressed in gender-prescribed ways, with women commonly spreading rumors or attempting to outsmart other women in prison rather than engaging in physical fights as often as men do (Trammel, 2012). However, it is important to note that kiting is a formal report of rule violations, not a form of verbal sparring which would more closely align with the behavior Jones (2010) described. Therefore, inmate and street codes do not offer a clear explanation for the proliferation of kiting in this prison. Neither does this behavior fit within the care framework, though. Instead, kite writing was framed as a type of system manipulation by many of those I spoke to at Perryville.

Working the system

By reporting rule violations to officers through kites, women in orange caused others to receive tickets, in addition to other consequences, such as room searches to seek alleged contraband or drug tests to follow up on drug use allegations. As mentioned previously, the accumulation of ticket points can result in the removal of a woman in orange from one housing yard to another. By understanding how the punishment system at the prison works, therefore, interviewees alleged that women in orange could "get people kicked off the yard."

In addition to kiting, women in orange described other ways that people at Perryville learned to "work the system" to accomplish their needs or make their time in the prison slightly more comfortable. Research in prisons often finds examples of ways that people held in institutions learn to navigate the system to meet their needs. Owen (1998), for example, referred to women with this knowledge as 'prison-smart', and Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2005) called them 'adapted.' These women avoid disciplinary issues by understanding which rules can be bent, how to conceal small infractions, and under which circumstances violations will be overlooked. At Perryville, women in orange referred to these strategies as "working the system" or "manipulation." In the earlier chapters, women in orange used the term 'manipulation' to describe backstabbing, conniving and otherwise negative stereotypes about women which they encountered at the prison. However, this same term was used by others to describe ways that women in orange had learned to work the system to accomplish their needs. One example comes from Carrie's laundry routine, detailed in chapter 5. In the chapter, this was described a mode of friction by which she was able to care for herself and her cleanliness while avoiding disciplinary response. Carrie's laundry friction was a result of her learning how to navigate the highly controlled system in the prison and therefore also is an example of working the system. This kind of manipulation, therefore, is not an example of internalized misogyny but rather a knowledge of

the prison system and how to navigate the formal and informal mechanisms therein. Additional examples of women learning how to work the system came from other women in orange.

One example comes from the use of chronos among women in orange.[32] Chronos are notes from the prison medical staff which exempt women from work duties, allow them access to a wheelchair, specialty shoes, or more ice than is regulation for pain management. Often these medical slips are legitimately needed by the women who manage to secure them, but some of my interviewees indicated that this isn't always the case. Alicia explained that "chronos can be useful to either take advantage of and get everything which is take take take from the prison, or it's a medical necessity - something that somebody's for real about." Melanie was in a wheelchair during our interview and she explained to me that she didn't think she really needed the wheelchair as she was able to walk, but that it helped her avoid some of the inconveniences of prison life.

> I go get my food in a wheelchair so I don't have to wait in the long lines. You get first come first serve kind of thing. Because I'm able to have it, I use it. I don't actually I don't 100% need it, but I use it because it works to my advantage. I don't want to be in no lines.

Melanie continued to explain that her wheelchair also allowed her to skip to the front of the line when she shopped on the store. She and others housed on her yard told me that this line was hours-long every week. She concluded her discussion of her chrono by reiterating, "I use it to my advantage. And so be it." Melanie did however note elsewhere in our interview that she does indeed struggle to walk long distances – as she would have to walk to get to the kitchen for meals and medical complex for her twice-daily pills – as well as standing for long periods of time – which she would be required to do for pill call, store shopping, and meals multiple times

[32] No one I spoke to was able to recall what the term 'chrono' was short for.

per day. Therefore, while she identified her wheelchair as something she takes advantage of, it does appear to be a legitimate use of the medical chrono. Either way, she described her ability to secure a wheelchair at the prison as a way to meet her needs and make her sentence more comfortable without obviously violating any prison rules.

Sarah also described a situation in which she took advantage of the medical system in a way that made her time more comfortable. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer while at Perryville and was prescribed morphine for pain management. However, she asserted "breast cancer doesn't hurt" and shared that she "kind of took advantage of it because it was numbing my feelings. I was sleeping, you know, I didn't have to think about things." Sarah was not experiencing physical pain from her cancer, but she did utilize the tools that were made available to her to make her uncomfortable experience at the prison more bearable – by numbing the feelings she was experiencing related to her diagnosis and her depriving living situation.

Manipulation of the system wasn't limited to the medical services at the prison. Women in orange do not have control over where they are housed or when they are moved to a different housing unit or yard. Women with more than a five-year sentence or a sentence for certain serious crime types are sent to higher security yards. Those with less than five years and who do not pose security concerns (i.e. violence or escape risks) are housed on the minimum-security yards. As a means of establishing some control over their living situation, four different women explained to me how they contemplated manipulating their disciplinary infraction points so that they weren't required to move to a minimum custody yard prior to their release. Christina, for example, arrived at the prison shortly after her biological sister. She explained "My sister just told me when I got here - because she's on like a [mixed-high custody] yard - so when I got here, she wanted me to, like rack up my points and get tickets so I could go be on the same yard as

her." Christina declined to participate in this kind of system manipulation and friction, hoping instead that her sister would eventually come down to the lower custody yard she was housed on.

While Christina was new to the prison and was trying to stay on a minimum-security yard, Tina had spent many years on higher custody yards. Women in orange who are within five years of their release date and haven't amassed too many disciplinary tickets are transferred to minimum security yards. Tina was nearing her release date when we spoke, and she asserted that she would work the system to stay on the yard she had called home for the past eight years if she needed to. Less than three years from her release she told me "I'm here because [it's] my choice. I will leave [this yard]. There's a manipulation part, I'll catch a ticket to stay here, even if I have to face disciplinary." Tina is familiar with how the system works and she is willing to engage in friction or even blatantly violate the rules of the prison to maintain her comfort for the remainder of her time at the prison.

Doing gender

The provision of care has been described earlier in this dissertation as ways by which one may engage in social action recognized as feminine (Baker Miller, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Poole & Isaacs, 1997). Care is certainly not the only way that a person in a prison may present their femininity, however. This section details the ways that women in orange negotiate their femininity in the carceral space at Perryville which are not well-explained in the care framework. Instead, these actions are better understood through the "doing gender" perspective offered by earlier scholars.

West and Zimmerman's structured action theory contends that "virtually any activity can be assessed as to its womanly or manly nature" (1987, p. 136) and that these gender assessments are unavoidable in social contexts. A person's actions are therefore always viewed by others

through this gender lens. They and other scholars have discussed appearing sexually appealing, engaging in household chores, demonstrating empathy, and nurturing qualities as examples of doing gender (Connell, 1987; Haney, 1996; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The doing gender lens importantly offers a viewpoint of gender as action in which "women and men 'do gender' in response to situated normative beliefs about masculinity and femininity" (Miller, 2002). Scholarship in this area extends the understanding of gender beyond inherent sex characteristics and highlights the role of social contexts and interpersonal interactions in forming and performing gender. This allows femininity to include a spectrum of gender actions.

For example, Messerschmidt (1995) applies the "doing gender" framework to explain violence among adolescent girls involved in gangs. He notes that within mixed-gender gangs, doing violence can be doing femininity given the social context warranting it. Similar to Jones' (2010) work, these girls in the gang do not hold a "respectable femininity" status, but rather a "bad girl" feminine status. Messerschmidt points out that this isn't understood within the gang context to be girls acting masculine or in a way that challenges their feminine identities. Engaging in violence when warranted, therefore does not diminish a person's femininity, but is aligned with a different form of femininity. Though Messerschmidt's (1995) work is commonly cited in connection to women involved in crime – particularly violence – women in orange at Perryville did not reference a 'bad girl femininity' even while describing people's involvement in fighting (as previously discussed). Nonetheless, there are indeed some of the actions of women in orange which can be understood in part through the "doing gender" lens offered by structured action theory.

Chapter 4 detailed the prevalence of found families, mentoring relationships, and support between people at the prison. Several women in orange explained that these features were unique to living around only women as women are "natural nurturers." However, while they viewed mothering and nurturing as "natural" to women, doing gender asserts that femininity is not a "natural, essential propert[y] of individuals" but rather an interactional and "social propert[y] of a system of relationships" (West & Zimmerman, 2009, p. 114). As discussed in previous chapters, men in prison do not socialize in the same ways that research finds women in prison associating with others. Pseudofamilies or found families are one prominent and recurring difference found in women's prisons. Chapter 4 framed the formation of these groups as a care related to feminine socialization, but the doing gender framework also offers explanation as why mothering appears to be a salient feature in women's prisons.

Laidler and Hunt (2001), for example, explored how girls in gangs accomplished femininity. They found that regardless of the strength of ties with one's parents or the race/ethnicity of the girls, the young women in their study who were involved in gangs all prioritized the role of a mother in providing care and nurturance as well as support, discipline, guidance, and structure. This was a means of accomplishing "respectability" or respectable femininity (Jones, 2010). The emphasis on a motherly role in women's upbringings described by these women may also explain the common finding of family-style relationships and mentorship styles among women in prison – while men are raised to prioritize independence and economic success, women are attentive to gendered expectations related to the family (Gilligan, 1982).

Doing femininity often is described in scholarship in connection with women appearing attractive. This is part of "emphasized femininity" (Connell, 1987) which represents the culturally idealized, normative style of femininity as well as "bad girl femininity"

(Messerschmidt, 1995) which allows space within femininity for violence to occur. Efforts to appear attractive were indeed described by women in orange at Perryville in connection to their femininity. As chapter 4 described, cleanliness and feminine grooming routines were part of expressing femininity while incarcerated. The following excerpt from Veronica's narrative elucidates the concept of respectable femininity at Perryville.

> As a woman, you know, I should fix myself up, I should do my hair, I should wear makeup, I should take that extra time to make myself look more presentable… I feel like as a woman, you know, despite our past, and despite the way that we were brought up, despite what we were taught as a child, or whatever the case may be, I feel like as women, we should not lose sight of the fact that we're women, and we should value ourselves and we should take care of ourselves. And we should take extra measures to make sure that we look good, we smell good.

The feminine actions Veronica described align with Laidler and Hunt's (2001) description of respectable femininity. They explain "respectability involves both appearance and conduct. Her clothing, hairstyle, make-up, and stride signify her status as a reputable young woman" (Laidler & Hunt, 2001, p. 664).

In the prison, respectability was contrasted with the ways that other feminine women in orange presented themselves. Interviewees ridiculed others who engaged in behaviors that seemed to overemphasize their femininity in the confined prison space. For example, Patricia, a white woman in her sixties who had served a year at Perryville, said "There are girls here that I don't know where they're going. They call one girl 'clown' she wears so much makeup. Its way, way over the top." In addition to those who wore what some viewed as excessive amounts of makeup, women in orange who altered their clothes to be "skin-tight" were typically derided as well. Several interviewees engaged in body shaming or shaming related to a woman's perceived promiscuity. For example, Dawn laughed as she shared that wearing tightly altered clothes "has nothing to do with them being feminine. It has to do with them being little hoes." Similarly, Julia

discussed feminine expression of others in the prison saying “if they want to be little sluts and show their skin, they’re not going to be able to that here” because of the appearance in compliance rules.

Often, comments like these were accompanied by the query “who are you trying to impress?” The ways that one does femininity “respectably” differs given the social setting the actions are taking place. Laidler and Hunt explain that “’Being feminine’ does not automatically change but is negotiated in the specific social contexts with interactions with other people. These notions may be contradictory in some settings, but are nevertheless seen as an accommodation to the setting” (2001, p. 660). Perhaps promiscuous dress, intricate makeup, and other hyperfeminine displays would not have been disparaged by the women in interviewed if the actions were not taking place in a prison. Given the confined social context, lack of people to impress (i.e. available men), or appropriate social settings (e.g. a nightclub), behaviors like these were not viewed as respectable.

There were other types of femininity beyond respectability described among the women at Perryville as well. When asked if they considered themselves a feminine person, eleven people at Perryville described themselves as “tomboys.” This tomboy femininity was contrasted with actions that were considered “girly girl.” Let us think about doing gender as a spectrum with emphasized femininity on one end and hegemonic masculinity on the other. Tomboyishness was described typically as falling close to the middle of this spectrum, with people in orange describing actions that exhibited femininity and masculinity, though most still personally identified as women.

Women who considered themselves tomboys, therefore, described various ways that their femininity negotiated with their self-described masculine characteristics or interests. Donna, for

example, described herself as feminine, prioritizing "smelling good," having her hair done, and often wearing makeup on the outs, but explained "I'm more of a tomboy… I can go work on a car if I have to." Working on cars, enjoying athletics or outdoor activities, and "being raised like a boy" were presented as masculine (or at least non-feminine) actions which contrasted one's otherwise feminine identity. Monica's description of herself further details this juxtaposition. When asked if she considered herself to be a feminine person she replied "My appearance, yeah, but I actually enjoy like male things. I love sports. I love getting ready and doing my hair and makeup, but I choose to hang out with men rather than girls." Like Monica, many tomboyish women in orange evidenced their feminine identity by their use of makeup, feminine grooming, or fragrance (described more in chapter 5). Anna is another woman in orange who considered herself a "tomboyish girl" explaining that "I'm not terribly masculine about moving through the world. I shave my legs still… And still like, be feminine. I like for my clothes to smell good, like rose and lavender." Anna liked to do her hair and makeup to "look nice" and engaged in feminine grooming routines, but because she wasn't preoccupied with these tasks she considered herself "tomboyish."

The interplay of masculine and feminine characteristics was evidenced in another way by women in orange at Perryville as well. Though femininity is typically associated with passivity, some feminine women in orange described themselves having a "strong personality," and as being "independent" or "dominant." In describing their femininity, Dawn said "I'm kind of tomboyish. Well, I'm dominant" and Lori similarly asserted "I am feminine, but dominant as well." These statements juxtapose femininity with dominance – a typically masculine trait. Yet recall that Lori described her identity as a mother as being very important to her, and her use of makeup and orange matching was a means by which she presented herself femininely to her

visiting children and parents. Lori's gender identity would not qualify as "bad girl femininity" (Messerschmidt, 1995), but neither was it "emphasized femininity" (Connell, 1987). Instead, the way that Lori described her femininity recognizes the spectrum of gender and acknowledges that a person can exhibit masculine as well as feminine characteristics while indeed being a feminine woman.

West and Zimmerman assert that "what it takes to exhibit (or suppress) a body as male or female is part of the experience of femininity and masculinity" (2009, p. 118). Though most of the people with whom I spoke described actions which 'did femininity' and exhibited themselves as women while incarcerated, a few people did not identify as women and engaged in actions which sought to present their masculinity instead. Sam, for example, was nonbinary and explained that they kept their hair cut short and though they couldn't "get away" from their breasts, they "slouch quite a but more than I used to because I don't like the fact that I'm bigger in the chest area." Additionally, Robbie, a transman, described many ways he negotiated his masculinity in the women's prison, such as wearing a beard. He shared "I don't even like the way this looks. I would prefer to shave. But I keep it just to make my identity more obvious to people." He continued, explaining that his presence in a female-facility meant that his trans identity was on constant display and that "simply because of where I am, I have no choice but to be out." On the outs he doesn't feel that exhibiting his gender is as much work because it is questioned by others less frequently.

In short, gender was accomplished by people at Perryville in various ways. Most common were actions that exhibited respectable femininity, demonstrating that a woman values herself and seeks to appear presentable even during her confinement. However, women who did not take their confinement in a prison setting into account when determining how to wear their

clothes or makeup (i.e. those who were "over the top") did not exhibit respectability and were ridiculed and shamed by some of the interviewees. Another group of women accomplished tomboy femininity – these were women who, in an outside of the prison, engaged in actions which were understood to be feminine as well as some which were masculine. Tomboy femininity was not disparaged by interviewees, but instead seemed to recognize a spectrum of gender actions. Finally, in addition to femininity, a small portion of people at Perryville engaged in actions which accomplished masculinity.

Identity reinvention

The ways in which women in orange avoided losing their identity in the prison is described through the care framework in chapter 5. In these examples, self-care for some was accomplished through compliance or "modes of friction" (Rubin, 2015). Other women, however, recognized the prison's capacity to break a person down but framed this as an opportunity to reinvent themselves rather than as institutional violence. Christina, for example, says:

> You know, they've completely stripped us of everything while we're in here, so while we're completely stripped of everything, why not build a solid foundation to have a better life and get out there? There's nothing else to do except for, you know, to change the people, places, and things and start that foundation for a better life so we don't end up back here.

Descriptions like Christina's reflect a concept of identity reinvention available to women in the "reinventive institution" (Scott, 2011). Drawing on transformative narratives from men and women in prison, Crewe and Ievens (2020) frame the prison for some as a "reinventive institution." This conception contrasts Goffman's (1961) inmates of a total institution by recognizing that despite a prison being a depriving environment, many ethnographies and prison accounts find a minority of people who identify their time in prison as a space of refuge or an opportunity for reflection and rehabilitation. "Clients of the reinventive institution" believe that

they need to change and that it is their personal responsibility to do so and therefore "willingly discard their old selves in the hope of finding something better" (Scott, 2011, p. 219).

Other women in orange at Perryville as well argued that being broken down was for the benefit of the individual. They often pointed to pre-prison identities that were caught up "in their addiction" or otherwise prioritizing the "wrong things." One such woman was Alicia. She had lived what she described as a "hard knock life," with an extensive history of trauma, neglect, and abuse in her childhood and adult life. Though she had spent time at Perryville more than once, she explained that this time was transformative for her. The following quote from her illustrates her changing identity:

> I'm learning who I am today. And that I don't even know, I can't even tell you what this identity is. It's a whole new person that I'm learning who I am. Because I've [been] a woman of many hats. I was that person that was that man's fantasy at one point. I was that person who was that bad kid who "Don't play with her, because she's that bad kid." I was that one "Man, you better watch when you talk to her, she's gonna punch you." I was all of them. And those are all like, I was gonna say, like distorted thinking - it was ass backwards is the way I thought. I don't know who I'm becoming today.

Alicia described transforming her self-identity, social identity, and expectations for her future self. Rather than as a captive in a "total institution" (Goffman, 1961), resisting oppressive attempts to change a person, Alicia and other women in orange I spoke to explained the reinventive potential they had at the prison.

Though women rarely said they enjoyed their time at the prison, several described the transformative potential of the time they were secluded from the rest of the life's demands. Prison was described as a time for reflection, learning to value the self, and a safe place to find yourself by many of my participants. In fact, seventeen of the women I interviewed (30%) noted incarceration as time to work on the self when asked what advice they would give to someone

coming to Perryville. For example, Amy, a white woman just over forty-years-old who had started her first sentence a few months before we spoke, advised:

> Just don't take this time for granted. I mean, I don't want this time again. You'll never in your life have to not worry about bills. Not have to like hands-on deal with problems. Not have family drama distracting you. Don't take it for granted, work on yourself.

Another individual, Jamie who was nonbinary and serving a life sentence, equated their sentence to a "vacation" or a "retreat."

> We have a huge gift of time that people on the outs don't have. People pay big money to go on these big retreats for six months or a year. You can actually do that here. You can go "Wow. I mean, I've had a 20-year retreat", if you look at it with the right perspective… How many people would love to have a three-week vacation?

Jamie viewed their sentence as a gift, providing time to heal from trauma endured earlier in life. Though they lamented that the access to programming had been scaled back in recent years, they asserted "there's so much good to take out of this." Despite asserting that they were able to thrive in the prison setting, they added "I'm not saying there hasn't been some real crap storms, but that's life. Out in the free world you have those." Jamie remarked that they felt people in prison are "blessed to have the time" in which they can heal, grow, work on themselves while insulated from the dangers or pressures of outside life.

Beyond providing time to reflect, the prison was also described as a physically and spiritually saving place by more than a dozen of the women in orange with whom I spoke. Research on the pathways for women into crime find that often women who experience incarceration had endured abuse and neglect as children, which often carried over into adulthood. Drug and alcohol abuse along with psychological damage are also common in the early and later adulthoods for these women. Other women get involved in crime because of their connection to family members and partners who are involved in crime (Daly, 1994; Simpson, Yahner, &

Dugan, 2008). The proliferation of trauma and abuse in the pre-prison lives of women in orange was referenced by several interviewees. Jamie, for instance, assessed in our conversation that "99% of the women here have had extreme, either sexual, physical or emotional abuse, not just as children, but it bled into their young adult life."

Between concerns about dangerous drug using lifestyles and histories of abusive interactions with men on the outs, several of these women assured me that if they had not come to prison they believe they would not be alive. Several others recognized their behavior prior to their arrest as dangerous to others and expressed feeling thankful they were sent to prison before they caused serious harm to someone. For these reasons, prison was understood to be a safer place for them and they felt protected there. Alicia recounted, "This is God's hotel - everybody that's in this prison right now was saved from something." Not only did prison provide physical safety for some, but many women in orange described prison as a place of saving in the ways that it provided "time down" to care for oneself and identity, work through trauma and maladaptive coping mechanisms, or to find religion (Ellis, 2023). Indeed, faith was discussed by nineteen women in orange, all of whom described their newfound commitment to their faith (primarily Christian faith) as an essential part of their survival in the prison. Several explained that their faith assured them that what they've gone through in their early life, crime, and/or prison sentence "wasn't for nothing" and provided hope and a model for redemption (see Ellis, 2020 for more on faith-based redemption scripts).

For many, being away from their "real lives" and families was deeply painful, but for some time in the prison therefore was framed as an escape from the dangerous, tumultuous, and tenuous lives they had lived on the outs. Earlier scholars of women's prison life assert that for many women, life may be safer and better in prison compared to outside (Faith, 1993; Sufrin,

2017; Owen 1998). For instance, like the women in orange in my interviews, some women from Sufrin's book similarly describe the jail as a safe place to "recharge," both physically and mentally. This safety is not so much something intentionally provided by the institution, but rather an avenue by which women who live contentious lives on the outs may utilize their time in prison to "better themselves".

The prison was indeed described at a reinventive institution by several women in orange. If provided an escape from pressures of life outside the prison walls which for some was an opportunity for self-reflection, healing, and growth. It should also be noted that women in orange who frame the prison as a reinventive institution in which a person has undergone a transformation may also be a means by which one makes sense of their time served (Crewe & Ievens, 2020). As several of the quotes from women in orange allude to, (such as Christina's suggestion that "while we're completely stripped of everything, why not build a solid foundation to have a better life?') it allows a person to feel like their forced time in prison was utilized in a way that will ultimately improve their futures.

Resistance and advocacy

Previously in this dissertation, everyday actions which are responses to highly controlled environments were referred to as "friction" which contrasted actions which qualify as "resistance" to the prison regime. However, some actions of women in orange were indeed "consciously disruptive, intentionally political actions" (Rubin, 2015, p. 24). Women in orange recounted situations in which they utilized formal processes inside the prison or reached outside of the prison to address unjust and unfair policies or undignified treatment of themselves and others in prison with them at Perryville. These actions contrast to those which challenge the rules of the institution and "render power incomplete" (Rubin, 2015, p. 27), such as altering one's clothes or doing laundry in one's cell despite the prohibition of such behavior by the prison.

Instead, the actions described in this section deliberately assert the humanity, dignity, and citizenry of people in orange at Perryville – they reference fighting for one's rights, entitlements, and equality during incarceration. Framing these actions as resistance is therefore more appropriate.

A frequently cited concern among women in orange was the quality of the physical and mental health care that their prison community members were subjected to. A body of literature on medical care in jails and prisons often notes the poor quality of care received by confined individuals (Braithwaite, et al., 2006). Unsolicited, my interviewees frequently cited the inadequate care they and other people in orange received at Perryville. Medical staff were described as lacking compassion and laden with stigmatized and demonized views of people in prison. Women who brought their health concerns to medical staff who they assert "just don't care" were typically disregarded, often told to "drink water and walk the track" sometimes only to later learn that they had serious health issues. One example comes from the following quote:

> For example, when I found a lump on my breast, I kept telling them and telling them, they called me a hypochondriac, told me it was nothing. And it turned out to be cancer. I had to have a double mastectomy. The State gave me implants here. And the doctor that called me a hypochondriac told me 'Well at least you'll get fake boobs for free.'

This poignant story is perhaps one of the most dramatic I heard in interviews, but certainly was not unique. Women reported filing multiple health needs requests (a form of self-care), others filing HNRs on their behalf (an example of care for others), filing formal grievances with the prison as well, before ultimately feeling forced to "come out of character" as they often called it, or be more assertive bordering on non-compliant with medical staff to finally receive the attention and care they believed they required. The actions of women in orange in the medical unit and in relation to ensuring that they and their prison community members receive

health care when needed certainly fit in the resistance framework offered by previous works in prisons.

Though medical staff were employed at ADCRR, they were described much more like "others" than officers who worked in this space. Several women recalled situations where medical staff demanded that a woman receive a ticket for her unruly behavior, but officers who worked at medical refused to do so. Many of these officers were described as "pro-inmate" and women believed that they knew and were unhappy with how women in orange were treated there. Melanie, for example, recalled a situation in which she cursed and yelled at medical staff after they refused to provide her the care she needed for pain management. The medical worker demanded that a nearby officer "write her up" but the officer never did. Melanie continued to explain "That's because he's pro-inmate… You know, he works there. So, he knows the issues."

Some officers on housing units as well were referred to as "pro-inmate", but in this area of the prison especially, officers were recognized as part of the prison community rather than oppressive supervisors. Frustrations with medical care were directed at medical staff and administrators, not officers, which was distinct from descriptions of officer behavior in other parts of the prison. Officer behavior which was protective of women in orange at medical were framed as ways that they too cared for the population of women in orange struggling to receive adequate medical attention.

Unsurprisingly, the dismal state of the health care at Perryville described by women in orange was not unwarranted complaining. Indeed, the summer before I conducted my interviews, the ACLU filed a lawsuit against all ADCRR facilities regarding the inadequacy of the health services provided to people incarcerated in Arizona. Many of the women I spoke to were aware of this lawsuit and shared detailed knowledge of the case with me, a legal battle which has been

ongoing since 2012. As of June 2022, ADCRR has been ordered to make "substantial changes to staffing and conditions so that medical care and mental healthcare at Arizona prisons comes up to constitutional standards" (ACLU, 2023) More than one woman in orange told me that they have not only filed grievances within the institution, but they have reached out to news agencies, the ACLU and other outside organizations to raise the alarm about the unfair or unconstitutional treatment people at Perryville receive. We can understand this kind of advocacy action within and against the institution as a resistance.

Filing grievances within the institution, reaching out to news agencies and other organizations, or filing civil suits were examples of advocacy and resistance discussed by four participants. Resistance efforts that were described were individual actions fighting against injustice a person in orange experienced or encountered. No examples of collective action were provided in the interviews. These findings support those of previous work with women in prison, which find that resistance tends to be an individual undertaking (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002).

Lori referred to herself as the "grievance queen" and recounted the successes she had had in fighting for dignified and fair treatment from staff for herself and members of the prison community. Her grievances were in response to issues like privileges which were afforded to people at the men's prison but not at the women's prison and the unhygienic distribution of pads and tampons. In this latter example, an officer working at state issue (where clothing, hygiene items, and mail to and from the prison is distributed) had stopped placing feminine hygiene items in a small paper bag before distributing the items to women's cells. The pads and tampons issued at Perryville also are not individually wrapped, and the absence of a paper bag meant that these items were in no way protected when they were tossed onto the floor of a woman's cell each

month. Lori remarked “Do you know how degrading that is? Come home and find things on the floor that I put in my private area?” Since filing her grievance in response to this practice, feminine hygiene products were once again distributed within sanitary paper bags.

Lori also explained that she utilized outside resources like news networks to expose policies which disproportionately impacted people with very long or life sentences and state representatives whom she had contacted about mishandling of the food service at the prison. Whether through internal grievance resolution procedures or through outside resources, people at Perryville who engaged in resistance described several reasons resistance is uncommon and typically an individual effort.

Veronica explained that “whether it's located in policy or not, there is such thing as retaliation and once you start voicing your concerns you kind of become like a target” from staff. Retaliation, she said, could include things like “You're room gets hit. You're likeable [liable] to have your room torn apart, likeable [liable] to be pulled up for UAs [urinary analysis] more often than not, even though they'll list it as untargeted. You're more likely to have friction with admin officers.” As Veronica has increasingly “become more vocal” about receiving care for her own mental and physical health needs, as well as the lack of “adequate clothing, programs, resources, and support” provided by the prison, she has experienced room checks for contraband and drug tests with increased frequency. She understands these actions from staff to be retaliation for her reaching out to the ACLU and filing formal grievances with the prison. Brenda also described receiving retaliation in response to her grievances filed against the medical system, saying “they're pushing back and then making things even tougher and worse for me. You know, the last two weeks I've had twice them search my bunk.”

Robbie was another individual who had engaged in several resistance efforts during his incarceration at Perryville. He secured the right of people at Perryville to access hair clippers and chest binders[33] on the store by putting together a petition and even obtained the Warden's signature for his cause. He also discussed an ongoing civil suit he was fighting against ADCRR facilities regarding the unconstitutionality of their blanket ban on gender affirming surgeries. His efforts took years to accomplish, and he explained how he felt belittled and intimidated by staff and administration when he started asking for such vital items.

> When I really started bringing these things up they would like laugh at me. Because the way they are, it's like, they make you scared to even speak up for yourself. Things that you would think you would be entitled to they act like you're out of line for even mentioning, you know. I mean, the things I had asked for, I was surprised no one had ever brought up before. But they're just very good - I think it's intimidating people to really speak up.

Robbie did not describe retaliation from staff like Veronica did, but the condescension and intimidation he experienced from staff he asserts also serves to deter resistance and advocacy efforts among the population of people in orange. Existing scholarship posit that women in prison avoid resistance actions out of fear that opposing prison administration will result in loss of privileges during incarceration (Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002). Retaliation of this sort was not reported by participants in these interviews.

Collective resistance action was not described by the people I spoke to at Perryville, but individual choices to resist were not disparaged by other women in orange. Veronica also explained that women in orange do not engage in retaliation actions against those individuals who do resist mistreatment by the system.

> We kind of have like this unspoken thing where it's like, you know, if you choose to do that, do it at your own caution, like at your own will. And it's kind of like an unspoken rule. Like, "No, it sucks here. But I mean, weigh it out. Is it really that

[33] Chest binders are used by people with breast tissue to flatten their chest to feel more comfortable in their bodies.

> important to you to like, go against the grain and voice yourself and try to advocate for change? For us within the prison?"

Earlier in this dissertation, mentorship and guidance offered by other women at Perryville was discussed as a form of care for others in the prison community as it prevented the actions of one woman from effecting the whole yard (e.g. getting locked down, receiving blanket punishments, etc.). Veronica's account, though, indicates that women in orange have a kind of "to each her own" understanding of resistance in prison. This may be related to the fact that the retaliation from staff in response to resistance efforts was described as targeting only the individual engaged in resistance. No narratives mentioned blanket punishment or negative ripple effects for the prison community as consequence of individual resistance actions. As evidenced in Veronica's above quote, women in orange may discourage resistance which could be emotionally taxing and may make a person's time in prison more difficult. These warnings are not a form of intimidation but more similar to the guidance offered as care for others at the prison.

Summary

While care certainly frames many of the actions of women housed at Perryville, theoretical frameworks provided by extant works were also evident in the actions of the women I interviewed. This chapter outlined the ways that additional methods of adaptation to the prison environment utilized by women in orange at Perryville. The use of physical fights is explained partly through the inmate and street codes, though women in orange did not explain a connection between their fighting and their femininity like girls involved in crime in previous works have (Jones, 2010; Messerschmidt, 1995).

Gender was accomplished by people at Perryville in various ways which are explained using the doing gender or structured action framework. Most common were actions that

exhibited respectable femininity, demonstrating that a woman values herself and seeks to appear presentable even during her confinement. Additionally, tomboy femininity was exhibited by some women engaged in actions which were understood to be feminine as well as some which were masculine.

Some women in orange also learned to work the system in response to the deprivation of comfort and stability in the prison. These actions support findings from earlier works with women in prison (Owen, 1998; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005) which provide a useful framework for understanding the prevalence of snitching – a common violation of the inmate code among women in prison. Others also explained the ways that they used their forced separation from the 'free world' to transform themselves and their identities, framing the prison as a reinventive institution (Crewe & Ievens, 2020). And finally, though many of the actions of women maintaining their identity or individuality at Perryville were framed as modes of friction, there were indeed descriptions of resistance as well. People in this prison engaged in purposeful and formal actions in reaction to unjust and undignified treatment by officers and administrative policies with the aim (and often successful outcome) of changing the way they and others at Perryville were treated.

Care is certainly one way that women in this prison adapt to their confinement, but there are indeed other adaptation styles as well which have been established in the body of literature on incarcerated women. Narratives from women in orange provided support for findings and themes established in these extant works. The final chapter will summarize the findings from the interviews with women in orange at Perryville, address how this work contributes to the body of literature on adaptation to prison life and suggest several implications for the future of correctional administration.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Women in orange housed at ASPC-Perryville described life in the prison as being structured primarily around care. In this dissertation the term care referred to a feeling of concern or interest, providing for the needs of someone, or paying close attention to doing something to avoid harm. Care also included self-care, involving the maintenance of one's body, well-being, individuality and personal identity. In framing care as the fundamental feature of life at this women's prison, I aim not to gloss over the painful parts of the prison life experience. Rather this dissertation sought to explore how the actions and attitudes of women in prison, many of whom are familiar with living in deprived and otherwise unsafe conditions, create caring lives in a space that functions to regiment behavior, strip identity and dignity, and curtail the formation of nurturing relationships.

The body of literature describing women's prisons and the adaptations of women in prison largely overlook the role femininity plays in structuring life in a single-sex and regimented space. Care is indeed rooted in femininity and feminist concepts of identity. Its role was made evident in this dissertation which sought to examine women's prisons from the ground up and to examine the capacity of gender to inform how women adapt to life in prison.

Women in orange cared for others through involvement in found families and mentoring relationships which are also described in extant literature on women in prison (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005; Owen, 1998; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). Care packages with material goods as well guidance in learning how to navigate life in the prison were features of these relationships, but these kinds of care were also provided between strangers for people new to the yard feeling lost upon arrival to the prison community. Providing care for others also presented a paradox however - women living in an environment with limited resources and a

regular influx of new strangers had to discern who they could trust with their emotional needs as well as which people in orange they could care for without being taken advantage of.

For some, providing care for others also served as self-care – engaging in nurturing roles like "prison mom" or program leader allowed women in orange to establish and cultivate an identity for themselves in an institution which sought to strip them of individuality. Care for the self was also undertaken by women in orange who expressed their femininity and creativity in ways that were in compliance with prison regulations as well as via modes of friction. Cleanliness and other aspects of appearance as well were expressions of care for the self, including feminine grooming routines, the use of comfortable familiar fragrances, and the curation of personalized outfits. Women in orange did not refer to their self-care actions as resistance against the prison system – indeed some descriptions of identity transformation or personal healing were discussed as an opportunity afforded by a woman's incarceration. Instead, tending to one's wellbeing, improving the self, or actions that allowed a woman to "just be me" fit within the care framework.

The actions of women in orange recounted in interview narratives also bolster findings and themes from extant work with women in prison. Navigating social expectations surrounding fighting versus kiting in conflict resolution showcases the interplay of doing femininity amid codes of conduct which are rooted in more masculine endeavors – like violence, intimidation, and asserting respect. Advocacy within the prison system, such as the actions described in by those filing formal grievances at Perryville are examples of resistance against a carceral system which may disregard the dignity and citizenry of its detainees. Women in orange at this prison also described ways that, like women in other prisons, they've learned how to navigate the rules

and exceptions in the institution to avoid disciplinary trouble while also making their time confined relatively more comfortable.

Finally, women in orange at Perryville described a process of taking care behavior which occurred after fights, a phenomenon which has not been described in extant works with people in prison. This behavior illustrates the ways that care structures life in this women's prison and encompasses care for the self, others, and the prison community. It highlights the interplay of responses to a multifaceted population in a highly controlled environment and the influence of gender in conflict and violent altercations.

Limitations

Before addressing the contributions of this research to scholarship and the corrections field, it is important to note that this research is not without its limitations. These limitations are related to administrative policies which impact sample eligibility, sample self-selection issues, the questions I sought to ask during the interview, and my positionality as the interviewer. Each of these limitations are discussed below and should be recognized as the findings in this dissertation are considered.

Firstly, there are segments of the population at Perryville with whom I know that I did not get to speak. As mentioned in chapter 3 on data and methods, people in orange at Perryville who were housed in intake, close custody, or who were otherwise ineligible to be out of their cell without accompaniment by an officer would not have had the opportunity to take part in the interviews. Policies like these related to the functioning of the prison impact the generalizability of my sample to the rest of the population at Perryville. Further impacting the generalizability of the sample, , though, there are also likely some selection effects which impacted which eligible

women in orange decided to participate in interviews. For example, several women in orange referenced a group of "cool kids" who were often described as loud, disrespectful, a source of drama, and people at the prison who did not engage in work, school, or other programs. Despite having "idle" time while serving their sentence, I did not speak with anyone who described their clique or found family in this way. Whether care or other adaptation styles are prevalent among women in orange in these groups, therefore, is unknown.

An additional avenue by which women in orange may have been functionally ineligible to participate in interviews is related to their involvement with work. Interviews were conducted only during the working hours of CO-IIIs: 8am-4pm during weekdays. Women who worked jobs at the prison during this time frame therefore would not have had the availability in their schedule to speak with me. This may have limited the way that I came to understand the role of work in prison communities and social networks at this prison (Gibson-Light, 2022).

The use of virtual interviews allowed interviews to take place despite limitations on visitors to the prison in response to security and health-safety concerns. However, this methodology also introduces limitations to the sample related to privacy within an institution concentrated on surveillance. Video visitation, phone calls, and other modes of communication between people housed at Perryville and people outside of the prison are subject to recording and monitoring by security personnel at the prison. The Google Meets format used for these interviews were not subject to such monitoring, however, living in the highly surveilled environment of the prison likely impacted whether some people wished to engage in conversations with outsiders - put simply, people probably assumed that the interview conversation was subject to recording and monitoring. The location of the interview – in a CO-III's private office – likely contributed to this concern. Though my informed consent procedure

aimed to mitigate concerns like these, the consent script was delivered at the start of the interview. Therefore, only people who already agreed to participate, therefore, would receive such assurances prior to speaking with me. Participation was voluntary and required that interested parties opt to volunteer to be interviewed. Self-selection issues like these, therefore, likely impacted the people with whom I was able to speak at the prison.

Furthermore, the video conversation may have presented concerns not only about official monitoring, but additional issues related to privacy in a prison space largely devoid of it. For instance, one participant asked to have their camera turned off during our interview. I did not ask why, and they did not offer a reason, but their choice highlights additional limitations presented by the virtual interview format. They, like so many of the participants, were very open in their discussion of trauma, identity, and emotional struggle, they allowed me to record the audio of interview, and yet there was a reason they preferred to converse without showing their face. This may be related to concerns about privacy, feeling subject to voyeurism, or a means of retaining control in an unfamiliar and potentially uncomfortable situation. These concerns, therefore, likely impacted what was shared in interview narratives as well as who decided to sit down in front of the camera in the first place.

One final limitation related to the virtual interviews is related to my lack of control over the interview setting. Occasionally, an interviewee would stop mid-sentence because someone needed to interrupt the interview to remind us of another time commitment or grab something from the office (similar intrusions are noted in Gibson-Light & Seim, 2020). Other times, the interviewee would see someone they knew pass by the office door window and would briefly interact with them. In a few instances, the call would freeze, or the participant would ask me to repeat myself because the audio had lagged. Each of these situations interrupted the flow of the

conversation and may have impeded the establishment of rapport between myself and the participant. More impactfully, in my informed consent script, I reminded participants to not discuss subjects which could result in them receiving disciplinary consequences as I was not able to control who was outside of the room or what someone may overhear. Though essential for participant safety, this did indeed impact what women in orange shared with me. Often, participants would whisper words or phrases to me, (e.g. 'snitch') preface their story by saying something like "Not to say too much," or by referencing my request that they avoid discussing certain topics (e.g. intimate relationships with other people at the prison). Again, this editing and omitting is essential for protecting participants, but it also likely inhibited trust with me and reminded the participants of the punishment potential of the prison. Establishing trust with research subjects behind bars is a challenge discussed by other penal scholars as well (Gibson-Light & Seim, 2020).

Further impacting who volunteered to participate and likely what participants shared in the interviews was the fact that participation required that women in orange interact with their CO-III. My recruitment strategy, therefore, may have excluded women in orange who were uncomfortable speaking with this authority figure and/or being escorted by them to a private room. The necessary involvement of the CO-IIIs may also have inadvertently contributed to selection bias. Though CO-IIIs were instructed to schedule the first fifteen people who wrote their names on each unit's sign-up sheet, there is the possibility that women in orange who were deemed untrustworthy or problematic were skipped by COs in scheduling.

There is one additional administrative policy which likely impacted the sample of people with whom I spoke. As I was nearing completion of interviews on the privilege yards, one woman was discussing the frequency of strip searches at the prison. She explained that she had

to “squat and cough” (which is how to the strip search was referred to by several participants) every time she left the gate and mentioned “even when I’m done with this interview its going to happen.” This hadn’t been revealed in previous interviews, but because interviews with people housed on Minimum A were held in the office of a CO-III on Minimum B, Minimum A participants had to exit a secure gate and enter through another to participate in the interview – a boundary crossing which required a strip search each time. Though it was a surprise to me, women housed on these yards were certainly aware of this procedure and it no doubt deterred at least some women in orange from volunteering to participate. This introduced an ethical concern to the research I had not anticipated.

Gibson-Light and Seim discuss the ways in which prison research reinforces state power as “penal authority exercises nearly unparalleled control over researchers’ ability to access their sites” (2020, p. 685) and researchers must at least partly align themselves with prison staff to conduct their research. Navigating the power asymmetry is certainly a challenge for a researcher, but it also necessitates some involvement of the researcher in the oppressive prison system they study – in their words “ethnography helps reveal penal domination, but penal domination also shapes ethnography” (Gibson-Light & Seim, 2020, p. 671). Though my interviews were not part of an ethnography, I do indeed see avenues by which I was a participant in the system of penal domination. This was perhaps most obvious in the connection between my data collection and the exposure of participants to strip searches. Angela Davis (2003) and other scholars describe the use of strip searches in carceral facilities as a form of state violence. Through these lenses, therefore, it must be acknowledged that participants housed on Minimum A were subjected to state sexual violence because of their participation in my interviews.

The content of the interview narratives would have been impacted by the questions that I chose to ask of the participants. For example, I sought to understand the role of femininity and feminine identity expression in the prison, and therefore asked questions explicitly asking if the interviewee did anything while incarcerated to express their gender identity. The prevalence of the feminine routines and gender-specific actions described in this dissertation therefore may be a result of the participants being primed by my questions.

The women in orange with whom I did speak may differ from the rest of the Perryville population in ways that impacted my findings. The sample of women in this prison I did speak to tended to be older than the average person held at Perryville and had sentence lengths that were, on average, longer than the average sentence length of women incarcerated in the US. This may have contributed to an over-selection of people engaged in care routines. Recall that previous research finds that "old heads" or people in prison who have served more time often serve in stabilizing roles at the prison (Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018; Lempert, 2016). The frequency with which nurturance and caring for others was discussed in the interview narratives, therefore, could have been a product of the age and prison tenure of my participants.

As with most qualitative work, my presence in the data gathering process also presents limitations related to the responses offered by the interview participants. My positionality as 1) a researcher, 2) an outsider to the prison, 3) a white person, and 4) a feminine presenting person all likely impacted who decided to speak with me and what they each decided to share with me during the interview.

I introduced myself as a researcher from the university at the start of each interview. This affirmed my status as an outsider which may have impacted the information that was shared with me. As a positive, I was able to ask questions that may have seemed obvious to someone who

was an insider. For example, a participant was talking about paying a friend “a dollar or two” in the prison to which I asked how money was exchanged in this setting. She laughed at my ignorance, but quickly explained the process - that cash did not exchange hands, but rather goods were exchanged, the value of which totaled “a dollar or two.”

My outsider status and position as a university-affiliated researcher indeed also presented limitations, however. In terms of the information that was provided to me, there may be issues related to social desirability. As discussed in chapter 6, several participants described the prison as a place for their identity transformation. This may be a reflection of participant efforts to assure me of their rehabilitation or transformation, to assert their redemption for the record, or to showcase the lessons they have encountered in programs offered by the prison.

Martin (2018) details aspects of the prison experience which shape how a person carries themselves, understands, and reacts to the world around them. His description highlights the barrier between insiders and outsiders in research, a limitation that was also evident in my interviews. While struggling to explain an aspect of prison respect, one woman told me “I don't know how to explain it. You’ll have to come and stay a few days.” This spotlights my lack of insider knowledge and is a reminder that there will be limitations on what an outsider researcher will be able to understand having not lived in the environment of the population they study.

Though I was an outsider both to staff and to the women in orange, my recruitment strategy, location of the interview, and interactions with CO-IIIs in the Google Meets room as participants were settling in for the interview all served to inadvertently align me with staff. Though my informed consent script assured participants that the only recordings of the interview were for my personal research use and that I had no intention of sharing the recordings nor the details of the conversations with any staff member, this affiliation may have impacted how

trusting interview participants were of me during data collection. Gibson-Light and Seim (2020) address difficulties with conducting ethnographies in prisons related to navigating the power hierarchy between staff and incarcerated people as an outside researcher. They, too, note the ways in which they were framed as aligned with staff by staff members while conducting research inside carceral facilities.

In addition to the information provided in the informed consent process, I did attempt to distance myself from staff in another small way. I asked for confirmation that the officer was not in the room and that the interview participant was indeed alone in the office before beginning any part of the interview. This not only confirmed that my research protocol was being followed, but also aimed to affirm with the participant that I was not collecting data on behalf of staff. Nevertheless, participants may have avoided sharing experiences or thoughts with me which they feared may result in harassment from staff.

My race may have also impacted who decided to participate in interviews as well as what participants opted to share during their interview time. For example, white women may have been more comfortable volunteering to participate while people of color may have felt less comfortable with volunteering to speak to a white female researcher. This potential sample self-selection issue, therefore, may relate to the finding that race appeared to be a non-issue among people housed at this prison. Furthermore, because of my racial privilege, I also may have overlooked issues related to race at the prison. As mentioned in chapter 5, hair and skin care products provided on the prison store were white privileged, leaving women of color without products that were difficult to do without. As I haven't lived a life in which struggling to find products that care for my hair or match my skin color was an issue, the ways in which access to

feminine self-care products in prison would vary by race was not something I thought to explore with my interview questions.

I did not share my age, marital status, or parental status with many interview participants, but these factors nevertheless likely impacted the data I collected as well as my interpretation of these data. I conducted these interviews as a nearly-thirty-year-old woman, long-term partner and wife of six years in a heterosexual marriage, and a mother to an infant son. There are many ways that these statuses could have influenced how I was perceived as an individual and interviewer, how I interpreted the findings from interview narratives, and topics I may have overlooked. Furthermore, as I was asking about gender identity and femininity, my self-presentation as a feminine woman may have impacted the interview data.

Policy Implications

In part due to the life histories and socialization women encountered prior to their incarceration, women in orange at this prison described employing strategies to cope with their confinement that differed from those discussed in extant literature which focused on men in prison. Nurturance, femininity, and care were fundamental in the narratives of women housed at Perryville. I conclude, therefore, that behavior in prison is guided in no small part by gender norms. This dissertation is but the start of a new way of thinking about women in prison. As it is a qualitative investigation, additional research is needed to determine the generalizability of these findings to other women's prisons. However, criminal justice and indeed prison administrative policies have historically been informed by knowledge about men in prison. Ignoring the unique needs, concerns, and barriers of incarcerated women risks overlooking factors which are important for secure administration of prisons as well as the wellbeing of incarcerated women. Therefore, I have presented three preliminary policy implications for

carceral institutions informed by these interviews, but caution that more knowledge about women in prison is needed to confirm their pertinence.

a) Officers should receive gender-informed conflict resolution training.

First, women in prison feel deeply connected to a small group, but there doesn't appear to be much solidarity among the population of women in prison, and this trend is also found in previous works (Giallombardo, 1966; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005). Therefore, security threats that are of great concern at men's prisons, such as riots or protests, are much less of a concern at women's prisons. Perhaps the focus that CO training provides to staff members about identifying and responding to these issues is less warranted at women's prisons. As an alternative, several women I interviewed requested that staff receive sensitivity training to better handle confrontations with women in orange. Lori, for example, recalled a recent incident involving a friend of hers.

> My best friend was being verbally abused by a six-foot-three sergeant all because she didn't have her pass on her. He was screaming at her at the top of his freaking lungs in front of seven of us. These men forget us women have been abused both physically and verbally. There was no reason for it, and it happens all the time.

Lori acknowledged the prevalence of abuse histories among women in orange and shared that situations like these are very disturbing for her. Officer training that is gender-informed may help officers recognize that many of the women they are instructing have histories of abuse and will respond differently than the average man, for example, to an authority figure yelling in their face.

b) Officers should be cognizant of the impact of minor ticket writing.

Secondly, it should be noted that women at Perryville, particularly on the lower security yards were preoccupied with making sure they didn't receive minor tickets for things like their appearance. Many indicated they were vigilant about compliance because they didn't want to

lose their privileges, such as visitation and phone calls with loved ones or eligibility for better paying jobs. The serious impact of handing out minor tickets "like Oprah" as one woman described it, should not be underestimated by administration and officers.

c) *Bring back tools for feminine expression and creative care.*

Lastly, femininity in prison is expressed by many in unique and creative ways. Some of the "old numbers" or women who have been at Perryville for decades noted that they used to have curling irons, could wear their own jeans from the outs while inside, and could engage in traditional feminine hobbies like knitting and painting. However, all of these examples have been pruned from the prison as prisons have "gotten tougher". Women do find ways to maintain their identity and dignity, but administration should consider the necessity of the deprivations they inflict on the people confined in their prison. Potential for security breaches among women in prison should be weighed against the psychological toll inflicted through the regulation of one's identity tool kit (Goffman, 1961) and access to creative expression.

Contributions to scholarship

Existing theoretical frameworks established in research on women in prison are certainly useful and several find support in this work. However, despite the many actions of women in orange reflecting actions of women studied in other prisons, the prominence of care described by women confined at ASPC-Perryville has not been detailed in previous works. This dissertation and the care framework posited therein present several implications for the future of research on life in prisons, particularly for women in prison.

Foremost, it highlights the importance of continuing to frame research on gender specific populations with gender in mind. Ground-up work like this dissertation allows the role of

femininity and women's gender socialization to be viewed as the impactful social features that they are. Whether the care framework is generalizable to other women's prison is an empirical question for future research endeavors, but intentionally placing the lived experience of women into research on confined and single-sex communities is an effort studies should continue to engage in.

Not only does the care framework have implications for the scholarship on women in prison, but more generally for the importation and deprivation dialogue in corrections scholarship as well. As it has been described in this dissertation, care is an imported response to deprivations inherent to the carceral space. Care is prominent in the narratives of these women in orange in large part because women are socialized to provide care to others as a means of expressing or "doing" femininity. Future scholarship should continue to expand on the ways in which gender outside of the prison is imported and structure the responses of the prison population to the deprivations commonly reported in research.

In conclusion, care is the prevailing feature among women in orange at Perryville. The dearth of care provided to women in orange by the prison, however, offers much opportunity for improvement. Future research on women in prison should continue to emphasize the role of gender in these communities and recognize that a person does not abandon her upbringing, identity, and socialization when she is forced into a unisex uniform. She remains primarily a *woman* in orange.

APPENDIX: Interview Guide

Now that we've established your consent to participate in this research, I'd like to start with a few quick questions about you before we get into the interview.

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your race? (White, Black, Native/Indigenous, Other – please specify).
3. Are you Hispanic or Latina?
4. How would you identify your gender? (woman, transwoman, transman, nonbinary, other – please specify)
5. Are you married? Have you ever been married?
6. Do you have any children? How many?
7. How old were you when you were first incarcerated? Was that at a jail, prison, or a juvenile facility?
8. How many times have you been incarcerated in your life?
9. For this current prison term, how long were you sentenced? How long have you served of that so far?
10. What's the longest amount of time you've served at once?

Ok. Thank you for answering those questions. Let's move on to the interview questions now. Remember not to say people's real names or provide other information that would identify them. Also, remember not to talk about things that could get you in disciplinary trouble – things like the use or distribution of contraband, or other things that could get you an infraction like engaging in sexual acts with another inmate.

1. Before you were incarcerated, what did you think prison would be like? (Follow up: Had anyone in your family or friend circle been incarcerated?)
2. Walk me through the first day you were at [the prison]. (Follow up: Do you remember how you were feeling that day?)
3. Has anything surprised you about prison life? Tell me more about that.
4. Can you tell me about the top three hardest things about being incarcerated?
5. What was it like adjusting to the prison environment?

6. Do you think your values or attitudes have changed since you've been incarcerated? (Follow up: in what ways?)
7. In general, how would you describe the way women in here are with each other?
    a. *Do they typically respect one another? Are they friendly? Do they usually help one another out?*
    b. *Would you say you have trust and support with any of the women in prison?*
8. What is it like living around only women?
    a. *I've about how hard to come by privacy is in prison. Can you talk a bit about how you find privacy?*
9. Would you say there are certain things the women in here value or that are particularly important to fitting in or getting by?
    a. *Habits, relationship types or people, material things*
10. From what I've been hearing in these interviews, so much about the prison system is designed to take away your individuality. Do you agree? What are some of the ways you make sure you stay true to who you are in here?
11. There's so much out there on men's prisons, and it seems like the general public doesn't understand what it's like to be a woman in prison.
    a. *Do you consider yourself feminine? Why or why not? What are the ways you express being feminine in here?*
    b. *Can you tell me about some of the ways prison rules and state uniforms stop you from expressing yourself as a woman?*
    c. *What are the things you do to your uniform to make sure you still feel like a woman in here? What about your hair? What about your makeup? Nails? Skin and body products?*
    d. *I've also been hearing a bit about the creativity of women at Perryville. Can you talk about how you or other women express their individuality in creative ways? (i.e. cooking, art, etc)*
12. Were you incarcerated when Covid hit – (if yes) what was that like?
13. I want to pivot now to talk about people on the outside. How often do you see or talk to friends and family?

a. *What are visits like? How often? How do you feel leading up to a visit, versus afterwards? What do you wish could be different about visits?*

14. Thinking about the most important people in your life on the outside, who would you say you were the closest to before coming to Perryville?

a. *Have those people stayed the same? How have they "shown up" for you? Can you think of someone who pulled back, or didn't show up for you anymore?*

15. What is the number one advice you would give to a woman who just got here about life at [this prison]?

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