

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

Punishment and Coping in “Golden County”: An Ethnography of Jail Living

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Michael Lawrence Walker

June 2014

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson

Dr. Adalberto Aguirre, Jr.

Dr. Alfredo M. Miranda

Dr. Dylan E. Rodriguez

Copyright by  
Michael Lawrence Walker  
2014

The Dissertation of Michael Lawrence Walker is approved:

---

---

---

---

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have had help from more people than I have space to thank. Let me begin by expressing my sincerest gratitude to the most outstanding mentor, chair, and friend that a student could ever hope to have—Ellen Reese. This project would not have been possible if not for her efforts. On more than one occasion she extended herself on my behalf. With all she managed on her plate, she still found time to read, edit, and respond to my work with astonishing speed. Thank you! I would also like to acknowledge my committee members, Adalberto Aguirre, Jr., Alfredo Mirande, and Dylan Rodriguez, each of whom provided valuable insight and pushed me (through challenges or through the value of their scholarship) to do my best. To my “unofficial” committee members, Damion Thomas and Randol Contreras, thank you for your advice, friendship, and time. To Scott Brooks who originally encouraged my ethnographic eye, I am forever grateful. To Howard Becker who watered the seed that Scott Brooks planted, thank you for the long conversations and advice. I am also particularly grateful to Jane Ward who was a friend when I most needed one. To Edna Bonacich, who I consider a member of my immediate family, thank you for always being there! I am grateful to the Department of Sociology faculty who I made full use of, often popping into offices with my queries. I would be remiss without a special thanks to Anna Wire, our Graduate Affairs Assistant, who literally ensures the success of graduate students at UC, Riverside. Thank you! Finally, I would like to acknowledge my dear brother, Wil Greer, whose act of heroic kindness so many years ago sparked a friendship that would guide me to be the best man, father, and developing scholar that I can be.

## DEDICATIONS

The road to earning a Ph.D. is a selfish one. I have tried to remain mindful of that throughout this process. The efforts represented here are dedicated to Heather L. M. Walker, M.D., Brenden M. Walker, Laiyla I. S. Walker, and Jaden K. M. Walker—my wife and children. You all give me strength. Your patience and understanding during my long hours away can never be repaid, but I will never stop trying.

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Punishment and Coping in “Golden County”: An Ethnography of Jail Living

by

Michael Lawrence Walker

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology

University of California, Riverside, June 2014

Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson

A growing body of research has been dedicated to examining the effects of mass incarceration with particular emphasis on the lives of former prison inmates, their families, their communities, and their life chances post incarceration. This dissertation takes a different focus, looking at the everyday lives of inmates in a county jail system. Though often discussed anecdotally within studies of prisons, jails are distinct from other types of punishing institutions in terms of function, amenities available to inmates, and scope. These differences make for a qualitatively unique inmate experience. The distinctiveness of jails provides for equally distinct sets of punishments and coping strategies that inmates adopt for survival. The findings presented here reveal the practical application of “tough on crime” policies and practices inside jail walls where the lives of captured men have been nearly invisible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DIFFERENTIATING JAILS FROM PRISONS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>STUDIES OF JAIL LIFE .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>17</b>
The Setting .....	20
Data Collection .....	21
An Insider Status .....	24
Recording Fieldnotes.....	28
Analysis .....	29
<b>PLAN FOR THE DISSERTATION.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter 2: A PENAL SOCIETY .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>GOLDEN COUNTY FACILITIES.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Open Dayrooms.....	35
Closed Dayrooms.....	36
Single-Man Units.....	37
<b>CATEGORIES OF PUNISHMENT .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Environmental Punishments.....	38
Private Punishments.....	42
A Netherworld.....	44
<b>INTAKE .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Formal Intake Processing.....	45
Informal Intake Processing.....	48
<b>THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PUBLIC IDENTITY .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Resisting Public Identities.....	55

<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>57</b>
<b>Chapter 3: CLASSIFICATION, RACIALIZATION, AND PUNISHMENT</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>INMATE CLASSES</b> .....	<b>62</b>
Trustees.....	62
The General Population .....	66
Stigmatized Class.....	67
Interactions between Classes.....	70
A Web of Resentment .....	76
<b>RACIALIZED INMATE GROUPS</b> .....	<b>77</b>
Racial Formation & Racialization .....	80
Classification: The Organizational Racial Project .....	82
The “Politics”: The Micro-Interactional Racial Project .....	94
<b>APOLITICAL SPACES</b> .....	<b>100</b>
Pre-Housing Holding Cells.....	101
Mental Health Holding Cells.....	102
The Trustee Pod.....	104
“Church” .....	106
<b>EXPLAINING VARIATION IN THE RIGIDITY OF RACIALIZATION</b> .....	<b>108</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>112</b>
<b>Chapter 4: “JAILING”</b> .....	<b>116</b>
Sensory Deprivation .....	117
Contamination .....	122
Emotional Constriction.....	132
<b>TIME</b> .....	<b>135</b>

<b>FREE TIME .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>PENAL TIME.....</b>	<b>138</b>
Time as Punishment.....	140
Time as a Task.....	142
<b>TIMETABLES.....</b>	<b>151</b>
Reference Groups & Points .....	153
Managing Time.....	154
<b>SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Chapter 5: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>PUNISHMENT AND COPING .....</b>	<b>164</b>
Racialization as Punishment.....	165
“Jailing” .....	167
<b>SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>170</b>

**FIGURES**

**FIGURE 1: GOLDEN COUNTY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE ..... 88**

**FIGURE 2: POLARITY CONTINUUM..... 151**

**TABLES**

**TABLE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL ..... 110**

**TABLE 2: MICRO-LEVEL ..... 112**

## CHAPTER 1: AN UNDEREXAMINED SOCIETY

It was my birthday, 2008. That morning I had decided to head down to the Providence<sup>1</sup> courthouse to take care of a traffic ticket. I spoke with a clerk briefly and was asked to sit in the waiting area while some documents were put together. Moments later I was approached by a couple of sheriff's deputies who instructed me to "stand and face the wall." I later discovered that charges that had been filed and dropped were refiled, and I made the job of executing a warrant easy by delivering myself to the courthouse.

Unceremoniously, I was taken through a series of corridors to the Providence Downtown Detention Center.<sup>2</sup> At the first station in the intake processing area, I leaned forward with my legs spread uncomfortably wide and my palms flat on a desk as a deputy catalogued my personal items. I was instructed to verify and sign a property form and a screening form that documented my general disposition at the time of admittance. I signed the property sheet, and I noticed that the deputy had checked several boxes on the screening form in order to move the process along faster.<sup>3</sup> I disrupted the flow. I told the deputy that he should not have checked the "no history of mental illness" box, which prompted him to ask me whether I felt that I might do harm to others or myself. Thinking over the events of the day, I defiantly told him, "I don't know what I might do."

Nothing else was said. Straightaway I was escorted to a small room where a deputy instructed me to strip naked. Instead of the usual county orange uniform that

---

<sup>1</sup> All names of places and persons have changed.

<sup>2</sup> The term "jail" and "detention center" are interchangeable.

<sup>3</sup> This was a common practice at the intake in Providence.

inmates donned, I was given a heavy, green, nylon dress that was held together by Velcro-straps on one side. Then I was placed in a safety cell.<sup>4</sup>

The cell was approximately 8' x 8'. It was cold, and there was a breeze at my feet that drafted up the green safety dress that I was wearing. The walls and floor were soft compared to the concrete floors of the rest of the jail. The air was saturated with a pungent smell. Human feces were smeared on the walls, splattered against the ceiling, tossed against the camera in the corner of the room, streaked across the floor, and smudged on the 4" x 8" window in the cell door. Catty-corner to the cell door was a grate on the floor covering an ill cut hole that provided direct access to a septic pipe. The mechanism for flushing the "pipe" was controlled by deputies from outside of the cell, which meant that human waste festered in the hole until a deputy remembered to flush.

I struggled against the environment for relief of any kind. A deputy offered me a cup of drinking water from time to time, and I was given meals at designated times. However, presumably for my own safety, I was not given a bed or bedroll.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, I was strategic with where I stood and where I sat so as to avoid the feces of previous occupants. I took off the nylon dress, opened it up, and spread it across the floor so that I could lie down safely; however, this meant that my naked skin was bare to the cold breeze in the room. I saved the skim milk cartons from "feedings"<sup>6</sup> and stacked them up as pillows for my head. My mind raced in a thousand directions. I softly sang songs to

---

<sup>4</sup> Safety cells are typically used for captured persons who seem self-destructive or are otherwise deemed mentally unstable and troublesome in some way.

<sup>5</sup> A bedroll included a foam mat, two flat sheets, and a thin, coarse, wool blanket.

<sup>6</sup> Deputies often referred to breakfast, lunch, and dinner as "feedings."

myself to pass and measure time and to focus my thoughts on something—anything other than my circumstances.

After what felt like a day, a young Asian woman who identified herself as a worker for the county’s department of mental health visited me to administer a survey of items regarding my mental stability. Through a small hatch in the cell door that was knee high, she struggled through the “one size fits all” questions, and after several instances wherein she began to read a question and stopped because she realized that it was not relevant for my situation, I became annoyed. I asked her whether she was simply reading a form to me or trying to determine what landed me in the cell. She said she “wanted to help me,” and she continued down the list of questions. Agitated, I delved into the meanings of every question she asked. *Did I feel like committing suicide? Well that depends. Are you talking about before I was put in this shit hole or after because that’s an important factor that you might want to consider.* Eventually, her patience ran out, and while in the midst of asking a question she stopped and said, “You know what? It doesn’t matter.” She closed the hatch and walked away.

Many hours later, an older Black woman from the department of mental health visited me without a survey form. We talked lightly and briefly. She told me that if I wanted to get out, I needed to tell the doctor (who would be visiting me next) that I was not suicidal or dangerous anymore. I explained that I was desperate to get out, and so when a kindly East Indian psychiatrist came by about a day later, I told him that I was better—that I wanted to live. He said, “Okay. We’ll get you out of there.” Hours later, he was true to his word, and a deputy escorted me to a shower after which, I was given

the typical Golden County inmate uniform and placed back in line to complete the rest of the intake process.

I open with this experience because it sits at the intersection of concerns regarding mental health care for inmates, punishment, the function of jails, and the general care and management of penal inmates. More important for my purposes here, the experience takes us from theoretical and macro-level discussions of punishment and penal management to the practical application of coping strategies in response to what I call *environmental* and *private punishments*, which refer to the constellation of tactics utilized (whether purposeful or indiscriminate) to penalize inmates.

There is a large body of research that looks at the growth of punishment—the expansion of the carceral state—and the indirect effects of “the prison boom,” “mass incarceration,” “mass imprisonment,” and the like on communities and the families of the incarcerated. Certainly, the growth of the U.S. penal population has necessitated such studies. From the 1970s through the early 2000s, 1.4 million persons were added to state and federal prisons (Western 2006). By year’s end 2012, 6.93 million adults were inmates in a correctional facility of some kind, or they were otherwise under the supervision of the criminal justice system through parole or probation agencies (Glaze and Herberman 2013).

This has had disastrous results for communities, families, and interpersonal relationships (Lynch and Sabol 2004; Western 2006; Clear 2007; Comfort 2008; Murray and Farrington 2008; Goffman 2009; Wildeman 2009; Wakefield and Wildeman 2013). The life chances of former inmates who hope to enter the job market are curtailed by

virtue of being former inmates (Schwartz and Skolnick 1962; Pettit and Western 2004; Western 2006; Pager 2007; Goffman 2009; Wakefield and Uggen 2010). The intersection of racialized criminal justice policies and stratification forces have led to disproportionately high numbers of Black American and Latino American inmates in penal institutions, which contributes to the “sedimentation” (Oliver and Shapiro 1997) of poor black and brown communities (Wacquant 2000; Wacquant 2001; Pettit and Western 2004; Western 2006; Massey 2007; Russell-Brown 2009; Alexander 2010; Bobo and Thompson 2010; Wakefield and Uggen 2010; Tonry 2011). Thus, the picture of American society that is developing is one that is fearful and controlling (Feeley and Simon 1992; Garland 2001b; Simon 2007; Russell-Brown 2009; Rios 2011; Tonry 2011) with cyclical social ills that transform humans into fodder for the carceral state.

Unfortunately, our efforts to understand the larger effects of expansive punishment policies and practices have not translated to a greater understanding of the inmate experience. The practical application of punishment for inmates is often mentioned incidentally within a discussion of the policies that led to higher rates of incarceration and what those rates mean for respective communities. This is mostly due to difficulties in gaining access to penal inmates (Patenaude 2004; Trulson, Marquart, and Mullings, 2006; Sutton 2011; Wacquant 2002; Rhodes 2009; Waldram 2009). Still, the overall dearth of scholarship that situates inmates at the center of analysis is startling. Perhaps, even more alarming is that most of what we know of penal living comes by way of studies set in maximum security prisons, and most of the more illuminating of these studies were produced generations ago (Rhodes 2001; Wacquant 2002). Notwithstanding

the parochialism of studying only one type of prison, the reach of American jails far exceeds that of state and federal prisons combined, which makes the general lack of interest in jails a bit confusing.

To be clear, the population of state and federal prison inmates typically outnumbered that of jail inmates. For instance, by year's end 2012, there were approximately 1.57 million inmates in state and federal correctional facilities (Carson and Golinelli 2013) compared with 744,524 jail<sup>7</sup> inmates (Minton 2013). However, a more telling comparison is between admission rates. “[Jails] admitted almost 11.8 million persons during the 12 months ending June 30, 2011” (Minton 2012:3). In comparison, state and federal prisons admitted 668,800 inmates by the end of 2011 (Carson and Sabol 2012), which means that in a comparable amount of time, American jails admitted over 17 times as many persons. These numbers represent communities of people who live large and often significant amounts of time behind penal walls, yet their experiences are poorly understood and obscured by piecemeal studies of rates of suicide, violence, sexual behavior, and so on.

Given the gaps in our knowledge, this dissertation may be understood as a new first step toward updating our appreciation for the inmate experience and an expansion of the earlier efforts of Spradley (1970) and Irwin (1985) who turned their attentions to jails and jail inmates. My attention is on the lived experiences of inmates in a society that is wholly oriented towards controlling and punishing people. First, I conceptualize jails as a type of *penal society*, profoundly shaped around the mandate to punish inmates. I argue

---

<sup>7</sup> This number includes city and county jails.

that the encompassing nature of most penal institutions, what Goffman (1961) described as a key feature of total institutions, is precisely why jails are better understood as a type of penal society—a bounded social system significantly separated from the free world that is organized to inflict punishment. Second, I argue that inmates are reconstituted as “criminals”—a type of *public identity*—through a series of degradation ceremonies (Garfinkel 1956), and ultimately, it is this public identity that justifies the punishments given to inmates. Finally, I present an analysis of the coping strategies that inmates adopt in order to survive life in a county jail system. Thus, my goal is to contribute to our understanding of the practical application of punishment and coping at the micro-level.

## **THINKING ABOUT PUNISHMENT**

Punishment is most often discussed by way of socio-historical analyses that look at how changing cultural bases and political pressures create a punitive society (Currie 1998; Garland 2001b; Western 2006; Simon 2007; Wacquant 2009; Tonry 2011). Rarely, however, do scholars situate their analyses on the lived experiences of inmates who are most vulnerable to criminal justice policies and practices. So while we have been developing a clearer understanding of the disconnect between penal expansion and crime rates over time and the larger effects thereof, the voices of penal inmates are conspicuously missing. Hence, how penal inmates confront and cope with punishment is also missing.

With few exceptions, this oversight is even found in qualitative and ethnographic examinations of penal living. Some of the most penetrating investigations of inmate life have stopped short of producing a statement on how punishment is lived and managed

from the viewpoint of inmates (Clemmer 1940; Spradley 1970; Carroll 1974; Jacobs 1977; Irwin 1970, 1985; Fleischer 1989; Toch, Adams, and Grant 1989; Conover 2001; Ross and Richards 2002; Santos 2007). Part of the issue is that these studies do not generally conceive of penal environments as profoundly organized to inflict punishment.<sup>8</sup> An equally relevant issue is that qualitative research in penal environments has been so sporadic that researchers are compelled to produce exploratory studies that look at the general structure and culture of penal living, or due to the complexity of inmate life, they focus on certain aspects of penal living at the expense of others. For instance, Clemmer's (1940) prolific work, *The Prison Community*, is a study of "prison culture" that excludes the everyday coping skills that inmates developed and employed in response to the punitive nature of prison life. Likewise, Carroll's (1974) important ethnography in "Eastern Correctional Facility" focused on race relations, but he did not consider how race relations might add another punitive dimension to life in a maximum security prison.

This does not mean that the significance of punishment from the inmate standpoint is completely missing in the literature. In *Society of Captives*, Sykes (1958) described what he called the "pains of imprisonment," which was a typology of punishment categories that inmates generally experience. Sykes labeled these categories types of deprivations, which included the deprivation of liberty, of goods and services, of heterosexual relationships, of autonomy, and of security. In response to these deprivations, a small number of inmates lived their lives as "plans for the future" instead of facing the reality of incarceration (Sykes 1958: 80). Primarily, however, the pains of

---

<sup>8</sup> In *Prisons in Turmoil*, John Irwin (1980) was one of the few scholars to plainly acknowledge that, "We are dishonest and foolish we do not admit that punishment is basic in our response to crime" (p. 238).

imprisonment were mitigated through the taking on of what he called “argot roles.” Argot roles gave structure to inmate society, but more importantly, inmates took on different roles within different situations as a way of lessening the hurt associated with being deprived liberty, for instance. For example, men became *rats*, inmates who betrayed the confidence of other inmates, in order to gain preferential treatment from prison officials. The *ball buster* was openly defiant in an effort to maintain a sense of autonomy. Similarly, men inhabited other roles at different points throughout their “moral careers” (Goffman 1961) in order to alleviate the punitive nature of imprisonment.

Goffman (1961) extended Sykes’ (1958) discussion on punishment and coping. Though Goffman’s analysis was set in a mental health institution, he was careful to connect the systematic mortification of inmates in his study with the experience of persons entering other types of total institutions. In addition to Sykes’ (1958) “pains of imprisonment,” Goffman described the intake process for total institutions as the start of a series of mortifying events that inmates will face until released. The process includes “role dispossession” in which a person’s ability to sequentially schedule role performances is disrupted; inmates are subjected to “obedience tests” wherein they are degraded and forced to degrade themselves in order to break their will; and each inmate experiences several violations of the “territories of self,” which Goffman appropriately labeled, “contaminations.”

Goffman suggested that inmates navigate these mortifications or pains through either “primary” or “secondary adjustments.” Inmates who adopt primary adjustments,

fall in line with the goals and become exemplary members of the institution. In essence, they become part of the stable fabric of the institution, and they derive a certain degree of comfort from accepting and working within the established rules of the institution. Those who adopt secondary adjustments, become members of the “underlife” of the institution. They participate in underground economies for goods and services that they would not otherwise have access to, but most importantly, secondary adjustments provide answers to the question of how to manage or cope with the pains of imprisonment and the ongoing mortifications facing inmates daily. For example, a sense of autonomy and liberty is gained through successful subversion of institutional rules, and creature comforts like better food and other useful goods can be gained through secondary adjustments—all of which provide inmates with a sense of ownership—of self and of goods.

Following Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961), Toch (1992) interviewed 700 prison inmates in maximum security institutions in New York, using what he called a “transactional” approach, meaning the lives of the participants were examined within and in relation to the participants’ environment. One of the central contributions of this study is that the concerns, problems, and coping strategies that inmates employed were carefully detailed in their own voices. Most inmate concerns converged under the categories of privacy, activity, safety, emotional feedback, support, structure or stability, and autonomy. Much of the content of these concerns can be mapped with relative ease onto Sykes’ (1958) pains of imprisonment, and the coping strategies employed echo the secondary adjustments that Goffman (1961) documented. Similarly, Rhodes (2004) conducted an ethnographic examination in several control units within maximum security

prisons in the state of Washington, in which she demonstrated the futility and irrationality of mental health treatment in a space that is psychologically and emotionally damaging. Though she did not organize her argument in this manner, embedded within her detailing of inmate responses to the pains they experience in isolation, is an analysis of coping strategies that mirror many of the behaviors of Sykes' (1958) argot roles.

Taken together, these studies suggest that punitive measures are so fundamental to the organization and operation of penal institutions that the development of coping strategies is a matter of survival—not convenience. In other words, the notion of “doing time” in a penal institution is inextricably tied to employing coping skills without which, inmates risk being overtaken by the pains of imprisonment. However, one might expect to find dire struggles for survival in maximum security units wherein control is enforced to an extreme degree relative to lower levels of security. But what of American jails? Are they merely the criminal justice system's wait stations for persons who have been found guilty of petty crimes and for those who await trial? To what extent do jails provide experiences similar to those found in prisons? Though few in number, there have been some important examinations of jails, which I will discuss below. First, however, a distinction between jails and prisons should be established.

### **DIFFERENTIATING JAILS FROM PRISONS**

Few individuals who have been to jail and prison would choose to go to jail versus prison if given the chance. As an example, I witnessed a court hearing in which a man had been found guilty of a minor charge while incarcerated in a state prison. He had been brought to Golden County for court proceedings in his case. During his case, he

was held at Providence. Upon sentencing, the judge noted that the inmate had the choice of serving the additional time at Providence or going back to prison. “You want to go back, right,” the judge suggested. When the inmate nodded, the judge added, “That’s usually how it works.”

On a separate occasion, an inmate offered the following illuminating metaphor:

In prison you’re home. You’re just home. They try to make it comfortable for you. Jail is punishment. Prison is like working for the government. You’ll be taken care of. You just do your job, and you’ll be okay. Jail is like working at McDonald’s. You could be fired. The pay sucks. The whole thing sucks.

Though they are often talked about interchangeably, prisons and jails<sup>9</sup> are not the same. Jails differ from prisons in terms of capacity, average daily population, budget, function, and the demographics of the inmate populations. As the front house of the criminal justice system, all prison inmates matriculate through jails, but many jail inmates never see the inside of a prison, and jail systems are called upon to provide a variety of services. The primary function of jails is pretrial detention (Jackson 1991; Kerle 1998a, 1998b; Wallenstein 1999), but jails also hold inmates awaiting transport to prison, prison inmates participating as defendants or witnesses in other court cases, the inebriated, vagrants, and persons charged with low level misdemeanor crimes are housed in two-man cells with persons charged with crimes as serious as attempted murder (Fitzpatrick and Myrstol 2011). Additionally, jails are increasingly serving as ad hoc mental health institutions (Liska, Markowitz, Whaley, and Bellair 1999; Etter, Birzer, and Fields 2008;

---

<sup>9</sup> Jails are often confused with “lockups,” which are small holding areas typically run by local police departments. Persons held in lockup are often released within 72 hours (Kerle 1998).

Wacquant 2009). Thus, jail populations are exceptionally diverse (May, Applegate, Ruddell, and Wood 2013).

The largest jail systems in the U.S. have greater capacities than nearly all U.S. prisons (Wallenstein 1999); however, jails tend to be chronically underfunded and managed in a style that approaches criminal neglect—a type of unconcerned warehousing of human life (Pogrebin 1982; Klofas 1984; Wacquant 2009). Relative to prisons, jails have poorer physical and mental health care services, worse facilities, dysfunctional amenities, and fewer programs designed to improve the life chances of inmates. This lack of resources figure largely in the experiences of jail inmates whose time in jail often exceeds the “county lid.” A “county lid” is the maximum amount of time that a sentenced inmate may be housed in a county jail before s/he is required to carry out the sentence in a state or federal prison. However, it is common for inmates to languish in jails for years while fighting a legal case. During this time, the notion of presumed innocence is little more than empty rhetoric because incarcerated persons are known as “inmates,” subject to the same arbitrary rules, degradations, deprivations, threats, and penalties that are meted out to sentenced inmates.

Such are the major differences between jails and prisons. To be sure, incarceration in a jail system is qualitatively different from time in a state or federal correctional facility. In fact, inmates who have had the misfortune of experiencing both institutions frequently report that jail is a far more punishing environment (Irwin 1985; May, Applegate, Ruddell, and Wood 2013). I now turn my attention to research that has

peered into American jails. My focus here is not upon the historical<sup>10</sup> development of jails or management practices. Instead, I am concerned with what we know of the inmate life in jails.

## **STUDIES OF JAIL LIFE**

An examination of jail as a social system has not been produced for nearly thirty years; however, jails have not gone completely ignored. Researchers have covered topics that fall under the broad umbrellas of administrative management (overcrowding, jail design, surveillance, job satisfaction, etcetera), inmate health (suicide rates, mental health resources, etcetera), and inmate safety (rates of sexual assault, violence, rule infractions, etcetera). But studies of these kinds do not paint a picture of what is going on with inmates at the micro-interactional level. That said, extant investigations into the form and functions of jails have yielded some telling results.

There is evidence to suggest that poor communities (particularly poor communities of color) are literally being reproduced behind jail bars. Spradley (1970) conducted an ethnography in which he examined the lives of men who identified themselves as “tramps”—a categorical identity comprised of several identities all tied to the experience of (to varying degrees) drunkenness and vagrancy. Spradley gathered data from Seattle criminal courts, an alcoholism treatment center, and he interviewed 100 men who had been arrested for public drunkenness. One of the central findings of this study is

---

<sup>10</sup> For analyses of the historical development of the American jail system, see Goldfarb, Ronald. 1976. *Jails: The Ultimate Ghetto*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books (pp. 9-13); John Irwin. 1985. *The Jail: Managing the Underclass in American Society*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (pp. 3-10); Kerle, Kenneth E. 1998. *American Jails: Looking to the Future*. Wobur, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann (pp. 1-12).

that “tramps” were arrested over and over not because they were guilty of any crime but because they offended the sensibilities of police officers and the public at large.

Irwin (1985) made a similar determination in his book, *The Jail*. Irwin worked as a caseworker for prisoner services in three San Francisco jails, and with the fortuitous support of a recently elected sheriff, who had been his friend and coworker, Irwin interviewed 200 inmates, from which, he developed his “rabble thesis.” He described the “rabble” as persons detached from conventional social organizations and who were, therefore, in a state of disrepute. The thrust of the rabble thesis is that the primary function of jails is to manage the rabble *because* we find them offensive. Though their crimes are mostly annoying and petty, the rabble are highly visible, which is why they are arrested and rearrested so often. Nearly a decade earlier, Goldfarb (1976) came to a related conclusion.

Goldfarb (1976) crisscrossed the United States with a team of researchers gathering information from jail administrators, custody workers, inmates, and court officers. Ultimately, he determined that the American jail had become the dumping ground for a “disparate collection of social outcasts and underprivileged people in desperate need of unavailable social services” (1976:4). Like, Spradley’s (1970) “tramps” and Irwin’s (1985) “rabble,” Goldfarb (1976) conceived of jails as recreations of the American ghetto.

The extent to which modern jails recreate American ghettos has yet to be determined; however, the notion that modern jail populations are comprised of inmates charged with non-serious crimes has been challenged. Recent research has demonstrated

that while the “rabble” are certainly held in modern jails, the majority of jail populations include inmates with serious violent crimes (Backstrand, Gibbons, and Jones 1992; Petersilia, Turner, and Fain 2000). Petersilia et. al (2000) profiled inmates in Los Angeles’ Men’s Central jail and concluded that the jail housed the “worst of the worst”—inmates charged with various counts of murder, attempted murder, and other violent crimes. These findings might well point to the changing landscape of jail populations in the era of mass incarceration more than suggesting that Irwin (1985) got it wrong.

Either way, from the viewpoint of inmates, jails are significantly more punitive than prisons (Goldfarb 1976; Irwin 1985; May and Wood 2010; May, Applegate, Ruddell, and Wood 2013). The simple issue here is that jails are underfunded and often outside of the minds of the general public versus prisons. As a result, jails tend to be resource-deprived and excessive in punishing inmates. This makes the issue of coping particularly salient in jails. For the question remains: how do modern inmates in these largely forgotten spaces manage their time and punishments?

Finally, though caution is warranted with this term, jails have been shown to be “criminogenic” (Spradley 1970; Irwin 1985). The greater the frequency of interaction with the “rabble” or “tramps” or those who are most often jailed, the greater the likelihood that one will become a member of that group and arrested again. This is the heart of the “rabble thesis,” and it harkens back to Clemmer’s (1940) concept of “prisonization” whereby newly incarcerated inmates gradually take on the cultural personality of more seasoned inmates—a personality that is inimical to authority. In some ways, such processes have less to do with creating “criminals” than they do about

acclimating one's self to a difficult environment in order to survive physical, emotional, and psychological attacks.

Given the reach of the American jail system, an examination of jail living in a modern jail is overdue. How do inmates cope with environmental and private punishments in modern jail systems? What forms and contents to these punishment tactics take? How successful are inmate coping strategies at mitigating punishment? These questions remain to be answered.

In the next section, I provide an extensive account of my methodology. Research in penal environments is fraught with challenges that must be negotiated, and in my case, those difficulties were intensified by my position as a "complete-member-researcher" (Adler and Adler 1987). Following the methodology section, I provide the outline for this dissertation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The decision to analyze and write about the things that I observed and experienced as a Golden County inmate was not taken lightly. Initially, I resisted turning my fieldnotes into a research project. After my first arrest in 2006, professor Scott Brooks encouraged me to write up my experiences. While I did as he suggested, admittedly, I did not take the exercise seriously because I had only spent a night in Desert Sun Detention Center, and I did not see the value in writing about an experience that I wanted to put behind me. Then, in the winter of 2008, on the eve of the day that I would surrender myself at Providence Downtown Detention Center for a 180-day sentence, professor Ellen Reese called me and suggested that I keep my eyes open and perhaps jot

down what I experienced. Again, I was not fully ready to receive the wisdom of the suggestion, in part, because I was convinced that my academic career was over. I had successfully completed a year of graduate study at the time. Nevertheless, upon entry, I began recording personal notes (a kind of self-reflective sociological analysis) regarding being in jail. After a week, I took heed to professor Reese's exhortations, and I started recording two sets of notes—one personal, the other sociological.

A couple of years after being released from Golden County, I was able to reenter the graduate program with two extensive sets of fieldnotes, but I was still not convinced that I should do anything with them. Prior to incarceration, I had little interest in criminology or criminal justice, and as the time approached for me to choose areas of specialization in my graduate program, I vacillated between a project on racial identity development and one based upon the fieldnotes I had gathered as an inmate. The fulcrum of my decision rested upon the issue of self-exploitation, and I contended with three questions. Could an analysis of my fieldnotes be nothing more than an interesting ethnography in a difficult to access space? Would writing up my experiences be an attempt to profit from my own misery? Would I be perpetuating a set of stereotypes by being the Black male graduate student who wrote about race and "the hood" to the extent that jails and prisons are becoming *extensions* of or perhaps institutionalized *recreations* of depressed urban environments? In fact, all three are true, and I had to make peace with that fact in order to proceed.

There is a degree of exploitation in any research design that involves human participants. Whether the researcher is a White, middle-class "outsider" (as many

ethnographers are) peering into the lives of exoticized communities in order to gain an understanding of how “they” do “it,” or the researcher is a member of the economically depressed, racial community (many jails and prisons fit this criterion) being examined, to the extent that the researcher benefits much more than the participants from the research, exploitation is inherent. In my view, the extent to which participants are exploited is a function of the benefits that participants receive from the research project, the degree to which the researcher was embedded within the community of interest, the goals of the study, and the viewpoint taken when writing up the analysis. In regards to these factors, my goal with this ethnography was to understand the world of jail inmates from the inmates’ viewpoints; I was completely embedded as an inmate throughout the duration of this study; and my analysis reflects the unique positioning of inmates as a way of understanding how jail is experienced—not just how jails are run. However, in regards to who benefits from the research, it is my hope that this study leads to policy changes that improve the quality of living for jail inmates. Admittedly though, this is only my hope.

For the ethnographer whose research is *close to home* in the sense that the researcher partly shares the worldview of the participants and community members, there is a degree of self-exploitation that must be calculated. To write or not to write is a particularly important issue when we are talking about subordinated groups who have long been the focus of sociological *problem* research—that is, research that begins with the assumption that how these groups (Blacks and Latinos in urban environments, for example) live is problematic, offensive, criminogenic, or otherwise interesting because it is not how “normal” society lives. In developing his ethnography of Dominican “stickup

kids” in the South Bronx, Randol Contreras (2013) grappled with this very issue, in part, because he was an insider:

I was afraid that, unlike privileged ethnographers, who were praised for studying dangerous urban worlds, I would be vilified for revealing violence in marginal communities. I was afraid that the Black and Latino/a scholarly communities, who wanted no more negative images, would become angry at me for studying violent Dominican men (pp. 17-18).

Contreras’ (2013) *The Stickup Kids* is an ethnography accomplished through the childhood relationships that he had with the primary participants. He was transparent about the social milieu in which he was raised and how a certain amount of violence was normative. Thus, in revealing the inner workings of his community and Gus and Pablo’s activities, he was exposing a bit of himself, and as he discussed openly, that is a scary and possibly dangerous choice to make. In the final analysis, I followed Contreras’ example. I determined within myself to do my best to accurately represent the inmate world, including all sociologically relevant content. I excluded accounts that, while interesting in a rather base and voyeuristic sort of way, add little in the way of understanding what jail life is like for inmates.<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Setting***

The data presented here are based upon fieldwork conducted in Golden County detention centers. California’s Golden County boasts the second largest sheriffs office in the state, covering the fourth largest county in the state in terms of population and land area. Excluding the eighty-eight beds designated for medical use and sixty-four beds

---

<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that I left out events that one might consider to be personally damaging. This means that I included only as many examples as was necessary to convey my point.

reserved for a substance abuse program, the five detention centers have a combined capacity of 3,754 beds for male and female inmates.<sup>12</sup> Like several other county jail systems in California, Golden County jails frequently operate above their rated capacity. During 2007 and 2008, when I was in the field for the longest stretch of time, Golden County operated its jails at 115% of their total capacity (Minton 2010).

Forty-six percent of Golden County denizens are Latino/a, 39% are White Americans, and only 7% are Black Americans (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). Latino inmates maintained a numerical majority throughout Golden County's jail system. Additionally, Black Americans were disproportionately represented in Golden County jails, and they often outnumbered White American inmates in many housing units.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Data Collection***

I recorded fieldnotes as an inmate of the Golden County jail system for various intervals of time from the fall of 2006 through the beginning of the summer of 2008. My time in the "field" ranged from 24 hours to 120 consecutive days. In total I did 135 days of jail time. Because I was transferred between jail facilities while in the field, my fieldnotes reflect experiences in all but one of the five detention centers.

Each period of data collection represents a time in which I had been arrested and processed as an inmate through the Golden County Superior Court system. I faced the same fears that other inmates faced. I had the same problems with my public defenders that other inmates had, and I hoped for an early release like many others did. For the

---

<sup>12</sup> This citation has been removed for the sake of confidentiality.

<sup>13</sup> Nationally, White Americans account for 46% of the jail population, Blacks represent 37% of jail inmates, and Latinos/as account for 15%; however, California has the largest population of Latinos/as in the union (Pewhispanic.org), which helps to account for their numbers in California penal societies.

greater part of the jail time that I was given, I was not affiliated with an academic institution. In short, while conducting this ethnography I was an inmate—not a scholar impersonating an inmate. The difference is important because when you know that you cannot go home (or leave the field) because you feel that you have reached the point of saturation or because you are ready to see your family or because you have other things to do, you are sure to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the groups and settings that you are examining. That was certainly the case for me.

My approach to examining jail living was naturalistic (Denzin 1971; Goffman 1989). I sought to understand the experience of the inmate world from the inmate's viewpoint. However, because I was an inmate, analyzing life in jail served the dual function of explaining my own situation and the structures that governed Golden County life. In order to explicate my own feelings and experiences from those that were sociologically relevant to inmate life, I continued to record two sets of notes throughout the length of the study. When an event was thought to have dual relevance, I recorded it twice. This method helped to separate me from my analysis a bit, and it provided a necessary outlet for my personal feelings.

That outlet often proved invaluable. Sometimes I was involved in conversations with other inmates that invoked a wide range of emotions in me. Without a constructive outlet for those emotions, I might have lashed out at others or myself. For instance, a few of us (Black inmates) were watching a television program that depicted a recreation of rape in the telling of a crime story. I commented that I just did not see how a man could force himself into a woman who is not aroused and terrified. D-Double responded,

“Bitches get wet during rape. That’s the ultimate fantasy for a bitch if you really think about it. They want to know what it’s like to be raped.” The depravity of D-Double’s comments infuriated me, and a small back and forth ensued that I quickly dropped in consideration of where I was and how often I would have to see the same men. So, I was angry. I recorded the event as a way of exercising my mind and exorcising the negative emotions that were built up from the interaction.

In a separate and unrelated conversation T, another Black inmate, who was in jail for battery against his wife, explained, “She said I beat her with a trophy and a broomstick. Everybody in my family knows she lies.” Disgusted, I asked if he hit her to which he responded, “Yeah. I admit I hit her. ‘Slapped her around, but I didn’t know she was pregnant at the time.” T’s wife was very early in her pregnancy—three weeks according to T.

“Mufucka don’t sound that sorry to me,” I grumbled under my breath, wanting to say something but not wanting to bring too much attention to how I felt.

“Women be lying,” chimed in Scotty, my cellmate at the time. “It’s his Indian blood. It’s too much.” T claimed to be part Native American, and Scotty believed that there was something unique to Indian blood that made them uncontrollably passionate to the point where they could be violent.

For me, conversations like this were particularly challenging, but I could not have survived in jail if I were an island. I could not be a maverick voice arguing passionately about my beliefs. Jail was not the place for that. Recording my feelings about conversations like the above was often the only coping mechanism that I had available to

me. More importantly, maintaining a personal outlet for feelings and responses to what I experienced and observed, helped to produce a more objective set of sociological fieldnotes.

### ***An Insider Status***

As an inmate, I was a “complete-member-researcher” (Adler and Adler 1987), meaning I was completely immersed within the jail as a “native.” However, my status as an inmate, alone, was not sufficient to qualify me for full participation within the inmate world. Insider status is just that—a status. Insider *privileges* accompany a knowledge base commensurate with one’s status (Contreras forthcoming). There is a difference between living *in* a gang-dominated neighborhood and being *from* a gang in that neighborhood. Anderson (1999) made this point in his discussion of the differences between “street” and “decent” communities members. Likewise, my race, class, gender, organizational membership, and any other social classification do not automatically confer upon me full participation in the activities of a given group. Privileges come with being viewed as “one of us,” and that level of legitimacy is granted when knows how to conduct one’s self as a member. I was granted the privileges of an insider because I was an inmate *and* I knew the “code of the street” (Anderson 1999).

In making my observations, steering conversations to get information, and analyzing the data as it came, I did not attempt to separate myself from other inmates. The two sets of fieldnotes helped to separate my emotions from my analysis so that my investigation would not be overly clouded by how I felt. However, the themes that I chased down do reflect my values, interests, and position, as is the case for all social

scientific research whether the research design is qualitative or quantitative. I admit to the subjective nature of this research. It was necessary. Even as an inmate, I could not have gained an understanding of the inmate world if I maintained a completely objective outlook upon what inmates did and how they felt about their lives as inmates. Therefore, I welcomed some of the problems associated with an insider status (Merton 1972; Adler and Adler 1987; Labaree 2002; Lofland et al. 2006)—namely the production of a highly subjective text. The post hoc analysis of my findings has been more objective, but this was possible only after I gained a deeply subjective understanding of jail living.

*Navigating as an insider.* This ethnography presented some unique challenges. Foremost among these challenges was my status as an inmate. I was subject to the rules that deputies instituted. Sometimes that meant that there would be no time allotted for interaction with any inmates other than my cellmate. Because I did not hold a job in jail, my opportunities (there were some) to interact with inmates outside of my housing unit were curtailed. Therefore, most of what I recorded included interactions with inmates in the same housing unit that I was in.

I dealt with these challenges by availing myself of every service and program that Golden County had to offer. When there was an opportunity to have some recreation time, I went. I never turned down a visitation. When we were given time out of our cells to shower, get hot water, and interact, I always went. I visited a mental health nurse and psychiatrist regularly. I went to “church.” When I hurt my foot while playing

basketball,<sup>14</sup> I visited one the jail's registered nurses. I even had a wisdom tooth removed while in jail, which made me eligible to receive pain medication and talk to other inmates during the "pill call," when a nurse and deputy delivered prescribed medicine to inmates throughout the housing units. In short, I made use of every opportunity I could to interact with other inmates.

The Golden County jail system classified and segregated inmates according to a specialized racial scheme thought to minimize security risks. As a result of these classification practices, a rigid set of racialized rules known as the "politics" developed. The "politics" instituted Jim Crow like rules into many jail spaces. My classification as a "Black"<sup>15</sup> inmate hindered my access to inmates in different racial classifications. In many dayrooms, I could not have a casual conversation with inmates who were not in my racial classification. However, I found that inmates were much more willing to talk when in spaces that included only a few of us (for example, visitation, "church," and mental health), and I regularly interacted with inmates in those spaces. Still, the bulk of my fieldnotes concerning non-"Black" inmates are observational or gathered through passive participant observation (Schwartz and Schwartz 1955).

I used conversations as ad hoc interviews. For instance, when I wanted to know how others coped with jail living, I sparked a conversation by offering how I coped. Usually, that prompted a response about how others survived. Sometimes, though, I simply asked directly. Eventually, I revealed that I was writing about being an inmate.

---

<sup>14</sup> Part of the inmate uniform included rubber slippers that were ill fitting and typically in a state of disrepair. Most inmates took them off to play basketball. During a game, I tried to make a quick move and ripped a large flap of skin off one of my feet, which bled profusely. A nurse bandaged my foot.

<sup>15</sup> I have used quotes here to denote the unique racialized classification in Golden County—not my free society racial status.

That revelation was positive. In fact, since inmates were trying to make sense of their lives in jail, the response I received was very positive. Toll, a Black inmate, said that he “could write a whole book on the shit that goes on” in Golden County jails, including “how the paint color affects us.” Most importantly, though, my insider status kept other inmates at ease and willing to interact with me. I did not “grill” or “interview” inmates. We had rather natural conversations that were not beyond the scope of everyday interaction. I simply drove conversations toward the content that interested me.

I also tried to interact with jail staff, including deputies, nurses, dentists, and psychiatrists. Here, code switching from the usual inmate diction to that of a college-educated individual proved invaluable. The goal was to get the deputies and jail personnel to see beyond the uniform I had been given and the status I had been ascribed. Most of my success was based upon my ability to code switch. I usually only had a few minutes to interact with this group, and so I had to gain legitimacy by separating myself from other inmates quickly. Deputies generally regard inmates as dangerous, unintelligent, unworthy of discussion, and always looking for an opportunity to con their way into a privilege. As such, deputies often treated inmates with disdain. I began just about every conversation with deputies with the same question: “What made you decide to be a deputy?” I settled on that question as an opener, resting on the belief that most people enjoy talking about themselves. Also, that question easily segued into other aspects of life in jail, and, of course, it satisfied my curiosity. Typically, my college-educated diction inspired a, “What are you doing here” or “How did you end up here,” and I never had a deputy refuse to answer a question.

My interactions with other jail professionals were less directed in the sense that my only goal with talking with them was to hold a conversation. Except for when talking with a mental health professional, a deputy was always present during my interactions with jail professionals. With this group, too, I quickly mentioned that I am college-educated and that I planned to continue my college career. Sometimes, I mentioned my education in an awkward manner; other times I made an educated observation to demonstrate that I was intelligent. That usually helped to make conversations flow freely. However, there were times when nothing I said led to any type of conversation at all. A nurse, for example, ignored my academic overtures while discussing the usefulness of her position given the number of inmates. She was distant and calculating. She finished her prescription for pain medication for me, and she promptly sent me on my way. Even that interaction, however, was informative. Still, my interactions with deputies and other jail professionals constitute a small percentage of what I recorded.

### ***Recording Fieldnotes***

The only writing utensil available to inmates was a golf pencil, which, along with paper, had to be purchased from the jail's commissary. In closed dayrooms, inmates were not permitted to carry pencils away from their cell. Thus, while in a closed dayroom, I recorded events while in my cell, and in open dayrooms, I recorded notes while on my assigned bunk and only at the end of the day. In some ways, it was good fortune that my mind was not occupied by the normal interferences of life—television, the Internet, and cell phones. The sensory deprivation that is so common to penal living allowed me to recall conversations better than I normally would. Also (probably because

there really was not much else to talk about), inmates often had the same (or very similar) conversations over and over. Most of what I present here is a direct quote. When I could not recall the actual words, I captured the spirit of the conversation and used italics to denote those instances.

Inmates generally stored their personal items in a small twelve-inch cardboard box that was issued during the intake process. I kept my fieldnotes in my box. There was no way to lock this box or to store it in a secure place, but I never worried much that another inmate would go in my box and take anything. The coercive sanctions for such an act were prohibitive. Few actions aroused the anger of inmates like being stolen from. My main concern was that the deputies would take my fieldnotes during a raid or a routine “toss.”<sup>16</sup> I only needed to encounter one deputy with a mean streak to have all of my work taken from me. Consequently, I often mailed notes home and conveyed what I saw in letters to my academic advisor. Upon returning home, my advisor turned those letters over to me, so that I could transcribe and analyze them.

### *Analysis*

I transcribed both sets of notes and the letters that I received back from professor Reese, professor Jane Ward, and Edna Bonacich, with whom I had been in regular communication. During transcription, I kept a separate document open in which I coded for major themes as I transcribed my notes. When I was done, I had a full set of transcribed fieldnotes organized into a preliminary coding scheme: *masculinity, jail*

---

<sup>16</sup> This was the term used to describe the routine cell searches conducted by the deputies during which an inmate’s personal property would often be tossed to and fro in his cell and sometimes out into the common area of the dayroom.

*living, deputies, racial politics, class politics, facilities and services, and court.* I then searched for intersecting themes, and in a separate document, that coding scheme included: “*Southsider,*” “*Black,*” and “*Wood*” *racial politics, coping, “Southsider” and “Black” masculinity, relationships to women, and open dayrooms and closed dayrooms* among others. The content of this examination is based upon the intersecting recurring themes of jail living from the viewpoint of inmates.

## **PLAN FOR THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation presents an analysis punishment and coping in a contemporary jail system. In chapter two, I conceptualize the Golden County jail system as a *penal society*. I argue that when considered from the viewpoint of jail inmates, Goffman’s (1961) concept of the “total institution,” is best understood as a penal society. It is here that I explicate the notion of *environmental* and *private punishments*. Additionally, I describe the inmate intake process to show how intake is used to ascribe to captured men a *public identity*—in this case, that of the “criminal.” I contend that this public identity justifies the treatments inmates receive in the minds of deputies and some inmates as well.

I open chapter three with a discussion with a discussion of the role of the classification process in shaping inmate social structure in Golden County jails. I look at the interplay of various inmate classifications with particular attention on how the stratification of the classifications creates animosity amongst inmates. I then turn my attention to race relations wherein I use Omi and Winant’s (1994) racial formation perspective to explain the creation of three racialized inmate groups. I argue that Golden

County's racial classification practices are based upon institutional myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977) about risk management and race relations in penal institutions. These institutional myths achieved hegemonic influence, and despite the difficulties that the racial project created, many inmates were complicit.

Chapter four introduces the concept of *jailing*, which encompasses a group of tactics that inmates employed in order to weaken the blows of punishment. Jailing is contrasted with environmental and private punishments. I then provide a discussion of the significance of time in a penal society and connect the meanings attached to penal time with punishment and coping strategies.

I summarize my key arguments and findings in chapter five. I suggest that the findings presented in this dissertation have important implications for race scholars, penologists, and researchers interested in how individuals manage interactions with and within difficult environments. I concluded the chapter with thoughts for future researchers.

## CHAPTER 2: A PENAL SOCIETY

Golden County is the fourth most populous county in California, and it operates five detention centers. Each detention center is connected to a local courthouse, but they are unified as a single jail system. Deputies sometimes transferred to different jail sites within the system, and inmates were frequently transferred between jail sites in what deputies and inmates called the “county tour.” The “county tour” described the busing of inmates between facilities in order to relieve overcrowding, quell violence, ensure that inmates appeared in court for their case(s),<sup>17</sup> and (according to unsubstantiated inmate lore) generate income for the county. The “county tour” represents the sharing of resources—information in particular. The jails worked in conjunction with one another, and so did the inmates being transferred. They too, shared news of what was going on in one facility with inmates in other facilities through what was known as the “JNN”—the “jail news network.” In this way, each jail was an interconnected subsystem of the Golden County jail system.

Since Goffman’s (1961) book, *Asylums*, researchers have tended to conceptualize penal institutions as one type of “total institution.” A total institution is differentiated from other types of social organizations by their all-encompassing character. That is, to varying degrees occupants of total institutions are severed from social interaction with society outside of the institution. That separation is typically built right into the facility symbolized by locked doors, high walls, barbed wire fences, and various other security measures meant to keep occupants from interacting with the world outside. It is the

---

<sup>17</sup> Inmates were frequently held in facilities outside of the jurisdiction of the court in which their case was being adjudicated.

totality of separation and the removal of the barriers that separate the spheres of one's life so that occupants work, sleep, and enjoy leisure time in homogenized groups or cohorts according to highly routinized schedules that characterizes total institutions.

Goffman described five total institutions, which vary in the severity of surveillance, separation, and control. There are those “established to care for persons felt to be both incapable and harmless” such as senior care homes; “places established to care for persons felt to be both incapable of looking after themselves and a threat to the community albeit an unintended one” such as mental health hospitals; those “organized to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers to it, with the welfare of the persons thus sequestered not the immediate issue,” which include prisons and jails; boarding schools and the like, which are “purportedly established to better pursue some work like task and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds;” and finally some are designed as “retreats from the world even while often serving also as training stations for the religious” such as monasteries.

In each of the five types, occupants are subjected to routinized “batch living” (Goffman 1961) and a profound degree separation from free society. It is precisely that separation—perceived and actual—that feeling of being whisked away to a netherworld to be punished that leads me to conceptualize the Golden County jail system not as a total institution but as a type of punitive society.

Jails are “institutional” in the sense that they are created in order to solve social problems—in this case, the problem of what to do with those charged with crimes. However, by “penal society,” I mean to emphasize a distinct set of cultural symbols

(Turner 2006) bounded geographically, politically, and economically. Beyond being subjected to the characteristics of Goffman's (1961) total institution, penal inmates contended with systems of language, technology, beliefs, values, and norms that were shaped (purposefully or indiscriminately) by an authoritative mandate to inflict harm. The organizational character of life in penal institutions is so punitive—the separation so profound—that it is more accurate to think of these institutions as *penal societies*, which I define as any bounded social system formally established to punish inmates. In penal societies, the facilities, the grouping of inmates, the amenities available and those missing, the rules established by administrators and the implementation of those rules by middle managers (deputies in this case) are designed to be painful to inmates. Even the “treatment” programs and services are laced with a punishing lining, as they typically include degradation rituals meant to shame and debase inmates.

In the next sections, I provide a general description of Golden County jail facilities. That description will include some important terms that I will use throughout this dissertation. Next, I layout a broad foundation for evaluating punishment. Finally, I give an account of inmate intake processes, which segues into an analysis of the creation of an ascribed identity given to inmates.

## **GOLDEN COUNTY FACILITIES**

For the sake of convenience, I have distinguished Golden County housing units as either *open* or *closed dayrooms*. Inmates often used the term “dayroom” and “housing unit” interchangeably, but in closed dayrooms, the “dayroom” areas also referred to a section of a particular housing unit. For example, “G-4” referred to housing unit “G” and

dayroom “4.” Some closed dayrooms were segmented in this way, but they constituted a single unit. “Dayroom” also referred the common areas in closed dayrooms. In this sense, the dayroom was where the hot water was, the showers, and the tables where men ate and congregated. Sometimes, though, inmates begged for “dayroom” or “dayroom time,” meaning they wanted time out of their cells to shower, get hot water, and fraternize. In open dayrooms, the “dayroom” area was not separated from where men slept in a significant way, and so the “dayroom” constituted the entire living quarters.

### ***Open Dayrooms***

Open dayrooms are dormitory-styled housing units (sometimes called “tanks”) in which beds are stacked three-high in rows. They ranged in rated capacity from as few as seven inmates to more than 50. In larger open dayrooms, the unit’s amenities (sinks, toilets, and eating area) surrounded the bunk beds, which were in the center of the room. Often, there were three sinks, showers, phones, and toilets in the larger open dayrooms, but always, there were at least two of each. In some of the smaller open dayrooms, the beds surrounded the tables at which inmates ate. The sink, showers, and toilets were to one side of the room. Other small open dayrooms were connected by metal bars to comprise a single housing unit. These types of dayrooms typically shared shower facilities. At designated times, the bars were “popped” open to each dayroom access to the showers. For example, inmates in 21-C3 would be given to the showers for an hour, and then 21-C2 would be given access to those same showers for a different hour. Most of the day, though, the showers (there were only two in units of this kind) were closed off to the entire housing unit.

### *Closed Dayrooms*

Closed dayrooms were housing units comprised of two-man cells, and there were at least two types. In older facilities, men were coupled in tight cages with traditional bars lining a long hallway. These cells provided the least amount of privacy, and they were among the filthiest and most dilapidated of all housing units. These units were “intermittently watched” (National Institute of Justice 2011), as a deputy had to periodically walk the hallway to see what inmates were doing. Units of this type were not connected to a dayroom, and without a television or phone, inmates hated the units.

Newer facilities implemented a podular design, which brought Bentham’s panopticon to life. Dayrooms with two tiers of two-man cells surrounded a command pod. Typically regarded as “remote surveillance” (National Institute of Justice 2011) a deputy could look into, communicate with, and control the cells in each dayroom on both tiers from the command pod. Typically, there were at least two deputies in a pod at any time, but the one running the pod was known as the “pod primary.”

Each cell was equipped with a toilet-sink unit and a metal two-high bunk bed unit. There was a metal desk and a metal pole fused to the ground in front of the desk with a round, flat, metal surface atop the pole where inmates were to sit. There was a button and intercom system with which inmates could communicate with the pod and the pod could contact a cell of choice. In these units, the air ducts passed through each cell so that inmates shared the same air. The dayroom area in the podular housing units contained, among other amenities listed above, the phones, which were cut on periodically during the day.

### *Single-Man Units*

There were two types of single-man units, differentiated by their institutional purpose. Some were austere and reserved for punishing inmates who disrupted the social order of the jail or otherwise posed a security risk. These cells contained only the most basic of amenities (a place to sleep, relieve one's self, and wash one's hands). Men confined in this type of cell were not permitted to have books or any other comforts. Other single-man units looked more like small apartments. They included a television, a shower, a sink, a toilet, and a bed with a mattress. These were typically reserved for inmates classified with a medical condition that removed them from general population.

### **CATEGORIES OF PUNISHMENT**

Though not often formally discussed, jails are meant to punish. Time in a penal society is supposed to hurt—to be uncomfortable, and to the extent that reform is no longer a major mandate of correctional facilities (Feeley and Simon 1992), jails can be said to do little more than punish inmates. By virtue of being incarcerated, inmates become the object of free society's moral outrage, and public retributive cries for "justice" through incarceration and discussions of the potency of incarceration as deterrence to recidivate center on the effectiveness of penal societies to punish inmates. From the viewpoint of inmates, nothing is more central to the experience of being jailed than the myriad punishments with which they must daily contend.

Types of penal harm (punishment) fall under two broad categories: *environmental* or *private*.<sup>18</sup> Briefly, environmental punishments are those that are connected to the jail facilities themselves. Private punishments include those based upon interpersonal interactions. In practical application, punishment was multidimensional and multilayered so that various environmental and private punishments were interconnected and experienced simultaneously. My classification scheme should be understood as an analytical tool.

### ***Environmental Punishments***

Most environmental punishments were germane to jail living. The freedom of movement of all inmates was restricted. Jail issued clothing was often soiled, ill fitting, and dilapidated. The bedrolls were thin, filthy, and wholly inadequate for anything approaching a comfortable sleep. The hot water sometimes went out. Toilets often flooded. It was cold in almost every space. Few inmates had access to natural sunlight. Everyone was subject to a highly routinized life, and no inmate escaped exposure to physical contaminations (Goffman 1961).

Environmental punishments might have been mediated if Golden County jails were not managed with the urgency of malign neglect. The intensity of environmental punishments did vary a bit by whether an inmate was in closed or open dayroom. Men in open dayrooms were often neglected. Deputies checked on inmates on a scheduled basis, and there were cameras with which deputies could watch the goings on in open

---

<sup>18</sup> I have constructed these categories as composites of Sykes' (1958) "pains of imprisonment," Goffman's (1961) mortifications, and Toch's (1992) "transactional" concerns.

dayrooms, but inmates did not have direct access to deputies. Between scheduled checks, whatever needs an inmate had, he had to wait until the next scheduled check, and scheduled checks were conducted in a hurried manner. No deputy wanted to be caught giving an ear to inmate complaints or needs. Consequently, deputies often operated in what might be called an “impotent mode” in the sense that their typical response to inmate requests was, “I don’t know” or “That’s probably not gonna happen” or “I’ll see what I can do” or every inmate’s least favorite response, “I’ll let the person in charge know.” None of these responses were productive or proactive. Though there were exceptions, typically, “I’ll see what I can do” was little more than a brush-off statement. Inmates were commonly disregarded in this manner.

Neglect of this kind was so common that one may say that it reached the level of institutionalization. For instance, a certain number of rolls of toilet paper were supposed to be doled to each dayroom, but inmates frequently ran out of toilet paper. When that happened, a man could hope that a fellow inmate had been hoarding a roll that could be made available to him, but most often, inmates were forced to endure the degradation of begging deputies for a roll or two. Inmates put in request after request, and deputies ignored the requests in one way or another. Eventually, new toilet paper would be delivered to the housing unit but not as a direct result of an inmate’s need. As a case in point, my celly<sup>19</sup> at the time, Flip, and I were nearly out of toilet paper. I hit the intercom button to call the pod and request more toilet paper. The female deputy said, “I’ll see what I can do.”

---

<sup>19</sup> Deputies and inmates referred to cellmates as “cellies” or a “celly.”

I accepted her response as a *no* and headed back to my bunk. Thinking that the deputy was not listening, Flip bitterly said, “Don’t see what you can do! We need some toilet paper.”

“Well if you think it’s a lie, then it will be,” the deputy responded, shocking us. We did eventually get toilet paper, but it came on the day that dayrooms were typically supplied with toilet paper. It was not in response to our request.

Similarly, the clothes that inmates were issued were typically dilapidated. Almost all of the socks had holes in them. Twice a week a clothing exchange was conducted during which inmates were permitted to exchange items of clothing that they had been wearing for clean items. To stem the tide of inmate requests and complaints, deputies often announced what was missing from the clothing exchange or what was in a state of disrepair. It was never explained why certain items were missing. The announcement simply informed inmates of what they would not be able to exchange. “Listen up gents, we’re running low on socks, so if you get some with holes, they won’t be replaced.” In other words, because the stock was low, inmates would not be permitted to exchange socks with holes for socks without holes. “We don’t have T-shirts or tops—only bottoms, socks, and chonies [boxers].” Given the frequency of such shortages and oversights, inmates came to the understanding that jail is supposed to be harsh and unpleasant—that going without was simply par for the course.

In closed dayrooms, particularly the podular type, the pod primary shut the lights off in the dayroom around 10 p.m.; however, the lights in the cells never went off. With the lights off in the pod and the dayroom, inmates were illuminated in their cells.

Deputies could see in the cells, but the inmates could not see into the pod as clearly. More importantly for the inmates, though, the lights posed a serious problem. At first, the constant light is annoying, and men coped in interesting ways. The light fixture was approximately eight feet from the ground, so a taller man or one standing on the stool could reach the lights. The lights were in a metal casing with a plastic covering. Most inmates spread open old potato chip bags or newspaper pages and pasted them to the light fixture using toothpaste as the adhesive. This dimmed the lights but did not blacken the light out. Inmates on the bottom bunk tied their sheet to metal handgrips on the top bunk to drape the sheet and dim the light. This was helpful, but it removed a layer of warmth, and the cells were always cold. Men who slept on the top bunk typically tied their T-shirt around their heads to cover their eyes, but again, this removed a layer of warmth, and the top bunk was usually colder than the bottom bunk because it was nearer the vent. Moreover, it was uncomfortable to sleep with one's shirt wrapped around the head like that.

Covering the lights was prohibited. "Get all that shit off my lights, or there's no dayroom for this pod," a deputy once announced to the all four dayrooms in a pod. During their standard checks and head counts, deputies frequently instructed inmates to remove anything covering the lights, but because not every deputy required the lights to be uncovered, covering the lights was a nightly project for inmates in order to sleep. From the pod, those cells which had their lights covered were noticeably dimmer than those that did not have the lights covered. Consequently, the pod primary often used the intercom in certain cells to instruct the inmates to uncover their lights. At shift change,

depending upon which deputies were working the pod, inmates who had taken down their light coverings would put them back up. The lights posed a constant battle. Inmates often got very little sleep.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Private Punishments***

Private punishments include those based upon interpersonal dealings with other inmates, deputies, and jail professionals. Deputies typically interacted with inmates in a hostile manner, regularly denigrating and disrespecting them. Much of this falls under the category of “obedience tests” (Goffman 1961), which were public mortifying rituals designed to teach inmates their place. For example, it was well known and understood that deputies went through inmates’ mail before delivering it; however, that was typically done out of sight, and so in some ways, the violation was out of mind for inmates. One night, though, an older, gray haired runner<sup>21</sup> strolled throughout the dayroom passing out mail and conducting a count of the inmates to ensure that everyone was where they were supposed to be. When he reached the cell of a Black American inmate named, LK, he leaned against the railing with his legs crossed and casually opened LK’s mail and thumbed through the private pictures that LK’s wife had sent as an update of what his family was doing in the free world. When he finished looking at the pictures, the deputy put them back in the envelope and slid it under the door without a word. The act was appalling, and it served as a reminder that the inmates’ lives were not their own to control.

---

<sup>20</sup> A high-ranking Latino inmate once told me, “everyone goes to mental health” for sleep issues.

<sup>21</sup> The “runner” was the name given to the deputy whose job it was to periodically leave the pod, enter the dayrooms, and count the inmates in their cells. The runner also delivered mail and periodically walked the dayroom as a show of presence.

Such antagonisms were common in Golden County. For example, deputies ensured that inmates were sleep deprived. During their routine head counts in closed dayrooms, deputies often kicked the cell doors to wake inmates up. Ostensibly, the deputies needed to be sure that everyone was alive, but the practice did little more than wake up men who were having a difficult enough time getting to sleep. Some deputies sang to themselves or announced their presence loudly and unnecessarily. Early one morning, a couple of hours before breakfast, a deputy conducted his security check while dribbling a basketball. The silence in the dayroom was broken by the echo of the ball being dribbled as the deputy inconsiderately made his way by the doors on both tiers. In open dayrooms, a deputy would come in and yell for each inmate to respond to his name. The lights in the open dayrooms were typically shut off at a particular time, but during security checks, some deputies cut the lights back on.

Using the justification of risk management, deputies could mistreat inmates and claim to be doing their jobs. The lights *needed* to be uncovered for security reasons. Likewise, inmates *needed* to be awakened for head counts in order to ensure that everyone was alive and well. Because these types of penalties could be explained away as artifacts of proper inmate management, they were the most insidious.

Taken together, the effects of environmental and private punishments were profound. Even long-term jail inmates did not “adapt” to jail living in the sense that they were not able to make jail a livable space. Instead, they got better at surviving the environment. Men became more adept at managing their exposure to certain pains at the expense of others, but there was no avoiding punishment altogether. As a result, when

life became difficult because a jail was put on “lockdown” status—keeping inmates from being able to shower or leave their cells or bunks—the general feeling was, “Hey. That’s jail,” as an inmate once rationalized to me.

### ***A Netherworld***

This sentiment—*hey, that’s jail*—is closely connected to feeling that being in jail is like vanishing from the consciousness of free society. Whether the jail was embedded amongst the downtown buildings of a city like the Providence Downtown Detention Center or set in a relatively underdeveloped area like Sunland Detention Center or Brownwood Correctional Facility, once inside one of these facilities, the outside world seemed distant. The smell and feel of the air, the cacophony of sounds, the energy of the inmates, the shutting out of the sun—inmates were struck with the feeling that they had descended into a netherworld—a hidden and forgotten place. This feeling of *netherworldliness* was especially acute for inmates who did not receive any mail, visits, or who did not have someone in free society who would be receptive to a collect call from jail. Even though most inmates had access to television programming and a daily newspaper, there was a feeling that they were in some far away land peering into a world that they once belonged to and hoped to visit again one day. Inmates were physically close to the free world, but psychologically, the distance was infinite. Accordingly, inmates often spoke of what they would do once they “touched down” or “entered the world” or “landed” or “made it home.” Such talk expressed the netherworldliness of time in a Golden County facility.

## **INTAKE**

Admission into a Golden County jail was a two-pronged process. Formal procedures began with the removal of each man's personal effects, the issuance of jail garb, photographing and fingerprinting, assigning an inmate number, classification, and it intake concluded when inmates were escorted from the "booking" or "processing" area to a housing unit within the jail. Depending upon how busy a given station along the formal process was, men were sometimes rerouted to other stations and doubled back to complete earlier stations as needed. Informal processes included a variety of mortifications (Goffman 1961) designed to train men how to be proper inmates. Together these processes dispossessed (Goffman 1961) inmates of their free society roles and transitioned them into jail living.

### ***Formal Intake Processing***

Deputies ran the formal intake procedures like an assembly line in a factory. Captured men began on the line like raw materials, and moving from station to station, the process concluded with the production of "inmates." Upon entering a Golden County jail, the steel door closed, and the inmates were introduced to the noise of walkie-talkie chirps, chatty deputies, men being escorted to and fro, and inmates yelling through secure doors for attention, "Dep'! Hey dep'!" Though disorienting, there was a progressive line of production stations that were operated in an organized and efficient manner.

The production line began with a prepping station. Rising above the noise were orders delivered with a militaristic cadence and a tone of annoyance. *Gentlemen, stand inside the red line and put your nose to the wall. Do not say a word. Don't speak unless*

*spoken to. Take off your shoes, socks, and belts. Put them in the brown bag. Keep your eyes on the wall until you are told otherwise.* While facing the wall, each man was given instructions so that a deputy could conduct a quick search for contraband. *Spread your legs. Raise your left foot. Raise your right foot. Hold your pants with your left hand. Raise your right hand. Hold your pants with your right hand. Raise your left hand.* The search and the initial removal of each man's personal items prepared him for further processing in which he would continue to be stripped of his "identity kit" (Goffman 1961).

The next station was a desk where men handed over their personal items and a brief mental history survey was conducted. Men were summoned to the desk and given specific instructions for how to approach it. *Spread your legs two feet apart.* If, as a result of the general disorientation that men had during this process, a man did not spread his legs when told, or if he did not spread them far enough, a deputy would kick his legs apart. *Lean forward and put your hands flat on this table.* Typically, a man's pants (if he was wearing pants) fell off at this point because he had removed his belt earlier. His personal items were catalogued and placed in little bags. If he had any money with him, it was counted in front of him, recorded on a property intake form, and eventually transferred to his commissary account. The deputy running this station also questioned each man about his mental health history and whether he had a sexually transmitted disease. As a matter of practice, the deputy at this station hardly looked up from the form he was filling out while conducting the brief survey, and he usually checked some of the boxes on the survey prior to hearing the inmate's responses. Men were then instructed to

sign the form for accuracy, but they were given little time to thoroughly review the document. Without an indication of mental instability, each man was moved on to the next station.

Always minding the red line that ran parallel to a wall throughout every corridor that an inmate might walk, men were escorted to a small room where they were given a minute to undress, put their clothes in a brown property bag, and choose jail-issued clothing. T-shirts, rubber sandals, orange bottoms, orange tops, and boxers were on the floor in a series of milk crates roughly separated by size. These items were in various stages of dilapidation. Some shirts and boxers were stained or yellowed. Some sandals had bad tears in them. Men were discouraged from searching through the piles of jail wear for the best items. *Just pick a pair of sandals and move on! They're not your clothes anyhow.* Once dressed, each man handed over his brown bag of personal items. Men had entered the clothing room with symbols of their free society identities, but they emerged with the accouterments of a "penal inmate."

Following their symbolic transformation, the fingerprinting station was next and then on to a picture and identification room where the divestment of their identity kits was fully realized. In the picture room, men were instructed to remove their tops so that their tattoos could be documented. Then, they were photographed from different angles using a camera that was mounted high upon a wall to get a clear picture of each man's face as he looked up. While the picture was printing, each man was assigned an inmate number.

An inmate's number was very informative. It number began with the year the inmate had been admitted to jail and the number of inmates that had been admitted before him. That number could also be used to give an inmate an idea of how long he could be jailed. For instance, while passing through a set of single-man cells, I passed the cell of an inmate whose case had been in the news during that time. He had been arrested for multiple counts of child abuse and torture. His inmate number was 199916446, which meant that 16,445 men had been officially admitted to Golden County facilities before him in the year of 1999. He had been in jail for nine years, and his trial was far from its conclusion at the time of this study.

The inmate's picture (commonly known as the "mug shot") was printed and attached to a plastic wristband, which included the inmate's number and name. The issuance of the wristband marked the objective transformation from free society individual to penal inmate. The person who was originally taken to jail had been stripped of his identity kit, photographed, and assigned an inmate number. From this point on, men were inmates—known according to their inmate number.

### ***Informal Intake Processing***

Concurrent to formal intake procedures, each man was subjected to a series of mortifications that introduced him to what it *meant* to be an "inmate." In effect, the informal process was a crash course on *how* to be an inmate—particularly while in the presence of authority figures (Goffman 1961).

From the inmate viewpoint, these informal processes of mortification felt like a psychological and biological assault. Deputies often spoke to inmates with contempt, and

the structured chaos of intake sometimes made instructions difficult to follow. Men who did not respond quickly enough or who responded improperly in some other way were often ridiculed for being *Deaf!* or *Stupid!* or *Unable to follow instructions!* For instance, when a nervous man became confused and made the wrong move while being frisked, the deputy demanded, “Hey asshole! Do you know your left from your right?” When the man tried to explain that he had not heard the instructions clearly, another deputy chimed in, *Just follow instructions* “without all the explanation.” Men were told when to speak, how to respond, and the tone in which they were permitted to communicate. Deputies routinely mocked and derided inmates for mistakes they made, clothes that they wore, and their inability to find jail-issued clothing that fit.

Inmates were made to walk with their hands clasped behind their backs, which led to men to walk with their heads slightly bowed. Some men tilted their heads back to feign standing erect, but their shoulders drooped forward. Eventually, this posture became normal for inmates whenever they were in the presence of deputies, and rarely did a deputy have to instruct an inmate to assume the position.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, inmates learned to address deputies with supplicating voices in order to ask for the most basic of items: “Hey dep, is there any way we could get some toilet paper?” Requests made in a demanding voice or those made in an effort to assert inmate rights were ignored, flatly denied, or given lip service. For example, when a man had been passed over during

---

<sup>22</sup> Carter G. Woodson (1998 [1933]) famously made this point with regard to the education of Black people: “When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his ‘proper place’ and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told” (p. xiii). Similarly, inmates learned their position so well that most of the time they did not require instructions about where they should be or how they should behave.

“chow time,” he spent hours begging every deputy who passed him for a meal. Most deputies ignored his exhortations that he had a right to eat. A few deputies did respond, offering, *I don't know why you weren't fed, but I don't have any control over that. I'll see what I can do.* Or, as was most common, deputies passed on the responsibility of seeing to the needs of inmates to a mythical “other” deputy who would see to it that the request was filled.

Inmates experienced these mortifications publicly. They suffered the indignity of answering questions about their personal histories or their mental health histories within earshot of other captured men and deputies who sometimes shared a laugh at their expense, and the cramped spaces in which inmates were held denied them the ability to deal with the reality of their arrests privately.

The informal process—public mortifications, public derision, “role dispossession” (Goffman 1961), the malign neglect, and various antagonisms—were an expression of what Goffman (1961) called “the welcome.” This was a rites of passage program in which inmates were informed of their status and made to accept it. The instructions that deputies gave functioned more like “obedience tests” (Goffman 1961) in which inmates were taught how to comport themselves properly. Some inmates were made to stand when others were allowed to sit. Some were isolated in a particularly filthy or cold holding cell because they could not catch on to the cadence that deputies used and respond properly. Inmates who stepped outside of the red line were derided for being too incompetent to follow simple instructions. This was training—a programming of sorts. Each man was taught how to address a deputy, how to walk, and what level of

degradation was commensurate with being a penal inmate. Thus, inmates were disabused of notions of “inmate rights” because whatever happened to them was justified by their being in jail. This philosophy was made clear by a few of the more sadistic deputies who periodically reminded inmates, *You’re in my house now, gentlemen!* “You shoulda stayed in school. Let this be a lesson. Ha, ha. Reading is *fun*-damental,” as a deputy with a booming voice once announced.

From the viewpoint of the deputies, the training men received during intake made the job of controlling them much easier. An inmate who knew not to make requests was less likely to pester deputies. Similarly, inmates who knew how to properly conduct themselves according to their status made their management much easier. In essence, formal and informal intake processes greased the transition from the free world to the netherworld for inmates and deputies.

Beyond training men in the ways of *proper* penal inmates, intake was also the starting place for the construction of a generalized socio-political persona, a “public identity” (Hancock 2004), which deputies used to justify the catalog of punishments given to inmates.

## **THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PUBLIC IDENTITY**

The legal principle of “presumption of innocence” is a bit of paradox for the jail inmate. Sixty percent of jail inmates are remanded to custody pending their day in court (Minton 2013), which means only 40% of jail populations have been found guilty of a crime. For those who fall into the former category, the problem of course, is that while in the custody of a jail, they are “penal inmates,” facing the same degradations and

punishments that inmates who have been found guilty of a crime must face. Inmates awaiting trial are not housed in separate facilities, and deputies have no way of making a distinction between who has and who has not been found guilty of a crime. Thus, an individual's status as an inmate is taken as proof of his guilt, and it is further used as an indictment of his essential character. The syllogism goes something like this: criminals are arrested and taken to jail; jails house criminals; this man is an inmate and therefore a criminal.

Throughout an inmate's "moral career" (Goffman 1961), he is subjected to a series of highly ritualized ceremonies designed to degrade, denigrate, and invalidate his personal identity. That personal identity is replaced with a highly stigmatized identity thought to be commensurate with his status as an inmate and his essential nature as a "criminal." For example, deputy Brown, who I had several interactions with, began a conversation with my celly and I over the cell intercom in Sunland. He started to talk about how the inmate's life was worry free. I replied that I had a son, a car note, and credit card bills, adding, "I *did* have a life before I came here."

"What the fuck could you do with a credit card," he scoffed. "You're already a criminal!"

Deputy Brown's intention was to remind me that my status spoke louder than anything I could say. While I was trying to assert that my life had meaning beyond the jail, he viewed such assertions as invalid. In fact, the notion that I could be responsible enough to maintain a credit card was, in his mind, antithetical to my status as an inmate and my nature as a "criminal."

Interactions of this type were common. Deputies frequently disregarded inmates because they were trained to assume that at the heart of all interactions with inmates (especially those initiated by an inmate) was a hustle to gain favor or a privilege in one form or another. When an inmate complained about the cold or worn out clothing, he was reminded, *Hey, that's jail...don't do the crime if you can't do the time*, which meant that whatever an inmate faced while in jail was warranted not only because he was in jail but because he *deserved* his punishment. Sometimes, inmates were reminded of their status and how they were viewed through rather mundane interactions with authority figures. For instance, men visiting mental health professionals were frequently required to speak about the charges they were facing *in light* of their past run-ins with the law and their present status as inmates. Such interactions reinforced the deconstruction of an inmate's personal identity while highlighting his stigmatized status.

Ritualized interactions of this kind are expressions of what Garfinkel (1956) called "degradation ceremonies," and they are foundational mechanisms in the daily operation of penal societies and the criminal justice system. Garfinkel (1956) defined a degradation ceremony as "Any communicative work between persons, whereby the public identity<sup>23</sup> of an actor is transformed into something looked on as lower in the local scheme of social types" (p. 420). A degradation ceremony is said to be successful when the object of the ceremony (in this case the penal inmate) is reconstituted as a "new person" in the eyes of the condemners (deputies, other inmates, jail professionals, and

---

<sup>23</sup> A "public identity" as Garfinkel (1956) was using the term is better understood as a "personal identity" or just an "identity" in the way that social psychologists tend to define the concept. See Burke and Stets (2009) for an example and useful review.

eventually the public) to the degree that the motivations behind the inmate's past, present, and future behaviors are taken to reflect the essential character of this "new person" that has been constructed (p. 421). In other words, to the extent that inmates were reconstituted as "criminals" such that their past, present, and future behaviors were understood as reflections of their criminal character, the degradation ceremonies may be considered successful.

However, in order to have a successful ceremony, Garfinkel (1956) delineated several critical components. The "perpetrator" (the inmate) and the event that led to the ceremony (the criminal act for which the inmate was arrested) had to be cast as "out of the ordinary" (Garfinkel 1956:422); there must be a "denouncer" (a deputy or officer of the court) who is legitimately recognized as a representative of the public interest; and the perpetrator must be defined in opposition to the public and made to be an "outsider" as a result (p. 423). Even with the principal components in place, a successful degradation ceremony depends upon a number of factors that include the authority of the degraders, the number and status of the witnesses, the frequency with which the ceremonies occur, and the status of perpetrator. Most individual degradation ceremonies fail (Garfinkel 1956), but done repeatedly over time, an individual is more likely to be reconstituted with the new stigmatized identity.

In Golden County, degradation ceremonies reconstituted the personal identities of inmates into a type of a nonspecific, morally, repugnant, identity—a "criminal." "Criminals" are a type of *public identity*, which is a socio-political construct that, in its role as the embodiment of public moral indignation, is used to "justify ideologically

specific forms of public policy” (Hancock 2004, p. 57). Public identities are “social” in the sense that they are created through interactional processes, and they are “political” in that they tend to be used as justifications for policy development and implementation (Hancock 2004).

Public identities are remarkably stable structures, and because they are typically the objects of our moral outrage, their existence demands action in order to deal with the problems that “they” create. In this function, the “criminal” is used to justify the need for more police, bigger and more modern penal societies, and more stringent laws. The effect of public identities is augmented by the intersections of race, class, gender, and other social identities. Accordingly, American society has become increasingly oriented toward punishment and control in order to manage “criminals”—especially low status “criminals” like poor Black and Latino Americans (Garland 2001; Bobo and Thompson 2010; Rios 2011). Thus, the constitution of a public identity is a political act. Degradation ceremonies situate penal inmates within the broader social context of criminal justice as the objects of moral condemnation (Garfinkel 1956; Hancock 2004).

### ***Resisting Public Identities***

Most inmates resisted degradation ceremonies and being recast as “criminal,” refusing to be fully subjected to the ritualistic condemnation of their selves. For instance, at night, the runner conducted a “face card” check, in which the deputy called each inmate’s last name, and inmates were required to respond with their first name as the deputy matched each inmate’s face with the name. Inmates perceived these “checks” as demeaning. Sometimes, the face card checks were conducted in such a routine and

unconcerned manner, that an inmate could get away with responding with something other than his government name. Scotty, who was my celly for a brief period, once responded with “Ya chick! Ya!” when his last name was called. I sometimes responded with “Egypt” when my last name was called. “Egypt” was the nickname I was given by other inmates while in Sunland. In both instances, the deputy accepted our responses and moved on.

Similarly, many inmates refused to wear their wristbands, which were constant reminders that they were in jail. One inmate likened the wristband to “wild animal tag,” and so he wore his only when he needed it to receive his commissary items or visit mental health.

Degradation ceremonies were meant to invoke shame and regret in the hearts of inmates (Garfinkel 1956); however, as I noted above, a successful degradation ceremony required the accomplishment of rather stringent circumstances. That said, some inmates had accepted the construction of the public identity. Sisqo, an older Black American inmate, was facing several charges, including burglary, strong-arm robbery, felony fleeing, and resisting arrest. He explained that he had been crying himself “to sleep every night.” Nevertheless, he said that he planned to continue stealing from department stores upon release. His attitude was fatalistic. He had a rather simple way about himself, and it seemed to me that he did not see a better future for himself.

His plans were seconded by D-Double, another Black American inmate, who said that he did not “believe” in giving up his criminal hustle. “Get better at it! If you get caught for the same crime twice, you’re just stupid.” Though, D-Double sometimes

refused to comply with directives given by deputies—especially those given in public—he nevertheless accepted the idea that he was a “criminal,” and he planned to be a better one when set free.

It is not altogether clear what differentiated some inmates from others in terms of their level of resistance or complicity with being recast as a “criminal.” Some of the more salient factors include the inmate’s life chances after release. The more fatalistic the inmate, the more likely he was to think of himself as a criminal who needed to sharpen his skills. Also, the degree of isolation—that is, the frequency and intensity of contact an inmate had with the free world seemed important. The most isolated inmates tended to think of their next hustle. These same men also tended to have more extensive criminal histories, which likely explained their relative isolation to other inmates who were newer to the criminal justice system. Finally, it is reasonable to presume that the length of time is a salient factor in an inmate’s ability to resist degradation ceremonies. The longer an inmate’s moral career, the more likely he is to face frequent, public, and intense degradation ceremonies. Thus, an inmate might (overtime) be worn down and experience “moral fatigue” (Goffman 1961) to the extent that he comes to accept the new stigmatized identity given him.

## **SUMMARY**

As a penal society, jails are organized toward the goal of punishment. The various methods of punishment (environmental and private) are brought to bear in order to do inmates harm. From the inmate point of view, punishment is a multidimensional (cognitive, affective, and corporeal) and multilayered (control systems nested within

hierarchies) experience. In Golden County, the ideological basis for the penalties imposed took on hegemonic nature in the sense that inmates came to understand their jail experience as commensurate with what “inmates” get when incarcerated. Inmates often adopted the “this is jail” attitude that deputies established during intake. For first-timers, the hegemony of punishment was made possible through interactions with veteran inmates who had already adopted the view that “it is what it is,” but more significantly, repeated ritualized degradation ceremonies of varying intensity and the construction of the “criminal” were instrumental in lacing punishment with a hegemonic edge.

As “criminals,” mistreatment could be justified or at least tolerated where many of the penalties that men experienced would be much less tolerable if the presumption of innocence were not trumped. It is because inmates were seen as criminals that free society allows for punishment to be so fundamental to penal living. Dilapidated clothing, dirty food trays, and general poor living conditions are filtered through the lens of righteous indignation. *They committed a crime. They deserve whatever they get.*

The moral condemnation of free society demands policies to address the problems that criminals present and represent. Thus, incarceration rates are used as justification for “tough on crime” policies such as sentence enhancements and the transformation of schools and other community organizations into “crime control” (Garland 2001b; Rios 2011; Tonry 2011) particularly when the public identity is augmented by race or gender, such as the “criminalblackman” (Russell-Brown 2009) and the “welfare queen” (Hancock 2004). After all, *Something must be done about those people.*

### CHAPTER 3: CLASSIFICATION, RACIALIZATION, AND PUNISHMENT

Ostensibly to reduce risk and maintain order (Brennan 1987; Fernandez and Neiman 1998; Brennan, Wells, and Demory 2004; Petersilia 2006), Golden County detention centers classified inmates according to a range of factors that included race, whether the inmate had been sentenced, the nature of the charges, a man's mental health status, his penchant for violence, his sexual orientation, and whether an inmate had been a witness for the prosecution in a case. Each jail was permitted to create its own classification procedures; however, the goals of classification and the general course taken to classify inmates were nonetheless relatively stable throughout Golden County, and once assigned, an inmate's classification was rigidly enforced. Changes in a man's classification occurred when, for instance, there was a significant change in his mental or physical health, he required protection from other inmates or other inmates required protection from him, or if his case concluded and he was sentenced to time below the "county lid."<sup>24</sup> Classification sorted inmates into a hierarchical system whereby different degrees of stigma and sets of privileges were conferred unto inmates by class. The stratification of inmates began during intake.

The factory-line like processes that defined intake culminated with classification. Inmates sat in what I call *pre-housing holding cells* for as little time as an hour to as much time as was needed until they were transferred to a housing unit. Pre-housing holding cells varied in size and other design features, but none deviated far from the experience provided by one in Providence Detention Center. Its dimensions were

---

<sup>24</sup> A "county lid" is the maximum sentence a jail inmate may receive without being transferred to a prison to do his time. In Golden County, as is the case in many other counties, a county lid was one year.

approximately 11' x 7'. The lights glowed beige. The cell had a sliding door with a wire mesh window. Just inside the cell to the left was a stained stainless steel toilet that greeted each incoming nose with the fetor of a man's recently flushed excrement. On the wall to the left was a corkboard with numbers to bail bondsmen and three working phones from which a man could make collect calls. Running along the length of the cell wall at knee-height was a wooden bench that men slept atop and under. Men were warehoused in pre-housing holding cells until summoned by a deputy for a classification interview.

One-by-one, a deputy called men from pre-housing holding cells to conduct a classification interview, which determined an inmate's security risk level and hence, where he could be safely housed. Inmates were asked their sexual orientation and whether they affiliated with a gang. If they had any, they were asked about their tattoos. They were questioned about their mental health, and as they gave their answers, a deputy rather unemotionally checked boxes on a survey form. As a matter of practice, the deputy conducting the interview generally checked more than one box per question, which suggested that the deputy might have been responding to certain items on the form for the inmates. In other words, the interview was so routine that unless the inmate said something to disrupt the process, the housing designation was nearly a forgone conclusion prior to an inmate's responses to the classification interview questions. For example, having gone through the process before and knowing that I was eligible for housing in the trustee pod, I waited for an opportunity to discuss my housing status during the classification interview. When the interview was concluding without the

deputy mentioning my eligibility, I offered, “I’ve been sentenced. I have a release date. I’d like to be a trustee if possible.”

“Oh you have a release date,” responded the deputy with his eyes scanning down the survey form.

“Mmm Hmm.”

The deputy scribbled something on the survey form. “Okay. I marked that down. There’s no guarantee though. It’s if there’s space.”

Following that classification interview, I was housed in a trustee pod for a week, which might not have happened had I not disrupted the deputy’s routine. He had been conducting the interview with the brevity and institutional efficiency that characterized most deputy-inmate interactions—mistrust. Thus, it was best to remain indifferent and on guard when dealing with inmates. Consequently, classification interviews did not stray much, and deputies conducting the interviews often went about the task with an attitude that hardly hid the tedious (even irksome) nature of what they were doing.<sup>25</sup> So long as an inmate did not disrupt the interview or pose an overt threat to security, the classification process concluded, and the inmate was held in a pre-housing holding cell until he could be escorted to his housing assignment.

The classification process was a significant determinant for how inmates experienced incarceration. The classes were highly stratified and further subdivided in ways that made navigating the inmate world a more complex task. In this chapter, my

---

<sup>25</sup> Presumably, the deputy conducting the classification interview would have the answers to many of the questions asked on the survey instrument; however, perhaps due to a bureaucratic or legal requirement, the deputy asked the inmate to respond to the items on the survey. For example, every inmate’s tattoos had been well-documented prior to the classification interview.

goal is to examine the stratification of inmates across Golden County detention centers and how nested hierarchies translated into varying intensities of control and, hence, punishment. As a point of information, there were several classifications (the medical unit, administrative control unit, and the mental health unit) that I will not discuss at length due to space, and methodological shortcomings inherent in an ethnography of this kind. Nevertheless, I will highlight the largest classes of inmates—those that gave Golden County social structure its character.

### **INMATE CLASSES**

The three largest classes of inmates were the trustees, the general population inmates, and a composite group that I have named the *stigmatized class* for reasons that will become obvious shortly. Each group was conferred a particular status and ranking within the inmate social structure, and in general, trustees were the high status class with the stigmatized class sedimented at the lowest ranks of the penal society. As is common within any society with scarce resources, there was quite a bit of animosity between the classes. Below I provide a general outline of each class, and then I discuss how these groups interacted.

#### ***Trustees***

A trustee was an inmate who had received a sentence, had a release date under the “county lid,” and who held a job within the jail. That job may have been general cleaning, working in the kitchen, working in the laundry room, or as a factotum to be worked at the disposal of deputies. Trustees were housed in a separate housing unit

known as the “trustee pod.” In Providence, the trustee pod was comprised of two-man cells.

The trustee pod was a well-known oasis compared to most any other housing unit available to inmates. Inmates who had been lucky enough to do their time in a trustee pod frequently regaled men in general population housing units with stories of how much easier it was to do time in the trustee pod. The number of inmates in trustee pods was no smaller or larger than the average general population dayroom. It was the amenities in trustee pods that set them apart. In Providence, the trustee pod overlooked the street with windows that allowed for natural sunlight so that an inmate could watch the color of the sky change with the rising and setting of the sun. The dayroom area was immaculate. Trustees were given actual cleaning supplies to clean instead of being asked to make do with whatever they could afford to purchase with their own money. There were books with all the pages in them. The checkerboards had all the pieces, and there was more than one set. There was more than one deck of cards with all fifty-two cards. There were several areas where inmates could congregate, and they did not require every inmate to be in each other’s space. The hot water in all three showers was hot, and there was almost never a line for the showers or the phones. Inmates interacted freely with one another as they saw fit. The only distinction was between that of “greens” and “oranges.”

A great deal of dayroom time was given in the trustee pod, but most of it was for “greens” only. The trustee pod held trustees, but it also held inmates who had had a release date under the county lid but who did not have a job within the jail, thus they wore orange tops and bottoms. The trustees wore green tops and bottoms. Quite often

the pod would announce, *Dayroom time, gentlemen. Dayroom time. Greens only. Greens only.* The cell doors popped open, and though “greens” and “oranges” were housed in the same cell, only the “greens” were permitted to leave the cell for dayroom time. The trustees who functioned as extensions of the deputy authority strictly enforced this rule. Some inmates chose to wear only the bottoms and T-shirt while in the dayroom, and periodically, an “orange” would try to pass using this tactic; however, his “orange” bottoms always stood out. Moreover, the pod was quick to remind the trustees that dayroom time would be taken away from them if they did not police the “oranges” from enjoying dayroom time before they were permitted. Consequently, “oranges” were typically shouted back into their cells by trustees, “Greens only, fucker! Greens only!”

Despite this division, time in the trustee pod was markedly different from time in general population. Certainly, the dayroom amenities were important for making punishment manageable. Having access to creature comforts like hot water, a newspaper, television, a working clock, natural sunlight, a window from which one could see free society persons going about their day, phones, and more than enough space to keep inmates from having to run into one another all lessened the sting of punishment. Similarly, the jobs that trustees performed typically came with perquisites. For instances, trustees working in the kitchen ate better than any other inmate. Trustees working in the laundry rooms made sure that they had the newest or cleanest of everything. Perhaps more significantly, though, deputies and other jail personnel treated trustees with a degree of humanity that was denied general population inmates. Whereas the general population inmates were regularly subjected to the ritualized reaffirming of the criminal public

identity, trustees were typically spared such rituals. They had a release date, and as a deputy once described trustees, “They are like children. Children want to please their parents.” Thus, trustees were treated as though they had a future—however bright or dim that future was—beyond the walls of the penal society. General population inmates were not thought of outside of the “orange” tops and bottoms that they wore.

The aforementioned benefits were significant for understanding how inmates experienced incarceration while in a trustee pod; however, the most consequential factor was that of the release date. In order to be eligible for placement in a trustee pod, an inmate had to have a release date under the county lid (and there had to be space). Having a release date provided certainty—an attainable goal—that made doing one’s time a manageable activity. It was not uncommon for inmates in the general population to be in a Golden County facility for three or four years awaiting trial. During that time, they have no certainty about their future. Life screeches to a halt until the trial is concluded and they can determine their next steps. There was little reason to plan for the distant future because one was likely to be in jail or prison. On the other hand, a release date gave inmates hope—something to look forward to and something to plan for. Conversations with one’s family and friends were not empty because an inmate knew when he was returning to the free world.

This helps to explain why the general mood in the trustee pod tended to be upbeat and hopeful. Beyond the available amenities, the knowledge that one had a release date provided inmates in trustee pods with a sense of “ontological security” (Giddens 1984). That knowledge transformed jail from an abyss of punishment into finite time that could

be reduced to manageable moments until one was released. That knowledge also preempted the need for inmates to settle into being socialized into the inmate culture. Inmates had little need in committing themselves to the values, beliefs, and norms of the inmate culture since they would not be there for long. Wheeler (1961) made a similar contention when he observed that prison inmates withdrew from prison society as they prepared for reentry into the world of free society. Thus, the trustee pod was free of the control apparatuses that made incarceration so difficult and punishing in the general population.

### ***The General Population***

Golden County's general population of inmates consisted of men who were at various stages of their moral career. While some inmates with a release date were housed in general population because there was not enough space in trustee pods, most general population inmates had not been sentenced. Some were in the midst of a trial. Some were not close to beginning their trial. Some were nearing the end of their trial. In any case, it was common for inmates in the general population to be incarcerated for over a year. This was primarily due to the charges that an inmate faced.

In contrast to Irwin (1985) and Spradley's (1970) findings, Golden County jails were mostly comprised of inmates with crimes far more serious than public drunkenness and disrepute. Most of the men with whom I interacted had been arrested for attempted murder, assault, armed robbery, battery, domestic violence, and theft. Many these

charges included “gang enhancements”<sup>26</sup> or other types of enhancements. These charges often meant that an inmate could not qualify to be “released on recognizance” (ROR), and most were either denied bail or assigned a bail amount that was purposefully out of reach.<sup>27</sup> The seriousness of these charges typically resulted in extensive cases in which inmates remained remanded to custody for years. Those inmates comprised the heart of the general population.

### *Stigmatized Class*

The *stigmatized class* of inmates was a composite class of inmates that required special considerations in order to safely incarcerate them. The class included “protective custody” (PC), “administrative segregation” (Ad-SEG) inmates, and inmates with contagious diseases or debilitating health problems. The stigmatized class was segregated from general population and trustees because their presence fomented aggression and violence; hence, they posed a security threat to the jail. This was particularly true for “PC” inmates.

PC inmate housing units held the largest and most severely stigmatized and disgraced of all inmates. “PC’s,” as they were generally called, were inmates that had been incarcerated pending a charge or charges of sexual misconduct, inmates who had become known for “snitching” or informing the authorities regarding the illegal activities of other inmates, and inmates who, for one reason or another, required protection from the general population inmates. Whatever the reason that an inmate had “PC’ed up”

---

<sup>26</sup> “Gang enhancements” refer to California’s STEP (Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention) Act passed in 1988, which adds greater punishment for crimes committed “for the benefit” of a street gang.

<sup>27</sup> Goldfarb (1976) provided an excellent analysis of the bail system as a sort of welfare system for middle-class and high prestige individuals who have been arrested and detained.

(chosen protective custody), that classification made him a target wherever he went, and the unwillingness on the part of general population inmates to permit a “PC” to freely go about his business without a fight necessitated the segregation of “PC” inmates.

“AD-SEG” inmates were among the most violent or anti-social inmates in Golden County. The identification band of AD-SEG inmates was red instead of the standard white. When I asked deputy Brown about the red bands that I had seen being escorted here and there throughout the jail, he explained, “Administrative segregation. Twenty-three and a half hour lock down. No phones. No visits.” I asked if the red band means the inmate had been getting into a lot of trouble. “Basically it means that if I put him in the cell with you, he would jack your shit up.” In other words, deputy Brown was commenting, that AD-SEG inmates are violent and prone to aggression; hence, if I had been placed in a cell with one, he would “jack [my] shit up.”

Therefore, “ad-seg” inmates were held in administrative segregation units, which were single-man units that were plain, austere, and extreme in their deprivation of input. They were Golden County’s version of a secure housing unit (SHU). These units were used as disciplinary tools, but they were also thought of as functional answers for unruly inmates. Whatever the benefits that could be derived from storing inmates in those cells, the extremes of deprivation seemed to be maddening. When I passed by AD-SEG cells, I often heard a man who seemed to cry out just to have some noise and a stimulus to which he could respond—even if the stimulus was the sound of his own voice. Some men in AD-SEG cells paced incessantly; others stared long and deeply through the tiny window in the cell door at nothing and everything at the same time. Men in AD-SEG cells, which

sometimes were little more than a very small holding cell that had a magnetic strip adhered to the door that read, “AD-SEG.” A full discussion of the effects of time in administrative segregation cells is beyond the scope of this study; however, Rhodes (2004) provided an illuminating ethnography of the intersection of punishment and treatment, in a maximum-security unit. One of her central findings was that the stiffening of controls in penal societies is negatively related to the effectiveness of mental health treatment. Additionally, a more stringent increase in punishment apparatuses was likely to exacerbate the physical and mental health conditions of inmates. Thus, AD-SEG inmates seemed to be in varying degrees of deterioration, and the nearly indiscernible noises that some of the men made, the constant pacing, and dead stare were outward manifestations of the inward stress level that those inmates faced.

Inmates with contagious or debilitating medical conditions were kept in single-man units. In contrast to “ad-seg” units, medical cells contained a bed—not just a metal slab with a foam mattress. In Sunland, they had a television, a shower, a toilet, and a sink all within space that was approximately 9’ x 9’. The cells were illuminated with the institutional beige glowing bulbs. In some ways, these cells avoided the worst aspects of general population living and administrative segregation. General population inmates regularly complained about the forced interaction that characterized batch living. Men soaked in the hours of alone time they had when their celly was away at court or mental health. Administrative segregation provides a space for a man to do his time in peace—alone and unfettered by others; however, administrative segregation almost entirely cells were devoid of stimuli. Medical unit cells provided a safe space where an inmate could

be alone to experience a full range of emotions if he so chose, and he could do so without the immediate reproach of other inmates. And contrary to the “ad-seg” cell, the medical unit cell had a television and the accoutrements of a small studio apartment. Thus, the general population inmates sometimes commented that inmates in the medical unit were “lucky” that they had chronic medical conditions such as HIV or hepatitis or a bad staph infection.

### *Interactions between Classes*

At the heart of interactions between the three primary classes of inmates is resentment, which is to be understood as a composite of jealousy, dissatisfaction, and aversion. Resentment refers to feelings of indignant insult. Generally, it is a position-based emotion in that it emerges through the interactions of dominant and subordinate groups (Turner 2010). Subordinated groups are engendered with resentment when they are made to defer to dominant groups (Turner 2010); however, in Golden County, power differentials were not always the determining factor for resentment across the classes. The classes of inmates had different reasons for resenting one another. Sometimes the resentment was based upon power or privilege differentials. Sometimes the resentment was a response to threats and reproach. Other times, the resentment emerged through socialization processes and group identity formation. Thus, instead of the resentment being unidirectional along hierarchical lines, inmates in Golden County were caught within a *web of resentment*—a network of interdependent resentment-based interactions.

Trustees experienced the most intense resentment. They dressed better than other inmates. They ate better than other inmates. They spent more time free of their cells

than other inmates. Most importantly they were generally treated better than other inmates. In the trustee pod, the trustees or “greens” functioned as extensions of administrative power. In order to keep extra dayroom time, they policed the “oranges” from being out of the cells before they were permitted. This often led to arguments between “greens” and “oranges” in large part because the only difference between “oranges” in the trustee pod and “greens” in the trustee pod was that a job had not yet opened up for the “oranges.” Thus, the “oranges” in the trustee pod often resented the treatment they received from the deputies and the “greens” who it seemed, abused their fortune as if it were a natural right.

Interactions between trustees and general population trustees were similar. For instance, Sunland conducted an inmate clothing exchange twice a week. Dayrooms of inmates were herded from their cells where they met with deputy-escorted trustees who received dirty clothing and issued clean clothes in the desired size of general population inmates. Though there were some trustees who tried to ensure that certain inmates received cleaner towels and clothing that fit, generally, trustees gave inmates whatever they grabbed. A general population inmate could complain, but that would bring the attention of a deputy. *Gentlemen! Just get your fucking chonies and get going. These are not your clothes anyhow. Keep the line moving, gentlemen.* When trustees handed out clothing that were noticeably stained and dilapidated, general population inmates frequently indignantly requested better options. Those requested were almost always met with a prompt, *I can't do that for you* from the trustee followed by a reminder from a deputy that the line needs to keep moving. For instance, when a general population

inmate was particularly resentful that his socks had holes in them, after being rebuffed by a trustee, a deputy chimed in, “C’mon guys. They’re gonna have holes.” Such interactions engendered a great deal of resentment towards trustees who were characterized as “house niggas” by D-Double. “They don’t want no problems,” so they functioned as control agents, but more importantly, they often went about their work with an air of superiority.

Ken expressed the feelings of the majority of general population inmates on the matter when he said, “[Trustees] think they’re better than everyone else. Like, they think they’re deputies and shit.”

On the other hand, trustees resented general population inmates, in part, because general population inmates represented a burden for trustees but also because general population inmates did not seem to understand the constraints under which trustees performed their jobs. A regular complaint amongst trustees was that they were being worked too hard for \$.50/day. “It’s slavery,” one my cellies grumbled under his breath while getting ready for work. “They make us do *their* work. ‘Real talk. We’re doing the work they’re supposed to be doing. If we weren’t here, *they* would have to clean this fucking jail up, and they don’t wanna do that, so they shit on us.”

“Meanwhile, you got every-fucking-body begging for better clothes and more food and shit. Yo. I hate that shit, bro,” my other celly chimed in.<sup>28</sup> “That’s why I hate dealing with them.”

---

<sup>28</sup> While I was in the trustee pod at Providence, I was the third man in a two-man cell. I slept in what was known as a “boat.” It was a 6’ long plastic canoe shaped sleeping apparatus made for situations in which there were more inmates than there were beds.

“The deputies?”

“Naw, the other incarcerated fools up in here who prawly ain’t never getting out no time soon and shit. They’re dealing with their politics and shit, and they want to pressure us to give them more of everything and get in trouble.”

During the above exchange, my celly was expressing a commonly held feeling that trustees were trapped in the middle of deputies and general population inmates. The trustees resented the general population inmates for forcing them to choose between doing their jobs as outlined by deputies and supporting their fellow inmates.

Resentment was expressed in other ways too. During a card game in the trustee pod, a conversation started between three trustees about how best to rank the jobs that a trustee could get. The men quickly resolved that any cleaning job was their least favorite. One inmate in particular made a statement that summed the feeling of the conversation: “Do dese mufuckas know dat da messes they make gotta be cleaned up by us? And den dey wonder why da fuck we don’t be fuckin’ with them like that. Mufucka cuz you nasty.” Trustees resented having to clean up after other grown men—particularly men who did not seem to care that other inmates had to do the cleaning.

The stigmatized class of inmates, particularly the PC inmates, was the object of universal resentment. While AD-SEG and medical unit inmates were resented because they upset the social order of inmate life, general population inmates and trustees were socialized to resent PC inmates. Normative street culture forbids one to become an informer (Jankowski 1991; Anderson 1999; Rios 2011; Contreras 2013). The penalty for being an informer or a “snitch” can range from a beating to death; hence, the phrases,

“snitches get stitches” and “snitches end up in ditches.” This code is so diffuse that one need not be involved in street culture to know the rule. In penal societies, informers must be kept in separate housing units for their own protection, as general population inmates are taught to feel offended by the presence of snitches. Men who are suspected of telling a deputy that he felt threatened, that they knew of misconduct of any kind, or those suspected to have given information to a policing agency regarding criminal activity, ran the risk of being made a victim. General population inmates generally operated with standing “go” orders to attack snitch inmates upon sight.

In response, “PC” inmates formed gangs for protection, and they resented general population inmates as much as they were resented. While I was in a *court-holding*<sup>29</sup> cell, across the hall were *court-holding* cells full of “PC” inmates yelling and cursing at us, “Eh fuck you putos! You think you betta us! You’re no different than me, homie. This door opens up, and I’ll fuck you up, homie!” I stared silently through the window at the inmate, knowing that he did not want our doors to open and that it made him feel better to yell empty threats.

“Fucking PC-snitch-ass bitches getting’ riled up,” a voice from behind me asked. He was a fast walking Latino inmate.

“Yeah. It’s just whatever. I’m just watching the show,” I responded.

---

<sup>29</sup> This is my term. I have holding cells primarily by their utility but also by the character of interaction that took place in each one. “Court-holding cells” tended to be violent places; “pre-housing holding cells” were typically pensive spaces; and “mental-health holding cells” tended to be emotionally unfettered spaces wherein inmates shared some of their deepest fears.

The Latino inmate flipped the bird to the “PC” inmate across the way whom then began to fire off more obscenities. “Fuck you bitch! Ahh...Fucking PC’s,” he said with a smile while walking back to the metal bench.

The PC gangs were called “2.5”—half of 5.0, which was short for “Hawaii 5-O,” which was pronounced as “5”-“O.” “Hawaii 5-O” was a television series about a police investigator. PC gang members were called “2.5’s” because they worked for the police as informants, but they were only half-cops, so they could not be called 5-O; hence, 2.5. Chino, a Black American inmate who had done some time in Chino State Prison said that there was a PC gang there called the “independent riders.” The PC gang in Golden County developed in response to the stigma attached to their class and the resentment that their status engendered. Thus, they resented others because they were first rejected and resented.

The most heavily resented group were those inmates charged with a form of sexual misconduct. Even amongst PC’s inmates charged with sexual misconduct were resented. Their presence offended the sensibilities of inmates to the extent that inmates were mandated to physically attack these men upon sight. For this reason, inmates facing sexual misconduct or child endangerment charges did their best to keep their charges unknown. During intake, I tried to assuage a Latino inmate who was deathly afraid that his charges would get out and that he would have to “PC-up” if that happened. He was facing child endangerment charges. At the time, it was just he and I in the pre-housing hold cell. I assured him that I would not say anything, and I warned him to simply sit silently so that he would not draw unnecessary conversation to himself in order to keep

from being asked about his charges. His fear was warranted. For example, an inmate named Mansa Musa, had originally been placed in the general population, but when details about his case aired on television (he was facing multiple charges of crimes against his children), he was being attacked everywhere he went. Eventually, he was moved to a single cell in the medical unit for his protection.

### ***A Web of Resentment***

The interactions between the classes were rife with resentment. The web of resentment built mistrust within the everyday interactions of inmates. A man need not have actually been a snitch to earn the label and be treated accordingly. Mere whispers of suspicions would be enough. Similarly, if there were questions about a man's charges, eventually, he would be made to answer to those charges in court, and arraignments were conducted in factory-line like manner in the presence of other inmates so that everyone knew the charges an inmate was facing. Even as resentment built solidarity amongst some groups, it did so at the cost of creating divisions between inmates that might not otherwise exist. For instance, not every man was so offended by the charges and apparent behavior of PC's that he was prepared to violently attack every PC that came within his reach; however, no inmate wanted word to spread that he was sympathetic to PC's, and for inmates in leadership roles, violent action was a requirement. Thus, resentment often led to violence, and when it did not result in violence, it bubbled under the surface, building into deep-seated animosity.

## **RACIALIZED INMATE GROUPS**

The inmate classes I described above were broad divisions of classes of inmates; however, the trustees and the stigmatized class of inmates constituted a relatively small proportion of the total population of inmates throughout Golden County. Most inmates were in general population housing units, and those units were profoundly racialized spaces. This is not to say that there were housing units designated for specific racial groups, but in closed dayrooms, inmates were assigned cellies according to a racialized scheme. In *Johnson v. California*, 543 U.S. 499 (2005) the Supreme court decided that assigning inmates to housing units according race was unconstitutional and that penal institutions must demonstrate a compelling interest in order to circumvent the strict scrutiny standard.<sup>30</sup> Despite this mandate, inmates continue to be housed according to race in penal societies in California and in those across the nation (Henderson et al. 2000; Goodman 2008; Trulson et al. 2008; Noll 2012).

The general institutional logic behind segregating inmates by race is two-pronged: race can serve as a proxy for gang membership, so keeping inmates segregated by race helps to reduce opportunities for gang violence; and less violence with the potential to polarize inmates makes the management of inmate populations much easier (Henderson et al. 2000; Goodman 2008; AELE 2010; Noll 2012). The problem is that race is not a good proxy for gang membership. It is bad policy to conflate the two. First, not every member of a given racial classification is gang-affiliated, and some gangs are racially and ethnically diverse. For example, two of the largest gang denominations in the nation—

---

<sup>30</sup> In other words, penal societies are subject to the same standards and rules regarding the use of social classifications to govern how individuals are treated by which every other institution must abide.

crips and bloods—span the racial and ethnic spectrum (see Goodman 2008 for recent evidence). Moreover, using race as a representation for gang membership understates the history and social construction of race and overstates the significance of gangs.

Beyond these administrative concerns, there is the trope that inmates segregate themselves by race, and there is some evidence to support this claim (Carroll 1974; Jacobs 1977; Irwin 2005). However, the relationship between self-segregating inmates and administrative practices that racially segregate inmates is underexamined. Hemmens and Marquart (1999) found that the perception that race was a problem depended upon the race of the inmate—with black inmates (on average) finding race to be less of an issue than Latino or white inmates. It is unclear whether the driving force behind racial segregation is inmate preference, administrative preference, or some hybrid of the two (Trulson and Marquart 2002).

The belief that inmates should be racially segregated reflects widespread opinions, assumptions, and interpretations about race and American race relations that have been legitimated in the minds of penal managers, concerned citizens, and criminal justice officials who (to varying degrees) are aware of reports of apparently racially motivated riots in penal societies. These beliefs function as rationalized myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977) that make sense of racial segregation (Spiegel 2007). Such institutional myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977) form the common sense behind rules and practices to make them seem reasonable and even necessary irrespective of their actual efficiency. In Golden County detention centers, racial segregation was mythologized as a legitimate form of risk management.

Golden County administrators, deputies, jail personnel, and inmates had accepted that racial segregation was necessary for maintain order and peace within the detention centers. In a conversation with Nurse Bee who was one of the mental health nurses working at Sunland Detention Center, I mentioned that life in jail was organized according to race, and she responded rather indignantly, “Well I read in the [local newspaper], I think not too long ago that people were complaining or blaming the jail for segregating inmates. Don’t they know that they’d be killing each other if they weren’t kept apart?”

During intake, I sparked a brief exchange with a deputy while being fingerprinted, and he made a similar argument. “So am I just waiting on another black guy to make bail or what,” I asked, wondering how long I would be held in a pre-housing holding cell.

“Pretty much. Or space might open in other ways. These rules don’t work in the world, but they work in here,” he retorted plainly.

Along the same line of logic, I once jokingly asked the “Black” “rep” (short for “race representative”) what we would do without him, and he responded, “Prawly get into a riot.”

In each of the above examples, behind the responses of the deputy, the “Black” rep’, and Nurse Bee is the risk reduction myth that rationalizes racial segregation as a necessary measure for the safety of everyone. Despite an abundance of examples that racial classification was problematic, inefficient, or at least not a factor in reducing risk, the practice of segregating inmates by race continued, and it began with the intake process.

In the following sections, I present an analysis of race relations in Golden County. While there were other social constructions (gender and reputation, for example) that are important for understanding how inmates experienced their time in Golden County, race and racialization processes were driving forces behind the very construction and character of Golden County social structure. For this reason, a discussion of the significance of race is warranted. I begin with an outline of Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation perspective, which provides my theoretical framework for examining race followed by what is meant by "racialization." Next, I conceptualize the Golden County jail system as a race-making site where two racial projects were at work. I conclude with an analysis of racialized and non-racialized spaces within Golden County.

### ***Racial Formation & Racialization***

Omi and Winant (1994) define "racial formation" as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55). This perspective is based upon the fluidity of race as a construct that derives its meaning from the organization of social, economic, and political forces. In other words, the meaning(s) of race change(s) based upon the push and pull of societal forces, which represent the interests of particular groups. Thus, who is defined as "White," for instance changes based upon the political, economic, and social interests of ruling groups at a given time.

According to the racial formation framework, race is "an element of social structure" that "*signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*" (italics in original p. 55). In other words, meanings

attached to race (and hence racial groups) are constantly being contested and transformed through political struggle. Thus, race is not biologically determined. It is socially constructed, and the attribution of phenotypes to certain racial categories is “always and necessarily a social and historical process” (p. 55).

The racial formation process is accomplished through what Omi and Winant (1994) call “historically situated *projects*,” which are the ideological mechanisms that link race as a cultural symbol (meaning) and race as a structural phenomenon (organization). A racial project is the simultaneous explanation or interpretation of racial dynamics and an endeavor to “reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (p. 56). Racial projects may be macrostructural, occurring at the institutional level, the meso-level within organizations, and at the micro-level between individuals determining “common sense” understandings of race.

Within the racial formation framework racial projects pervade society at large. A multitude of racial projects compete, and in becoming a part of our ideological lexicon, some rise to construct a “common sense” understanding of race and racial order. This is a key aspect of racial formation processes. Racial formation operates at the level of hegemony wherein subordinated groups come to think of race in a “common sense” manner based upon a ruling group’s ideological prescriptions for racial order. Thus, subordinated groups consent to what is understood as the legitimate authority of a ruling group’s beliefs about race. Though these beliefs may ultimately not serve subordinated groups well, subordinated groups nonetheless regard the racial ideology as representative of some more general principals about how to best to think of race and racial order.

A related concept of importance here is that of *racialization*. Racialization is the process of attributing a racial meaning to phenomena (Almaguer 1994; Omi and Winant 1994; Bonilla-Silva 1997). People and things can be racialized; hence, innocuous items like watermelons and fried chicken as well as activities like basketball, polo, and hockey have been infused with racial meaning, resulting in, for example, “White activities” and “Black foods.” Racialization processes reflect the hegemony of racial ideology. At the center of racialization processes is the fitting of material, social, and psychological “things” into racial categories (Bonilla-Silva 1997). In this way, racialization is conceptually intrinsically tied to the racial formation perspective.

***Classification: The Organizational Racial Project***

During the classification interview, the deputy conducting the interview plainly asked, “Do you get along with all races?” So long as an inmate posed no overt threat to security, he was assigned to a housing unit in the general population according to a racialized scheme that allowed for only three racial categories. Contrary to Goodman’s (2008) findings, there was no negotiation process with regard to determining an inmate’s race. In Goodman’s (2008) institutional ethnography, an inmate’s race was determined through negotiations that included the inmate, the correctional officer, and prison administrators. An inmate could argue that he should be given a particular racial or gang affiliation, and the inmate’s choice was weighed and negotiated in accordance with prevailing thoughts about what the “right” category was for each inmate and the established system of categorization. In Golden County, inmates were asked whether they got along with all races, but deputies never asked inmates to identify themselves in

terms of race or ethnicity. Instead, the classification deputy simply looked at each inmate and determined the inmate's proper racial classification based upon a set of common sense understandings about what the typical "Wood," "Southsider," or "Black" inmate should look like. The question, "Do you get along with all races" was aimed at determining whether an inmate could be housed in general population versus a PC unit—not whether he could be housed in a racially integrated cell. Thus, upon entering their cell, inmates learned that they had been fit into one of three categories of inmates that were delineated by an unrefined color scheme based loosely upon perceived phenotype. Mostly brown inmates were housed together as "Southsiders;"<sup>31</sup> mostly black inmates were housed together as "Blacks;" and mostly white inmates were housed together as "Woods."<sup>32</sup>

It is at the point of official classification that the race-making process begins. Free society racial and ethnic identities such as Asian and Native American, are ignored, and reinterpreted, and reformulated according three categories. Simultaneously, the jail's social structure comes to be organized along newly formed racial lines: the "Woods," the "Blacks," and the "Southsiders." This is the essence of the racial formation process.

Golden County recidivists new what awaited them, but first-timers had no idea that the classification interview had sorted them into a racialized group at the organizational level. Nevertheless, Golden County made organizational provisions for the three racialized groups. The largest group was the "Southsiders" or "Surenos."<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> In northern California, Latino inmates are typically called "Nortenos," meaning "northerners."

<sup>32</sup> "Woods" was short for "peckerwoods," the genealogy of which, I never discovered.

<sup>33</sup> Spanish for "Southsiders."

They were comprised of “homies,” “paisas,” “Indians,” and non gang-affiliated Latino Americans. A “homie” was a gang-affiliated Latino American inmate. In free society, two “homies” might have been from warring gangs, but in Golden County, as was the case for all Latinos, they were united under the “Southsider” banner. Paisa or “paisano,” translates to “countryman,” but the term carried a negative connotation, and it identified a “Southsider” as being an unassimilated or recent Mexican immigrant that spoke little to no English. Within the “Southsider” hierarchy, the paisas were low status men, and they were often the butt of jokes or objects of ridicule.

The “Woods” were comprised of White American inmates. The “Woods” were a divided group. The leadership was derived from the “comrades”—short for “White-power comrades.” They were conspicuously white supremacists. They greeted one another with the symbolic “heil Hitler” salute. Other “Woods” were White American men who were not affiliated with a gang or a political group with any type of racial philosophy, and they made efforts to distinguish themselves from gang-affiliated inmates. For example, while sitting in a *mental-health holding cell* awaiting my turn to speak with Nurse Bee, I chatted with a “Wood” and a couple of “Southsiders” about how easy it was to receive a gang enhancement in Golden County, and during a brief exchange, the “Wood” made it clear that he did not want to be associated with the comrades. “They checked my tattoos, but I don’t have gang tat’s,” I explained. “So, they couldn’t add that shit on.”

“Yeah they check everybody’s tattoos,” the “Wood” began. “They wanna hit you wit’ a bunch of enhancements, and that shit just makes your time hecka long.”

“Did you get an enhancement because of your tats,” I asked, thinking that maybe he had gotten a raw deal because of his tattoos, which were not gang-related.

“Fuck no!” He was indignant with his brow furrowed as if he was shocked that I could even think such a thing.

“Oh okay.”

“I’m not a skinhead.”

Though the “Wood” distinguished himself from “skinheads” or comrades as emphatically as I would have denied being in a gang, such pronouncements were largely empty and useless. We were interacting in one of the few places in the jail that allowed for interracial fraternizing, and if an interracial conflict broke out in our respective dayrooms, we would be required by the “reps” to fight on the side of our racialized group.

The “Blacks” represented an extreme form of racialization and race-making. The racial category “Blacks” included Black and Asian American inmates. The “Blacks” were further divided by those who were gang-affiliated and those who were not. Of those who were gang affiliated, the two overarching gangs, the Crips and the Bloods, were fractured, and those street alliances and divisions often transferred directly to Golden County penal societies. Men, who, in free society would be regarded as Asian American, were classified and assigned to two-man cells with “Blacks.” They were, for all intents and purposes, “Black,” and I never overheard, took part in, or was told of a conversation in which an Asian American inmate’s free society ethnic identity was given primacy. They were, in fact, expected to abide by the rules that governed all the “Blacks.” There

was no negotiating this mandate. For example, when a new Asian American inmate passed G's (a "Black") cell door on his way to his new cell assignment with Sisqo, another "Black", G yelled through the seam of his cell door, "'You ride wit' the Blacks?'" The question was more about seeking confirmation than it was about seeking information. When the Asian inmate nodded in the affirmative, D-Double, the "Black" "rep'," showed him where all the "Black" cells were.

During my time in the field, I never saw more than three Asian American inmates in a dayroom at a time, and all of them had a "Black" celly; however, there had been at least one attempt at assigning an Asian American inmate to a cell that did not house a "Black" inmate. Paul Bunyan, a Wood, shared his experience with me while in a mental-health holding cell. "I had a Korean celly for fourteen months," he began. "He slept most of the time, but we got along okay."

"We've got three Asians in my dayroom," I replied. "'Didn't know you could have an Asian celly."

"Well, I can't. The rep' that we had had before was kinda relaxed. You know? He was cool about this shit [the "politics"]. Then he was rolled out<sup>34</sup>. The new rep' is way stricter. He rolled my celly out. I never had any problems with him. He slept all the time. I don't know. Maybe he was hard-timing it. But yeah the rep' said that it wasn't right [for me to have a Korean celly], so he complained to the depts' [deputies] and they rolled him out [transferred him to a different housing unit]."

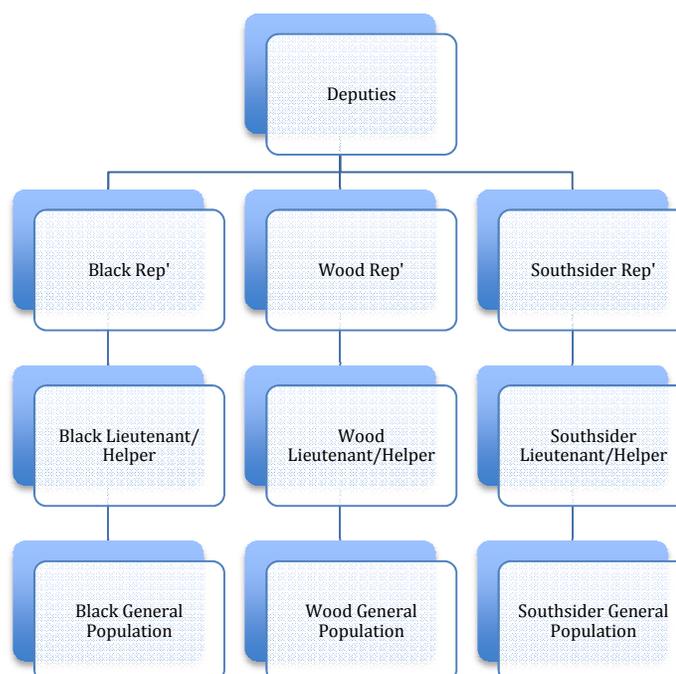
---

<sup>34</sup> Transferred him to another housing unit.

Several key points can be derived from the above interaction. Whatever the anomalous chain of events that led to a Korean American inmate being housed with a Wood, the arrangement was deemed inappropriate by inmate leadership, and that decision was supported by deputies and the jail administration. In effect, a micro-level control agent (the rep') policed the racial order, and his decision was sanctioned at the organizational level by the very agents (deputies and jail administrators) who established the racial order in the first place. In this way, the organizational and micro-level projects informed and supported one another in the racial formation process.

*A flat hierarchy.* The three racialized inmate groups were organized in a *flat hierarchy*, which I conceptualize as multidimensional ordering systems between and within groups. In this case, the "Blacks," the "Woods," and the "Southsiders" were intra-hierarchical but not inter-hierarchical. Each group had a similar organizational structure, but the number of defined roles varied according to the size of the group. The general hierarchy of leadership is graphically represented in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: GOLDEN COUNTY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**



The “rep” (short for “representative” or “race representative”) were determined by the rules of each group. They were not appointed by the jail administration. They tended to be well versed in jail vernacular, the “politics,” and fluent in jail sign language.<sup>35</sup> They needed to have a willingness and ability to exercise violent force tempered by a personality that allowed for the diplomatic management of men who did not always respond well to authority. “Reps” tended to have money on their “books,”

---

<sup>35</sup> Jailhouse sign language was an adulterated version of standard American sign language in which each letter of each word needed to be spelled out using the an adapted version of the sign language alphabet.

meaning they had money in their personal account with which to purchase stationery supplies, hygiene and food products from the jail commissary. As the position required stability, usually “reps” were facing serious charges—murder or attempted murder—which would likely keep them in jail for months if not years through the conclusion of their trial. Inmates became the “rep” in a variety of ways. The “Southsiders” appointed their “reps” in a formal manner. A meeting was called, discussions were held, and a formal announcement was made to their membership. Sometimes, an inmate was the last of his race in a particular dayroom, in which case, he became the “rep” by default. The “Wood” “rep” was always the most respected comrade in the dayroom. When there were no comrades, the “Wood” rep was determined informally. The “Blacks” generally determined who would be the “rep” through informal conversations.

When there was talk of D-Double, the “Black” “rep” leaving, I had a conversation with Toll, the “Black” lieutenant, about who would replace D-Double. He suggested that he would likely have to replace him, which made sense because Toll had been there for three years, and he was well respected. I followed up that conversation with Toll with one with D-Double. When I asked him who would replace him, he shrugged his shoulders and said, “I don’t know. Somebody smart,” and he pointed at me. I said that I did not know enough about jail culture, and I asked about Toll. He nodded and said, “But he probably don’t want it.” I left before D-Double, but the general consensus was that Toll was to be the “rep” if D-Double left before him, and this was determined through a series of casual conversations.

“Reps” played an important role in Golden County social structure. They functioned as mid-level service managers—go-betweens for the inmates and jail administration. In effect, they were an added layer of control and buffering that kept deputies and administrators free from the hassles of the average inmate’s concerns. For instance, if an inmate wanted to make a personal request, he needed to do so formally with what deputies and inmates knew as a “kite.” A kite was a written message or request. It could be formal or informal, depending upon the addressee. In general population, which was the realm of the “rep’s,” inmates were prohibited from submitting a kite without allowing their “rep” to see it first. The “rep” would then take the kite to the other two “reps” to demonstrate that the kite was not a threat to security from the point of view of the inmates, and only then could it be submitted to the deputies. If an inmate were to be caught submitting a kite directly to a deputy without going through the proper channels, he put himself at risk for a beating. Thus, the development of the racialized group led to the development of racialized social controls.

In closed dayrooms, the “reps” were typically allowed to roam free of their cells when the rest of the inmates were locked away. This privilege served an administrative function. There was only one source of hot water in each closed dayroom, and it was centrally located outside of the cells. The privilege of roaming the dayroom freely came with the responsibility to tending to the needs of inmates. Without the “rep,” inmates would be pressing their buttons in their cells every time they needed something, and a deputy would have to deal with being inundated with inmate requests. “Reps” reduced the general population’s reliance upon the pod. There were times when the “reps”

simply sat in the dayroom and watched TV while the inmates were locked away, but very often the “reps” spent their time running from cell to cell, delivering hot water through the seam between the cell door using an opened potato chip bag as a funnel. Sometimes the “rep” would change the channel per the request of his membership group. Books and games that the jails provided were also centrally located in the dayroom, so “reps” often placed books and their group’s checkerboard<sup>36</sup> in front of the cell doors per inmate requests. They passed kites, placed bartered items in front of the cell doors of the parties involved, they ensured that every member in their respective group received a tray during “feed” times, and generally saw to the needs of their membership. Thus, the bulk of their time was consumed with servicing their membership.

Aside from addressing the more mundane needs of their membership, “reps” were instrumental in maintaining the social order. I once half jokingly asked D-Double what we would do without him, and responded, “Prawly get into a riot.” Deputies often sought the support of the “reps” to deal with insubordinate inmates. When word reached the administration of possible interracial violence or when there an issue that threatened the social order of the jail developed, the “reps” were typically called to the sally port in a meeting with deputies to quell the conflict or to discuss what should happen to maintain order. Sometimes, deputies referred inmates to their “rep” when an inmate wanted to

---

<sup>36</sup> In Sunland, each group had its own set of checkers.

make a request. For instance, when Sisqo, a “Black” inmate, tried to whisper a request to the runner,<sup>37</sup> the deputy loudly responded, “Who is your ‘rep’?”

At times, order was maintained through intragroup violence. When an inmate’s behavior threatened to disrupt peaceful interactions between the racialized groups, it was the job of the “rep” to correct (sometimes diplomatically and sometimes violently) the disruptive behavior. Most inmates policed themselves because the threat of violence was enough; however, when the mere threat was not enough, the “rep” was expected to step in. A warning would be given, and if that did not correct the mistakes, the “rep” disciplined the inmate. For example, when Henry, the “Wood” “rep” lost his patience for explaining the “Wood” rules regarding how to behave during dayroom, he disciplined an inmate:

Tonight, just as dayroom ended...as I headed up the steps by Henry’s cell, his celly was standing right outside the cell facing the pod, and I heard the sounds of fists on flesh...[As] I passed the cell, I saw shadows moving in the cell, and I realized that Henry was DPing [physically disciplining] someone...his celly was looking out for the deputies...A few more steps and I looked back in time to see one of the newer woods, Staplehead, get shoved out of the cell holding his hands up in a cowering manner...The rule for the “Woods” is that they must come out [of their cell’s] for dayroom. This is so they’ll have numbers in a race riot. Apparently, Staplehead and his celly didn’t want to come out for dayroom...and a lesson needed to be taught.

Under the “reps” were what I call *lieutenants*. They were responsible for enforcing the rules and policies when the “rep” was away at court or when the representative wanted to sleep. Sometimes, but not always lieutenants were the “reps”

---

<sup>37</sup> The “runner” was the name given to the deputy whose job it was to periodically leave the pod, enter the dayrooms, and count the inmates in their cells. The runner also delivered mail and periodically walked the dayroom as a show of presence.

celly. In effect, the lieutenant was second in command. The *helper* and the lieutenant were sometimes interchangeable. When they constituted separate roles, the helper served as a support function for the “rep” and his group membership. Generally, the helper was the “reps” celly, and he performed tasks like counting food trays for his membership, acting as “rep” when the lieutenant and “rep” were gone, and cleaning the dayroom with the “rep’.”

The “Southsiders” had a *phone monitor* who had the unenviable task of ensuring that inmates used only a specified amount of time on the phones. For the “Woods” and the “Blacks” the “rep” or the lieutenant monitored phone time, but there were so many “Southsiders” in the larger dayrooms, that a separate position was created for this task. Fights over phone time were more common among “Southsiders” than the other two groups. To spread the responsibility around, the “Southsiders” rotated who would be the phone monitor.

Despite the intra-hierarchical systems that governed the racialized groups, intergroup relations were organized like a strange democratic republic, wherein the “reps” were the senate. The numerical advantage that the “Southsiders” had over the “Woods” and the “Blacks” did not afford them greater authority or power. Despite the scarcity of resources, the groups were organized in a flat hierarchy. For instance, there was usually just one television set per housing unit, and if it worked, inmates created a calendar that was visibly displayed under the television. Each day of the calendar had either a “B,” a “W,” or an “S” marked on it, symbolizing which group was to have control over the television for that day. Similarly, there was only one set of nail and hair

clippers, and they were made available in an egalitarian manner. Whereas whiteness is given primacy over other racial identities in free society, the racial order in the Golden County detention centers was flat.

Despite the rather egalitarian division of resources, their numerical superiority meant that each “Southsider” was afforded significantly less access to showers, phones, nail clippers, hair clippers, food extras, and so on. On the other hand, the “Woods” had fewer members among to divide resources. Interestingly, in some dayrooms, the “Woods” and the “Southsiders” sometimes shared resources. For instance, in Sunland, the “Wood” “rep” gave some “Southsiders” permission by to use the “Wood” phone. In fact, the race-based tension that generally characterized interactions between “Blacks” and other groups was noticeably absent in many of the dealings between “Woods” and “Southsiders.” This was not the case in all dayrooms, but it was common enough to be noticeable. Nevertheless, in the event of interracial conflict, each racialized group was mandated to protect its own, first.

### ***The “Politics”: The Micro-Interactional Racial Project***

Deputies and inmates referred to the system of racialized rules that governed inmate behavior and organized the allocation and usage of facility resources as the “politics.” The “politics” imposed the mania of avoiding racial contamination that characterized the attitudes of most White Americans during Jim Crow. However, the racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow era had been flattened out in Golden County so that no one group was singled out as the contagion. Thus, a Jim Crow mania pervaded Golden

County detention centers but was tempered by a separate-but-equal philosophy that was truer in practice than was ever realized in free society.

When an inmate entered a housing unit, he was briefed about the “politics” of that dayroom. He was told where “his” group’s toilet and sink were. He was told which days his group had control of the television and which phone was his—if there was more than one. If there was only one, he was given the rules for using it—time allowed per call, whom to ask when he wanted to use it, when he would be permitted to use it, etcetera. He was told which shower and table(s) belonged to his group. He was told where he could walk, with whom he could talk, with whom he could share, and most importantly, he was warned about the punishment for violating the rules. Beyond the prohibition of sharing any resource—whether personal or provided by the facility—the “politics” proscribed fraternization across racialized groups. A “Black” and a “Southsider” inmate might have shared a tiny space in a pre-housing holding cell without incident. They might even have shared food, but if sent to the same dayroom with “politics,” they walked by one another without acknowledging each other, and they certainly did not share personal items. Facility resources like showers, sinks, toilets, and phones were shared to in such a way that only a particular group could make use of these resources at one time so as not to contaminate them through race-mixing. For example, when an inmate wanted to clip his nails, it was not first come, first serve. It was first group come, first group served. Thus, though a “Wood” might have been second in line, if he was behind a paisa, the “Southsiders” who wanted to were permitted to clip their nails first. Similarly, haircuts were scheduled according to racialized group. Golden County jails

did not have barbers, so each racialized group typically had an inmate who could cut hair well enough to be the designated barber for his group. In Sunland, there was only one pair of clippers per housing unit with up to four dayrooms. Haircuts were scheduled according to racialized group—not just need.

Though these racialized rules were jarring at first, with time and conditioning, notwithstanding some annoyances, the “politics” took a common sense nature. In fact, in some dayrooms, the infrastructure for the “politics” seemed to be built into the facility. For instance, Sunland Detention Center<sup>38</sup> had several housing units that included three phones, three showers, and the tables were bolted to the ground in groups of three. These sets of three made it easy for inmates to allocate resources along racial lines. The sets of three *signaled* to inmates that each group was supposed to have its own. Thus, the racial project that began with classification was further entrenched at the micro-level.

Nevertheless, men frequently complained under their breath about the “politics.” *‘Fucking hate this shit man! This politics shit is stupid.* Of the three groups, “Southsiders”<sup>39</sup> appeared to be the most committed to the “politics.” Whereas the “Blacks” and the “Woods” were sometimes known to initiate intergroup interaction, the “Southsiders” rarely did so. Of the three groups, the “Blacks” were, perhaps, the most lax when it came to the “politics.” It appeared as though the “Blacks” went along with the “politics” because the rules existed, but they seemed dispassionate about enforcing the racialized rules relative the “Woods” and certainly in comparison to the

---

<sup>38</sup> Sunland is one of the newer facilities in Golden County, having opened in 1993. One wonders whether resources were built in sets of three with this racialized scheme in mind.

<sup>39</sup> Evidence from recent interviews with former jail inmates that I have conducted suggest that the origin of the “politics” might be traced to the “Southsiders,” their relationship to La Eme (The Mexican Mafia)

“Southsiders.” That said, men rarely resisted the racialized rules in highly political spaces, but in apolitical spaces (pre-housing holding cells and mental-health holding cells) and spaces that might be in contestation (the visiting area and the “rec”<sup>40</sup>), men challenged and even ignored the “politics.” For instance, while at rec’, a few of us played basketball while a few “Southsiders” waited their turn. When our time on the court expired, T (a “Black”) complained, “Well, I’m ready to play another game, but we can’t play with you,” pointing to two “Southsiders” who were waiting to play next.

“This shit is stupid,” I grumbled. LK (a “Black”) nodded.

“Could we pick them up [play a game of basketball],” T asked, looking to LK as if he had the answer.

“They ain’t gonna be able to, nigga, but ask if you want to.”

“Yo,” T blurted to Reaper, the “Southsider” lieutenant who seemed to be at rec’ just to watch what was going on. “Can we pick them up?” Reaper shook his head and walked away. There would be no violating the “politics” during his watch.

In the above exchange, Reaper functioned as a control agent for the micro-level racial project—the “politics.” He effectuated “Southsider” rules, but he also reinforced the racial order and ensured that there was no racial contamination.

There were times when resistance to the “politics” in political spaces was successful. One morning while in the pill call line,<sup>41</sup> I overheard a “Wood” saying that he

---

<sup>40</sup> The “rec” is short for “recreation area,” which was the outside area that usually contained a basketball hoop, a place to play handball, and a place to do pull-ups. Sometimes inmates were given “rec’,” and sometimes they were sent there at night in the cold in their boxers as corporeal punishment.

<sup>41</sup> Inmates who received regular medication for any reason were summoned from the cells twice a day to receive their medicine.

had run out of toilet paper despite having put in several kites. “Wow. That’s some bullshit,” I interjected while looking over my shoulder.

“Yeah man,” he responded in a dejected tone. “And these fuckin’ rules they got here. This one Mexican said he’d gimme a roll, but if I take it, I could get my ass beat.”

Toilet paper was a particularly valued resource that men often hoarded as long as they could. I told him that I would try to get him a roll, but that I was not sure whether I could. I asked D-Double how he felt about me giving the “Wood” a roll of toilet paper, and he responded, *Damn! A nigga can’t even wipe his ass properly in here. ‘Fucked up. I don’t care, nigga. Do what’chu feel.* With D-Double’s blessing, and after negotiating with my celly about giving away one of our rolls, I waited until the night pill call, and on my way back to my cell, I dropped a roll of toilet paper in front of the Wood’s cell door. He nodded and mouthed “thank you” through the cell window. We never spoke about it.

*Crystallization of the “politics.”* The “politics” were most intense within the interactions of inmates, but the “politics,” as racialized rules, might have been less stable had the rules not pervaded the everyday business of managing the inmates. In other words, it was not just that inmates recreated *political* rules through their interactions that crystallized the “politics;” it was that deputies adhered to the “politics” as well. Thus, the “politics” were given a level of authoritative legitimacy that they would not otherwise have had. Racial classification and racialization processes extended beyond housing to include clothing exchanges and food distribution. During feed<sup>42</sup> time, a representative from each of the racialized inmate groups was asked to give counts of their respective

---

<sup>42</sup> Deputies routinely referred to lunch or breakfast or dinner as “feed” time, which added an unnecessarily demeaning dimension to eating.

membership, and food trays were supplied according to the racial order instead of simply using the total number of inmates in the dayroom. In this way, inmates relied upon the leadership within their respective racialized group, and the micro-level project was sanctioned at the organizational level. In fact, deputies relied upon inmate leadership to police their respective group members. When an inmate silently protested directives from Sunland deputies, I recorded the following observation:

...my celly and I were up as usual, and we saw three male deputies walking a “Southsider” back in here. Before they turned him over to the three female deputies running the pod that night, it was clear that the one male deputy was frustratingly trying to get answers from the “Southsider” who had his bedroll with the sheet already on it and his box in his hand. Eventually the male deputies gave up, and the man was told (apparently) to go sit in the dayroom (he was probably told to go back to his cell). One of the female deputies, Bear, began to talk to the man through the intercom. He wasn’t answering her questions, so he was called to the sally port and questioned by Boy (a female deputy). She wasn’t getting the answers she wanted either, and he went back in the dayroom and sat down. Then Reaper, [the “Southsider” lieutenant], was called out, questioned, and sent back to his cell. He walked by the southsider without acknowledging him at all. Then Beast, [the “Southsider” rep’], was called out, questioned, and sent back to his cell. He also didn’t acknowledge the man—not that the guy looked up at either one of them. Then the three female deputies all came to talk to the man, threatening that if he didn’t go to his cell (#94 with Bubble), they would put him in there. Shockingly, he just turned his back to them...I don’t know what Beast said to the man, but he clearly didn’t feel safe. The man was nonresponsive and openly defiant in front of everyone. Boy demanded, “Then who’s your rep’?! Who do I have to talk to?” The man said nothing, and he refused to move. They dared not put their hands on him, and I don’t think they wanted to call a male deputy. Eventually, Boy concluded, plainly, “I’m gonna put you in rec’ [recreation] cuz I’m tired of your shit.” The southsider did not respond to any threats.

I later found out that the “Southsider” refused to return to his cell because his celly, Bubble, had been sanctioned to beat him. The man could not inform the deputies

of the situation (be a snitch), so he sat silently and refused to obey directives because he could not be honest about his position. Relevant here, the deputies relied upon inmate leadership for information regarding what was happening with an inmate who simply refused to do as he was told. The deputies did not seek out the inmate's celly or other inmates who are in nearby cells. They sought the counsel of the inmate leaders who headed racialized groups. More importantly, the deputies sought to have input from the "Southsiders" leadership because the man ignoring directives was a "Southsider." Consequently, the racial order was not challenged or problematized. It was crystallized, and made to seem natural.

### **APOLITICAL SPACES**

The intensity of the "politics" was not uniform across Golden County detention centers. That is, the degree of racialization varied throughout Golden County. Some spaces were characterized by strict adherence to the "politics" while other spaces had no "politics" at all. Still others were somewhere in the middle. In effect, the intensity of the "politics" could be mapped along a continuum from "no politics" to "strict politics." I have described the general character of interaction in a couple of the places that had no "politics," but further detail is needed.

### *Pre-Housing Holding Cells*

Interactions in pre-housing holding cells were relatively unfettered insofar as inmates had not yet been classified. It was apparent which inmates were recidivists and which were first-timers, but that differentiation was based upon experience and not class in the way that I have conceptualized it here. Men representing varying racial and ethnic groups shared each other's space without incidence in pre-housing holding cells. In fact, despite being so tightly packed at times that avoiding physical contact was nearly impossible, I never witnessed or heard of a single altercation while in a pre-housing holding cell. Men shared stories about how they almost got away from the cops, their concerns regarding their charges, and even seasoned men involved themselves in laughs and storytelling though they knew that the "politics" that awaited most of us would likely disallow casual conversation across racialized groups. Most significantly, men shared their food items freely without concern for race or ethnicity, which was heresy in almost all jail spaces. Those who were not accustomed to drinking skim milk offered it to whoever was the first to holler, "Shoot it!"<sup>43</sup> Effectively, without a system of classification (and in small numbers because the pre-housing holding cells were full if ten men were in them), race was not a divisive factor for inmates.

---

<sup>43</sup> "Shoot it" was a common saying germane to jail facilities, meaning to quickly pass something.

### ***Mental Health Holding Cells***

Mental health holding cells were also apolitical zones. Typically, there were no more than five inmates at a time in these cells, and the group was usually racially diverse. In pre-housing holding cells, inmates had not yet been exposed to the “politics” or forced to abide by the racialized rules; however, in mental health holding cells, inmates usually came from highly political dayrooms. Many of the inmates who visited mental health nurses went to escape the “politics.” Time in the mental health holding cells were blissful relative to the experiences inmates were having in their respective dayrooms. The mental health holding cells usually had a working phone with which an inmate could gain a little extra phone time that he would not get while in his housing unit. Most importantly though, conversations in these cells centered on how inmates felt about being incarcerated. Men talked about mistakes they had made, issues they were having with the wives, ex-wives, and children. They spoke of concerns about being left alone for too long. They complained about the “politics” and desire to just do their time in peace.

Some inmates visited mental health as a sort of vacation from their dayroom lives, and this was no secret. While waiting in a mental health cell, which in Sunland was across from an “ad-seg” cell, I overheard deputy Brown responding to an “ad-seg” inmate regarding a mental health hustle. The inmate was complaining that he could not sleep

and that he needed someone to talk to. Deputy Brown scoffed and responded, “You just want to use the phones. I know that’s why you come down here. I’m not stupid.” He might not have been wrong. The mental health nurses were personable, and they did a good enough job at feigning empathy for the inmates, but they were not fooled into believing that every inmate who visited them was there because they needed professional attention.

In discussing when I was supposed to return to mental health, Nurse Bee added, “Some people like to come down here because they say it’s a nice environment.”

Being that mental health served as a sort of vacation destination for inmates within Golden County, the character of interaction was quite different from other spaces in the jails. Paul Bunyan, a large and imposing “Wood” used to share his most personal feelings about life while we sat in a mental health holding cell awaiting our turn to speak to the nurse, doctor, or to be escorted back to our respective cells. He said that he could tell that the psychiatrist was sometimes rushing him out of the booth—that he was not always listening, which “sucks when you’re pouring your heart out.” Mental health holding cells were extensions of the booths that inmates sat in to discuss their fears and personal issues with professionals, and inmates ignored the “politics” in those spaces.

### *The Trustee Pod*

Beyond the administrative-based benefits that come with being housed in a trustee pod, those dayrooms were free of the “politics.” During the week that I spent in the trustee pod in Providence, I was the third man in a two-man cell. I am Black American, one of my cellies was a red-headed White man in his early twenties, and the other was Latino and in his early twenties. I was assigned to that cell by the administration; however, when I was transferred to a general population cell in Sunland, all of my cellies were “Blacks” like me. Again, this reflects the organizational level racial project, but that I could be in a cell with one of each of the three racialized groups represented without any issues begs the question: *why have segregate inmates in the first place?*

The trustee pod had no racialized groups,<sup>44</sup> and hence, no racialized group leadership structures. The tables in the dayroom were bolted to the ground at equal distances, and they only sat four, which made arranging them according to a racialized scheme difficult. Men showered in whichever shower was available. Men used whichever phone was free. Men who would not be permitted to hold a conversation with one another in other dayrooms were sharing food. In fact, I partook in what was known as a “spread” with White, Black, and Latino inmates. A “spread” was a potluck of sorts

---

<sup>44</sup> I am referring to the racialization process in Golden County, and I am not suggesting that men in the trustee pod had not undergone some form of racialization while in free society.

in which inmates contributed food items (typically “soups” were the base food) to make a large meal, and all those who contributed (and sometimes a few who did not) sat and ate the food together. In political dayrooms (most dayrooms), a “spreads” were open to inmates of the same racialized group only. I was a bit taken aback when I was invited to what would otherwise be an intergroup “spread.” In the trustee pod, the “spread” was for inmates—no class or race differentiation.

Race relations in the trustee pod challenged my understanding of how inmates interacted with one another, and so for clarification, I struck up a conversation with a Black American inmate who was playing cards with a White American inmate. “So, I can use whichever phone I want,” I asked a bit incredulously.

“Yeah,” he responded while shrugging his shoulders. “You could use the one up there or the one back there or whatever,” pointing to various phones around the housing unit.

“Cool.”

“Yeah. We don’t have that shit in other pods—that race shit. Mufuckas in here can do what they want. Just don’t be disrespectful, but it’s not about race. I mean, Mexicans kick it wit’ each other, but they don’t have to. I play cards with whoever.”

It is worth noting here that during my time in the field, I never witnessed an interracial disagreement, argument, or fight. This is not to say that there were no issues. Certain inmates did not like other inmates, and there were class divisions between the “greens” and the “oranges” that bred resentment, but race was not a factor in the trustee pod.

### ***“Church”***

Periodically but irregularly<sup>45</sup>, one or two volunteers visited Sunland and held “church” services in the multipurpose room<sup>46</sup> adjoining the command pod. The pod would announce that church was available and ask those interested to line up at the sally port. Only the first ten to fifteen inmates to line up were permitted to attend church in the approximately 20’ x 20’ multipurpose room. Christian volunteers who freely shared their personal battles with the criminal justice system, drugs, and other of life’s difficulties conducted the “service.” Generally, the volunteers read a scripture or two and started talking about their lives until something sparked a conversation among the inmates.

The multipurpose room had a huge window through which, the goings on in the room could be viewed clearly from the dayroom that I was in at Sunland. Nevertheless, while at church, inmates interacted as if they were in a safety zone—invisible to others.

---

<sup>45</sup> Sometimes it would be weekly. Sometimes no services were held for weeks at a time.

<sup>46</sup> The multipurpose room was also frequently called “program” or the “program room” because so many programs were conducted in that room.

When the call came for those interested in church, inmates formed lines at the sally ports in deeply racialized spaces; however, once they entered church, those same men held hands, prayed together, spoke of their hopes and concerns for their families, shared their triumphs and their nightmares. One inmate shared that he had a recurring nightmare that he was being attacked by snakes. Two other inmates nodded and said that they had had similar nightmares. More than anything else, church gave inmates space and time to recapture a bit of the humanity that had been stripped from them and that they suppressed. Men cried. They were emotional and vulnerable in ways that would not have been permitted in their dayrooms. In fact, shows of emotion could have been dangerous outside of church and mental health. An older “Black” inmate from a different dayroom once told me that a younger “Black” inmate had been threatened because he was “crying like a baby...nobody wants to see that.” Church allowed men to be human—for a little while.

Upon the conclusion of church, men filed back into their dayrooms, and those same men who had literally shared their dreams and nightmares, walked by one without acknowledging the experience that they had together because of the “politics.” The “politics” meant that inmates returned to business as usual, and whatever benefits inmates gained from church, they kept those benefits pushed down within themselves.

## **EXPLAINING VARIATION IN THE RIGIDITY OF RACIALIZATION**

The intensity of the racialization was not uniform across jail space, so what explains this variation? Why were some spaces Jim Crow-like while others were relatively free of such racial mania? To answer these questions I created two simple matrices based upon what was occurring in each racial project. Beginning with the organizational level, I reasoned that whether an inmate was permitted to have visiting hours, time at recreation, whether he could visit a mental health nurse, be classified as a trustee, or participate in church, were management decisions that could be understood in terms the end the goal—treatment or rehabilitation. Analyzing the use of space in terms of the administrative goals allowed for the creation of two simplified categories: *punishment* and *treatment/rehabilitation*. I then cross-referenced the management goals with the rigidity of racialization. For the sake of simplification, I chose the extremes—either “strict racialization” or “very low racialization.” None of the services provided by Golden County rose to the level of a sustained effort toward rehabilitating inmates, and Golden County certainly did not have the resources or a mandate to provide treatment services that would get inmates well; however, the abovementioned services, programs, and activities could be viewed as efforts toward treatment and rehabilitation. Jails are typically thought of us as relatively temporary stations in the criminal justice system, so

they tend to have far fewer resources for rehabilitation and treatment than prisons (Goldfarb 1976; Pogrebin 1982; Klofas 1984; Jackson 1991; Collins et al. 2013). Thus, the efforts that Golden County offered were commensurate with what is likely to be found in most jail systems.

Table 1 represents my analysis of the relationship between the rigidity of racialization and Golden County jail management goals. Treatment/rehabilitation-oriented spaces were characterized by very low racialization.<sup>47</sup> Racialization processes would disrupt rehabilitation/treatment services, programs, and activities like visiting mental health, working as a trustee, or participating in church services; therefore, to reduce the effects of racialization, inmates were kept in low numbers where interaction could be better managed, and the administration forced intergroup interaction by integrating these activities whereas other services like using the nail clippers and getting a haircut were racialized. Thus, primacy was given to treatment/rehabilitation instead of management, which often meant punishment and control. Also, in these spaces, inmates were provided a sense of dignity. Trustees were spoken to as if they were humans, inmates visiting mental health professionals were encouraged to think about themselves

---

<sup>47</sup> Though some spaces clearly had no “politics” at all, here I’m referring to the degree of racialization, and my use of “very low racialization” is in acknowledgement that like gender, racial systems (and hence racialization) are typically at play in one way or another.

outside of their current conditions, and men at church were permitted to experience a wider range of emotions—beyond disgust and anger. Most importantly though, because inmates were not separated according to the racial order, interactions in treatment/rehabilitation spaces were characterized by very low intensities of racialization.

Conversely, when punishment was the goal, inmates were subjected to *strict politics*, and time in a highly racialized environment was experienced as an added measure of punishment, as the “politics” superimposed a layer of control upon a society of men who had already been divested of their freedoms.

TABLE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Management Goals	Racial Project	
	<i>Very Low Racialization</i>	<i>Strict Racialization</i>
<i>Treatment/Rehabilitation</i>	X	
<i>Punishment</i>		X

At the micro-level, the intensity of racialization was a function of the presence of a control agent, whether the inmate had a release date, and the amount of time that the inmate had been in the jail. The relationship between these factors is represented in Table 2. Repeatedly, when a control agent in the form of a deputy who favored or who enforced the “politics” or a lieutenant or “rep” (especially an out-group “rep”) was present, the “politics” were strictly enforced. That is, inmates were on their best behavior, following all of the Jim Crow-like rules whenever they knew they were being watched by a “rep,” a lieutenant, or someone who was sympathetic to “politics.” On the

other hand, when control agents were absent, inmates were much more lax about the “politics.”

Having a release date was critical. Inmates with a release date tended to cheat the “politics” in some small way or another. Sometimes as their release date approached, they withdrew from participating in day-to-day activities with other inmates, a finding that lends support to Wheeler (1961) who made a similar observation with prison inmates who were preparing for reentry to free society. The release date provided a sense of certainty and the ontological security that the netherworld was not never-ending. One would eventually be permitted to go home, and that knowledge was invaluable, as most of the general population had no idea when they would be leaving Golden County. With a release date, inmates had something to hope for, and looking toward their free society lives, they sought only to do their time in jail—not to become fixtures within the normative structures of the jail. They hoped to be *in* jail but not *of* jail, and so the “politics” were resisted—strictly prohibited in the trustee pod.

Finally, the longer an inmate was in jail, the greater the likelihood that he would be officially classified as either a “Black,” a “Wood,” or a “Southsider,” and the greater the likelihood that he would be conditioned to follow adhere to the “politics.” In other words, similar to Clemmer’s (1940) “prisonization” and Irwin’s (1985) adoption into the “rabble” class, with time, socialization pressures drove inmates to adhere to the “politics.” Men who made bail while in pre-housing holding cells were removed from jail before they had a chance to be racialized. Often, men were processed through classification, given a housing assignment, and released a day or two later. Most of the

time, those men never had to settle in and accept racialization in Golden County penal societies as their new environment. They simply were not around long enough for the racialization process to become a common sense way of behaving and thinking. On the other hand, the longer an inmate was there, the more conditioned he became to the “politics.”

TABLE 2: MICRO-LEVEL

<b>Inmate Factors</b>	<b>Racial Project</b>	
	<i>Very Low Racialization</i>	<i>Strict Racialization</i>
<i>Control Agents Present</i>		X
<i>Certainty of Release</i>	X	
<i>Time</i>	X	

## **SUMMARY**

In Golden County, an inmate’s experience varied based upon whether he was classified and housed with the trustees, in general population, or in a housing unit reserved for the stigmatized class. Mirroring systems of hierarchy and control in free society, Golden County inmates were subjected to layers of class- and race-based controls, and several conclusions can be derived from the analysis of Golden County social structure.

I have conceptualized the Golden County penal society as a race-making system wherein racial formation processes at the organizational and micro-level were mutually constitutive and expressive of a naturalized racial order that was based upon institutionalized myths related to race and risk management. These myths (Meyer and

Rowan 1977) are found within free society stereotypes, misconceptions about U.S. race relations, fear, and misnomers like “race riot,” which as Spiegel (2007) so cogently argued, are often not conflicts stemming from racist origins. Instead, they are conflict on which a racial order is overlaid, and despite ample evidence that suggested that racial classification and segregation was not only unnecessary, but it could be dangerous, administrators, deputies, and inmates alike accepted the hegemony of these myths. This was no small issue.

Strict adherence to the racial-risk myths meant that meanings attached to free society racial and ethnic categories and groups were reconstituted according to the goal of reducing risk. Thus, the racial categories “Black,” “Wood,” and “Southsider” were created, and however foreign or extreme this process seemed, we must remember that “race” is a highly contextualized concept, and who inhabits a given racial category depends upon the constellation of political, social, and economic contexts (Omi and Winant 1994). On this point, Almaguer (1994) provided an exemplary historical analysis of the meaning of Whiteness in California, which included a brief discussion of how Mexicans, some Chinese, and Asian Indians were, during differing socio-political moments, deemed White, demonstrating that racialization is not tied to biology or phenotype. It is a socio-political process *loosely* tied phenotype, which itself is socially constructed.

The construction of racial categories in response to an institutional myth about race relations demonstrates how dynamic and complex racial formation processes can be. One might say that the myth of risk management in Golden County jails and the resultant

organizational projects were embedded within a larger project concerning race relations that articulates the attitude and belief that racial groups are better off segregated. Recent scholarship has shown that the U.S. is becoming increasingly racially segregated (Massey 2007; Sharkey 2013). Future studies of racial stratification might benefit from looking at institutional myths about race and race relations in order to examine racial segregation and “white flight” in particular.

The myth of risk management for racial segregation was remarkably durable in the face of evidence that plainly demonstrated that racial classification was, at worst, problematic, and at best, ineffectual. Perhaps the most glaring issue with racial classification and segregation practices as measures for risk management was that men were only segregated in two-man cells. Except for times of security alert, which always meant that inmates were put on 23.5 hour lockdown, men in closed dayrooms were usually given time out of their cells two or three times a day (notwithstanding the normal food schedule). Thus, if interracial conflict was going to occur, inmates always had plenty of opportunities to fight. In open dayrooms, men roamed freely at all times of the day and night. Again, if a man sought interracial conflict, he certainly had plenty of opportunity for it. In effect, racial segregation was largely ineffectual as a risk management practice.

To this end, the analysis presented here invites penologists to consider how institutional myths about race permeate organizational behavior and lead to policies and practices about race relations that are neither effective nor efficient. Penal managers can have a significant effect on the intensity of racialization based upon their goals—whether

they be to punish, to treat, or to rehabilitate. Very little research has been conducted in which penologists consider how management goals affect the lives of inmates *while* including the voices of the inmates (Collins et al. 2013).

Finally, the Golden County racial order problematizes the way we think of U.S. racial structures. Generally in free society, an analysis of “race,” “race relations,” or “racial segregation” would be incomplete without a discussion of the asymmetrical power relations between racial groups; however, in a flat hierarchy, groups may be hierarchical in one way and not in another. Future research might reconcile contemporary U.S. race relations, which can be traced to white supremacist beliefs (Mills 1997), with the relationship between flat hierarchies and racial groups in other penal societies or in free society.

## CHAPTER 4: “JAILING”

Today, as usual, Scott and I divided up the task of cleaning our cell. He cleaned the toilet and the sink. I got under the bunks and cleaned the floor. I’m always amazed at how the floor feels after it’s been cleaned—kinda soft and cushiony. The doors popped open without warning for dayroom, and Toll appeared in our doorway as we worked in silent concert. I guess we must have looked like busy little ants getting a job done because he said, “Oh, so y’all just jailin’ huh?” Scott responded that we were just about done, and I just laughed, but it struck me that Toll, who’s been here for so long, noticed that we seem to have the hang of things. I kinda feel like he’s anointed us in some way.

The above excerpt is from my fieldnotes while in Sunland, and it captures the coining of the key concept discussed here: “jailing.” *Jailing* is a processual concept that refers to the learning and development of coping strategies for penal living. Jailing helped inmates to manage the stressors that they daily faced. Here I focus on those strategies that, through repetitive use and perceived helpfulness, rose to the level of prescription and became a part of the cultural landscape of Golden County penal society. Inmates learned these strategies through observation, or they were explicitly taught them *because* they were durable. In short, they worked, and so they comprised the heart of the jailing process.

Jailing is about survival. The implementing of a constellation of coping tools that reduced stress and thereby alleviated the pains of imprisonment was an ongoing process in which an inmate was playing catch-up. His responses were always reactionary, for, over time, coping tools diminished in their capacity to reduce stress. Thus, the inmate was constantly shuffling tools and strategies. This was necessary, in part, because punishment was multidimensional, and the various fields of punishment waxed and waned in their intensity and significance. For instance, there were times when the loss of

autonomy was a greater issue than the loss of romantic or other social and familial relationships; there were times when the loss of liberty was a more significant issue than the loss of heterosexual relationships and issues concerning personal security; and there were times when an inmate was primarily concerned with the loss of property over any other *pain* associated with imprisonment. It was this shifting of the emphasis in stressors that necessitated vigilance and a well-stocked tool shed of coping strategies, less an inmate succumb to the stress of the penal environment.

Below I further subdivide environmental and private forms of punishment in terms of how inmates experienced and responded to these punishments. My discussion is organized according to the coping strategies that inmates employed in response to three broad dimensions of punishment: sensory deprivation, contamination, and emotional constriction. I then provide an analysis of the special significance of time as it pertains to jailing.

### ***Sensory Deprivation***

Penal living starves the mind of input. The facilities are purposefully drab. The scenery is unchanging. The routinization of life gives structure to everyday living, but it also strips life of meaning. The conversations, activities, thoughts, and emotions of each day become so predictable that it is hardly worth having them, for as the passing of one schedule blends into the passing of the next, which seems identical to the schedule appearing on the horizon, inmates struggle to find meaning in living and in time itself. As Scotty once said, “It’s just the same games—the same crimes.”

“You can just swap most niggas in for other niggas, and ain’t shit changed,” LK added. “I’m glad I haven’t gotten tired of you niggas yet because I would do something to change this scenery.”

For Scotty and LK, as was true for many others who spent month after month in jail, the extremes of deprivation and routinization reduced penal living to an endless procession of empty moments and interactions with interchangeable inmates.

To break the monotony of daily jail living and to answer the ever-present question, “Now what,” men engaged in a variety of activities that I place under the umbrella of projects. *Projects* are tasks that inmates give themselves to do, quite simply, in order to have something to do. That definition is rather plain, but that is precisely the function of projects—to give a man something to do. Projects are actually quite common. In free society, for example, wherever people are made to wait, persons can be seen on a smartphone or a tablet playing a puzzle game. The game is a type of project that keeps the mind busy until it is time for one to handle one’s personal business. Similarly, but perhaps more idiosyncratically, I have a few friends who do not drink coffee or tea but who have the habit of arranging sweeteners by brand so that they are more accessible and aesthetically pleasing to those who do drink coffee or tea. More importantly, arranging the sweetener packets gives my friends something to do while we wait for our food to arrive. In penal societies, projects perform more important functions. They reduce the strain that accompanies punishment by interrupting the monotony of what Goffman (1961) referred to as routinized “batch living.”

*Projects.* In open dayrooms, inmates cleaned the dayroom continuously, and a more thorough clean was regularly scheduled between daily cleans. Past staph infection outbreaks led inmates to place a high value on cleanliness. However, because the space was shared and because cleaning the dayroom was always a group effort, the project did not have the therapeutic value that it had in closed dayrooms. This is not to say that cleaning the dayroom did not give men something to do, but in open dayrooms, it was experienced as a chore instead of a project as I have defined it here.

In closed dayrooms, inmates spent the majority of their time locked in the cells. There were days when their housing unit was on “lockdown” status, meaning inmates were locked in their cells for twenty-three and half hours a day until that status was lifted. Sometimes word traveled through the JNN that a fight had broken out in another dayroom; however, most times, we had no idea why we were being put on lockdown or why “lockdown status” ended. There were days when the pod primary, the deputy running the pod, preferred not to deal with the vigilance that came with giving inmates time to roam the dayroom, and so no dayroom time was given. There were, of course, rare times when inmates were given an extra amount of time to interact in the dayroom,<sup>48</sup> but on the balance, inmates spent a great deal of time in their cells. Once the cell door closed, inmates were immediately confronted with their conditions and time. Cleaning the cell gave them a project.

Often the decision to clean the cell began with one of the cellies having nothing else to do. But once the decision was made, a poor effort was not going to be acceptable.

---

<sup>48</sup> Dayroom time was typically given twice a day for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour.

For first-time inmates housed with returning inmates, cleaning the cell could be a dangerous project. Inmates took the project seriously. Poor effort and poor execution could lead to violent disciplinary action, and inmates did not have the right to refuse to clean a cell. Cells were not just cleaned; they were detailed. The floors were swept and mopped. The walls were wiped down. Nooks and crannies were cleaned. The metal bed frames were wiped down. The toilet and sink were cleaned, and the mark of a good cleaning meant no streaks or soap scum left behind. Dust bunnies were cleaned from air vents. The cell door window was cleaned, and a couple of men could go the extra mile and clean their cell door if they so chose. The project was therapeutic. Cell cleaning was often done in near silence—especially when two veteran cleaners were doing the work. Their minds became so focused on the project that very little needed to be said.

Cell cleaning was often a multilevel project in that it sparked other projects. Inmates were not given cleaning supplies, brooms, mops, or any such tools to clean their cells. Thus, men spent hours producing these items. The cleaning solution was typically a mixture of water, bacterial soap, and shampoo, which were purchased from the jail's commissary using an inmate's personal money. In order to sweep the cell floor, men used the cardboard backs of paper pads because the flat edge could be dragged across the floor to gather dust. A dustpan was created by wetting the edge of a sheet of paper so that it would stick to the ground and sweeping the dirt upon the paper. Men ripped, cut, and tore their jail-issued towels in such a way that they had a hand towel with which to wash their bodies, a rag with which to clean the cell, and a towel that allowed them to dry themselves off after a shower. The development of these tools represented projects.

Sometimes men were explicitly taught how to make these tools. Sometimes, men saw that a neighbor had created a tool that worked, and so they recreated what they saw, and other times inmates tried their hand at innovation. For example, Flip once spent an entire day fashioning an actual “broom” from toothpaste and newspaper. His broom had a handle and newspaper bristles, but it was completely useless as a method for cleaning the cell, so after spending a day on designing (he actually made drawings of designs) and bringing a design to fruition, he simply threw his broom away. The value was not in the broom. The value was in the project itself. For him, the project filled the day, consumed his mind, his hands, and produced a material good. I joined in the project vicariously by offering constant criticism, which gave me something to do.

A clean cell was a source of pride, and once done, men typically made use of dayroom or chow time to make it known that they had just cleaned their cell. With prideful hearts they recounted how they dusted and cleaned and wiped and scrubbed with toothbrushes. Typically, such boasting led to a discussion about who had the best cleaning skills, followed by a brief showing of the cell when the cell doors popped open again, further debate about who could *really* clean a cell, and at least one or two pairs of men cleaning their cells in competitive response. Accordingly, the respondents benefited from cell cleaning, for they then had a highly purposed project.

There was a wide range of projects that specifically helped men to cope with sensory deprivation. In fact, the array of projects indicates the difficulties inmates had with penal living. Some inmates chose to sleep, and those who utilized this method seemed to be able to sleep for ten and twelve hour stretches. Those who could not sleep

but wanted to lay on their metal bunk and pad staring into space or on one side staring at a wall for hours on end. Nearly every inmate created an individual workout plan that he followed with varying degrees of fervor. Men read everything made available to them. Some men sang loudly just to break the deafening silence. Others rapped. Writing and drawing (if one had the skills) were also common projects. Some inmates held regular conversations with themselves while in their cell, as if replaying old movies or television programs. During dayroom time, they interacted perfectly normally with others, but at night when the hours in the cell were longest, they relied on unconventional coping methods. In each case, men were searching for ways to cope with the punishments they were receiving as inmates, and it bears acknowledging that the effectiveness of any one project waxed and waned throughout an inmate's career. Consequently, inmates made use of more than one.

### ***Contamination***

Within his discussion of the myriad ways that inmates are mortified, Goffman (1961) discussed various forms of contamination, which he described as violations of "territories of the self" (p. 23). His analysis included examples of types of contamination, which can be gathered under the categories of physical, informational, or interpersonal. *Physical contamination* refers to the various types of bodily defilement that confronted inmates; *informational contamination* refers to the use of knowledge about an inmate's personal history to discredit and stigmatize him; and *interpersonal contamination* refers to the condition of being forced to interact with others who one might find reprehensible or disagreeable in some way. In sum, contamination comprises

the feeling that one has been polluted in large measure because the partitions that separate the private from the public have been removed or penetrated. This intermingling of the front stage with the back stage (Goffman 1959) is an explicit form of punishment germane to batch living in penal societies that increases one's stress level. Below I discuss these forms of contamination with more detail.

*Physical contamination.* There were some very general types of physical contamination that inmates dealt with as part of the punishment of incarceration. Most of these types could not be avoided, so coping with them required inmates to adjust their expectations for maintaining distance between the public and private in relation to what they would face daily. The showers were designed for public use, and though inmates had instituted a rule that each man should wipe down the shower after he used it, there was no skirting the fact that dozens of men were using the same showers, which were rarely if ever cleaned thoroughly. Similarly, the clothes that inmates were issued were rarely cleaned well. Often, unknown stains remained on boxers and T-shirts that had been freshly "cleaned." The food trays tended to have crusted food underneath them where men typically gripped the trays to pick them up. The sponge bedrolls that men were issued to throw over the metal bunk bed frames were rarely—if ever—cleaned. They stunk of the sweat of previous inmates. Everywhere one looked, there was a chance to be physically contaminated by the jail environment. The deputies were keenly aware of this. They never handled inmates or entered dayrooms without wearing gloves, which reminded inmates that they were considered unclean things in an unclean environment. Men negotiated these environmental contaminants through a change in perspective.

Certainly, efforts were made to keep themselves and their personal areas clean, but mostly, the attitude that men adopted was that they were in jail, and with that came exposure to a certain amount of pollutants. In essence, inmates changed their expectations about what was an acceptable degree of physical contamination to survive jail. This is not the same as saying that they had accepted the filth that comes with being jailed, but in order to get through a day, a man had to change his understandings of comfort and adjust his notions of clean; otherwise, his day would be filled with anxiety, as he tried to maintain an unsustainable standard.

Another type of contamination had to do with the inmates themselves. Inmates with poor hygiene were not tolerated, and the potential spread of viruses and bacteria was handled in a very aggressive manner. An inmate who skipped a shower for more than a day, one who did not exchange his clothing during one of the bi-weekly clothing exchanges, or whom did not otherwise manage his personal hygiene properly was given a warning, and then he was violently disciplined. In fact, there was a palpable energy that was generated at the prospect of beating a man. That the inmate had poor hygiene that put everyone else at risk was justification. Enforced by “reps,” lieutenants, and the inertia of the group, there would be no detractors from such attacks, and the activity (the discipline session) was therapeutic for those involved—like smashing an object in anger to relieve one’s stress. *Yo! I swear, I’m gonna pounce on this nigga’ head if he don’t clean his ass. ‘Shit is ridiculous! You wanna get sick? Exactly. He don’t care, so he needs to learn to care. He was told. Hell D-Double told him.* With excited detail men described how they would get their licks in to punish the inmate who put everyone in

danger. But it was not just that men felt that they could catch something from being forced to interact with someone with substandard hygiene practices. It was the offense of being polluted by a public impurity that made men so indignant. At the same time, an unclean inmate provided an opportunity for stress relief, as it was understood that a lack of cleanliness would lead to a beating. Therefore, men kept track of who had not showered each day and those who had not purchased at least a “fish kit” from the commissary. A “fish kit,” as it was colloquially known by deputies and inmates, was the basic hygiene tools given to each inmate upon entering a housing unit for the first time. It included a toothbrush, toothpaste, a razor, soap, and some deodorant. “Fish kits” usually did not last long, and an inmate who refused to replenish his hygiene tools set himself as the indirect recipient of a stress relieving activity. Indigent inmates were pressured by their group’s membership to get “fish kits” from deputies, a task deputies typically completed at their leisure. Men stretched their muscles and pumped themselves up in preparation for a disciplining session. It was exercise at the expense of another.

Periodically, a toilet would overflow because someone tried to flush the wrong things. Facilities management was characteristically slow to respond to such matters. In the mean time, inmates were subjected to the contents of backed up sewage pipes. Until the toilet was fixed, inmates had to either hold their waste or beg for an escort to the recreation area where an outside toilet that was never cleaned was made available. Contaminations of this kind were particularly personal, for there was no escape. In closed dayrooms, a tiny cell quickly filled with the fumes of excrement and urine, which traveled through the air vents to neighboring cells. Similarly, in open dayrooms, a

dysfunctional toilet negatively affected everyone. Because facility resources like toilets were divided by race, when a toilet was out, an entire group of inmates suffered.

Here, again, the typical coping strategy was to remind one's self that life in jail is bad. In response to having the inconvenience and contamination of an overflowed toilet, men frequently commented, *This is jail, you know? This is what it is.* Men coped by adjusting their expectations to what was within their sphere of control. Those things beyond their control were regarded as artifacts of the jail experience that must be accepted as one did one's time.

In closed dayrooms, a much more personal form of physical contamination took place regularly. Inmates circulated *Smooth Magazine*, *Smooth Girl Magazine*, and other magazines that showed curvy models posed provocatively in vibrant color and detail with enlarged quotes along the pictures from the models talking about what kind of men they liked and their favorite sexual positions. These magazines were collectively known as "jack-off material." Sometimes a man would receive a magazine from another inmate and find that wetness of some kind had dried and wrinkled some of the pages. *Damn! You can always tell which page they stopped on! Ha ha! But now I don't even wanna touch this shit. 'Fuckin' nasty.* Despite the possibility of touching another man's dried semen, rarely did an inmate turn down the opportunity to use a magazine for a night or two. As Toll once explained, "My nigga, it's not about the bitches. I just need a way to fuckin' relax and shit. A nigga can't be in here with these niggas 24/7 and not go crazy. It is what it is. My celly know. He just gotta deal with that shit. I do." Thus, men

masturbated as a way of coping with the omnipresent stress that accompanied incarceration; however, pleasuring one's self was not without its downsides.

Masturbation presented serious challenges in jail. In a closed dayroom, a man had to wait until his celly went to sleep and hope to not wake him, all the while maintaining his fantasy enough to achieve a mild orgasm. This was no easy task. Many inmates rarely slept. The lights in the cells were never shut off, and a deputy periodically walked through the dayroom for population counts and to ensure that no rules were being broken. The cells were typically cold, and knowing that one's celly was lying above or below one—possibly about to wake up—made masturbation a difficult task. There was a sense that one's fantasies and most intimate moments were contaminated by the public. That contamination was mutual, as no man wanted to be in the cell while his celly masturbated. As a case in point, Flip, who was my celly for about a month while at Sunland, once entered the cell after lunch excited because he had bartered for two magazines that he could use for a few days. He proudly showed me the magazines, and I knew that he would be using them at some point. Later that night I was awakened by the sound of Flip masturbating on the bunk above me. I lay on my bunk for a couple of minutes—sick to my stomach and empathetic at the same time. I tried to force myself back to sleep, but I could not sleep through the sound of a man above me vigorously trying to pleasure himself. Though I knew what he was doing, I shouted, “What are you doing?” He immediately stopped masturbating, but he said nothing. It was a watershed moment for both us. I never again caught him masturbating, and he stopped talking

about how excited he was to masturbate to the pictures in the magazines. We needed that space.

*Informational contamination.* Inmates were subjected to informational contaminations as a routine part of the constitution of a public identity. The regular rituals and degradation ceremonies required men to think of themselves in terms of being a “criminal.” Their records or charges were used against them to establish that they were, in fact, “criminals” who were in the right place. Similarly, inmates were often encouraged to confess their crimes while at “church” and “mental health” as a process of healing and therapy. Inmates were told to face up to their criminal histories, meaning they should allocute their poor behaviors in an open forum. Whatever therapeutic use such rituals and degradation ceremonies had, they mortified inmates more than anything else.

I experienced this many times in my interactions with deputies. Typically, I tried to engage deputies in mild conversation (ad-hoc interviews) while walking to and from mental health or any other time when there were not more than four inmates within earshot. While being escorted to the dentist, I had a conversation with an older Black American deputy who had a very calm presence. My wont with deputies was to code switch so that I was using language commensurate with someone with a college education. Doing so always set me apart from other inmates (at first), and this time was no different. After talking about why he chose to be a deputy, he summed his thoughts of me by saying, “You’re obviously a smart guy—not like every other knucklehead in here. Why are you here?”

“I’m for the same reason that any so called smart person would be here: I made poor decisions.”

“Yeah, but you’re guilty,” he asked in a suggestive manner. “Your charges—did you do it?”

I was taken aback by the question because I thought that he and I had established a rapport on a human level, but when he asked me whether I was guilty, I was immediately reminded that I had not cut my hair or trimmed my beard or mustache in over two months (fearing that I would be physically contaminated by using community clippers), that I was dressed like an inmate, that deputies were taught not to trust inmates, and that my answer was meaningless. I could have said that I was completely innocent, but one’s presence in jail was typically used as evidence of guilt. I could have said that I was guilty, and the conversation might have just ended there. “I’m certainly guilty of poor decision-making, but the charges don’t reflect the circumstances,” I offered rather nervously.

“Hmm,” he responded while looking forward and not at me.

I had several such interactions with deputies. The order of interaction was always the same. I was an inmate asking a deputy about his or her viewpoints on something. I code switched to earn the deputy’s trust and keep the conversation going longer than normal. The deputy was surprised that I was different from the other “knuckleheads.” The deputy then reminded me that I was an inmate, asked about what brought me to jail, asked how many times I had been arrested, or talked about how I was different but still an inmate. In each instance, information about my criminal history was used to discredit

me. Though I tried to preemptively cope with the informational contamination through the presentation of a free self, my management strategy was typically abortive.

Conversations with deputies often left me dissatisfied and feeling that I should not waste my time trying to live above my circumstances.

This type of informational contamination was not the most severe. The most serious violations of the self were experienced when an inmate suffered two types of contamination. An exemplary example comes from a story that K-OS, a “Black” inmate shared with me. He suspected that he had contracted a sexually transmitted disease prior to being incarcerated, and he went for testing while in jail. He said that he was taken in a small, relatively public area where a nurse approached him with a long Q-Tip. “When I saw that, I was like ‘hold on. Hold on.’ I was fucking terrified, and a punk ass dep’ was there watching the whole time. I got my dick out, and this lady is coming at me with this long ass Q-Tip, and a fucking dep’ was in the room too. ‘Guess he had to be there to watch and shit. I kept saying, ‘hold on’ because I was nervous, and he kept saying, ‘Just do it!’ ‘Man. Shit was crazy.’”

Here K-OS’ sexual history was on display. No one needed to directly address how he might have contracted a sexually transmitted disease, but instead of his medical history being privately shared between he and a medical professional, a deputy was there contaminating the process and the use of K-OS’ personal information. I directly asked K-OS how he handled the situation, he said, “Fuck it. Ya know? Fuck it. I’m just glad that I didn’t have shit.” The “fuck it” attitude was an expression of an adjustment in expectations and acknowledgment that the situation was well beyond his sphere of

control. Had he ruminated over the violation, he might not have been able to do his time. Adopting a “fuck it” attitude allowed for him to move on to the next day’s challenges.

*Interpersonal contamination.* Any given dayroom was comprised of a cast of characters—some of whom were offensive or otherwise off-putting. Some men had awkward rituals in which they spoke to themselves, hummed to themselves, or otherwise soothed themselves in order to deal with the strictures of jail living. Some men sang or rapped loudly to break the silence. Such annoyances made jail life more difficult, but unlike hygiene, I never witnessed or heard of an inmate being beaten up because of one of these mild annoyances. Instead, as much as was possible, inmates ignored or avoided interactions with offensive inmates. For example, Flip had the habit of holding mini conversations with himself at night in order to fall asleep. At first, I tried to explain how much I hated listening to him hold a conversation with himself so that he could sleep. When he showed no signs of being willing (or perhaps able) to stop, I simply stopped communicating with him altogether, and that gave me a measure of peace that I had not been able to achieve when I was trying to convince him to be quiet. The longer I ignored him, the easier it became, and the less I heard him.

Avoidance was the typical coping strategy for unwelcomed interpersonal interactions. For example, Henry, the “Wood” rep’ in Sunland, had several tattoos depicting white supremacist images. I have a Pan-African flag tattooed on one of my arms. The philosophies that drove Henry and I to get our respective tattoos are at odds. Therefore, he and I never had any direct meaningful interaction. Even when we were in each other’s presence, neither of us acknowledged the other. We were forced to be in the

same dayroom together, but our interactions ended there. Similarly, even though they shared a dayroom (and sometimes a cell), there were some “Southsiders” who never interacted with paisas, and there were “Blacks” who avoided and ignored others. “I don’t fuck wit’ him like that,” as LK once described his relationship to Dago, another “Black.” Batch living forces others in one’s space, and often those “others” are unwanted and offensive. In Golden County, avoidance was the only effective method for coping with offensive inmates.

### ***Emotional Constriction***

There is a tendency to view what men do as a performance of masculinity in male-dominated spaces. This is particularly true of men’s emotional responses to life in penal societies. A number of scholars have examined the significance of masculinity in prisons and suggest that it frequently entails an exaggerated performance of masculinity often referred to as “hegemonic masculinity” or “hypermasculinity” (Courtenay 2000; Bandyopadhyay 2006; De Viggiani 2006; Wallace 2008; Green, Emslie, O’Neil, Hunt & Walker 2010). Research of this kind often points to an extreme form of stoicism and emotional management that allows for aggression and other negative feelings<sup>49</sup> that might lead to violence. Such performances are conceptualized as gendered performances used to construct or affect a type of masculinity. My view is that extremes in behavior are best understood as reactions to the extremes of penal living. They are not *necessarily* masculine responses in the sense that one thinks of men doing masculinity in order to bolster their sense of manhood. Instead, what is sometimes characterized as “hyper,”

---

<sup>49</sup> I am using “feelings” and “emotions” interchangeably.

“uber,” or “hegemonic” masculine performances could be better understood as men’s responses to extreme stimuli. *Jailing* as I describe it here, was certainly shaped by gender, but it was not a self-conscious attempt to construct a particular type of gendered performance. *Jailing* was about coping, first and primarily.

A certain amount of stoicism is par for the course with men. In fact, masculinity can be so controlling that men are often unwilling or *unable* to show pain or a full range of emotion to the extent that their adherence to a masculine ideal becomes unhealthy (Courtenay 2000; O’Brien, Hunt, and Hart 2005). Anecdotally, whenever I have visited a specialist or an emergency, a female nurse invariably has instructed me, *Now if it hurts, don’t try to be tough. Just tell me, so I can help.* That I have heard a variation of that instruction so frequently points to the typical performance that men affect in those situations so as not to appear less masculine. Prescriptions for masculine behavior, then, often function as control mechanisms.

However, men’s emotional coping strategies in Golden County dayrooms were constrained by “framing rules” and “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979). These rules refer to ideological beliefs about which feelings are acceptable given a particular situation (Turner 2010). Jail living is hard; the environment is Spartan, and men’s responses to the environment were commensurate with their experiences. Their living conditions delineated a set of acceptable feelings and emotionally responses. This does not mean that men did not experience a wide variety of emotions, but inmates worked (Hochschild 1979) to bring their feelings in line with the rules that defined the situation. Not every

attempt was successful, but the ability to manage one's emotions was an effective coping tool.

There were general prescriptions for emotional content. Much of this can be understood as an expression of Majors and Billson's (1993) concept of "cool pose," which they defined as a "ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control" (p. 4). Majors and Billson conceived of "cool pose" as masculine performance that Black American men adopted as a survival tactic in anomic communities and as a way of hiding during what seemed for many Black American men to be a constant front stage presence; however, their development of the "cool pose" is useful here for understanding how inmates in general coped with jail. In an environment in which one has been stripped of agency, a show of control (any form of control) is empowering. While Majors and Billson described the "cool pose" as a mask, I am using it to refer to the "deep acting" (Hochschild 1979) that men did in the management of their feelings. Emotionally, "cool" behavior refers to a general aloofness, the ability to remain calm in the face of threats, and feeling that one is in control of one's self. Breakdowns in "cool" behavior were generally taboo and outside of the ideological belief system that delineated appropriate emotionally responses.

Nevertheless, there were spaces that were "zoned" (Hochschild 1979) for particular types of emotion. For example, "church," mental health holding cells, and visiting rooms were sometimes sites where men were permitted to be emotionally present and to explore their feelings. In dayrooms, depending upon the news that pushed an

inmate one way or another, men sometimes dealt with prolonged bouts of despair, sadness, or exuberance—none of which were sanctioned under normal circumstances. These opportunities for extended emotional content relieved stress even as they violated the “cool pose,” which was itself a coping strategy for managing stress.

“Cool” behavior worked as a coping tool because no inmate wanted to be inundated with the universe of feelings that awaited him outside of the “cool pose.” Seeing family member cry during visiting hours, seeing an inmate (having a celly) cry around you, and watching a man walk with his head down and face long with despair just made one aware of one’s own condition. The “cool pose” put space between an inmate’s ecological condition and himself. He could control that space and live there, but when he was encouraged to share his emotions or when he was surrounded by sorrowful individuals, that space shrunk, and he was faced with the rawness of his feelings about where he was, how he got there, what was happening to him and his family while he was there, and how long it could be before he was set free. Those are painful realities to face. To cope, men became aloof—emotionally distant—alienated from themselves and their condition.

## **TIME**

Time is so critical to the organization of penal societies that an analysis of penal living would be incomplete without a discussion of the importance of time. This is particularly so if one hopes to have a thorough understanding of the adjustments that inmates make in coping with the strictures of penal life. My analysis of time begins with a brief discussion of the significance of time in modern free society, which I contrast with

time in penal societies. I then extend that initial contrast into a larger discussion of the meaning of time for inmates.

### **FREE TIME**

Time is a central force<sup>50</sup> in modern societies (penal and free). Social activities are classified and arranged according to time. At the most basic level, we organize activities according to the rising and setting of the sun. For instance, bacon, eggs, grits, and pancakes are served during the morning because we associate these foods with breakfast. Nightclubs tend to be closed during daylight hours, and, in fact, there is a host of activities associated with the “night life” that are not considered appropriate for daylight hours. Not only does time organize activity, but it also signals when an individual should make the cognitive switch from one identity to another. For example, as the end of the workday approaches, the time signals to the employee to begin making the cognitive switch from worker to father—to concern himself with the activities of fatherhood, picking up his children from daycare, feeding them, etcetera.<sup>51</sup> Thus, time helps to shape cognitive and behavioral aspects of social interaction.

Beyond the function of organizing activity, time has other important properties. It is a quantifiable resource that often serves as the basis for exchange. It is common to hear a person speak of how much time he *has* and how he does not want *his* time wasted because *his* time is precious. He owns that time. He trades it for cash in the labor market. He trades it for love in his relationships, for when relationships fail, a common

---

<sup>50</sup> This concept refers to an organizational attribute of a given social structure.

<sup>51</sup> I am not assuming that the “switch” is an automatic clean break. It is made in steps, and there is likely a period during which an individual is cognitively transitioning between identities as he transitions between roles; however, I am saying that time signals when this transition should begin.

issue is how little time was spent together. Time is valued to the extent that the phrase *time is money* hardly earns a second thought, and talk of how time is “spent” or how individuals may be “spending” their time hardly gives us pause. The point is that time has a quantitative dimension, and the value of a relationship or a commodity in a Marxist manner is determined, in part, by how much labor time we put into these objects. But, time also has a qualitative dimension.

As with any commodity, the quantity of the resource is tempered by its quality. Time is no different. The phrase, *time is money* also exhorts us to work hard while at work—that a quality product or at least a quality effort towards production is demanded during work hours. Similarly, a great deal of time spent in the presence of one’s significant other while ignoring that person is hardly quality time in the eyes of most lovers. It is not just the amount of time spent at work, in relationships, in a conversation, walking a dog, or engaged in any activity, but it is the quality of that time that gives the experience of the activity its polarity. Here the *polarity* in the perceived quality of time (hereafter referred to as “polarity of time”) refers to the subjective experience of an activity. The polarity of time is either positive or negative, and it is determined in large part by the meaning that is intrinsic to the activity and the degree of commitment individuals have to what they are doing.

We commonly think in terms of the polarity of time. Whether one is delayed for four hours on the tarmac, remembering a beautiful vacation in St. Lucia, recalling a childbirth, the passing of a loved one after a long bout with cancer, or warning a friend about a movie that was recently released, the narrative is often told in terms of how an

event or activity or relationship was the *best, worst, most boring, or most exciting time of our lives*. After an event, it is common to report whether one had a good time. What is being conveyed here is that time (apart from whatever or whomever consumed the time) is an important aspect of social interaction.

In summary, time organizes social interaction, but it also has qualitative and quantitative properties. It can serve as the basis for exchange, and it is experienced—positively or negatively—as a function of the degree of situational efficacy a person has, the perception of the ratio of progress relative to time, the degree of commitment, and the intrinsic meaning in the event or activity. The polarity of time is a subjective concept, and the aforementioned list is not exhaustive. It merely points to some of the more general factors that determine that polarity.

## **PENAL TIME**

Time systematizes social interaction in penal societies similar to what is found in free society, but the character of life in a penal society adulterates the cognitive relationship to time. In free society, role performances and identities are separated by social worlds so that one's work time, leisure time, and family time, for example, are kept separate (Goffman 1961); however, penal societies, by their all-encompassing<sup>52</sup> nature, do not allow for such separation. Men are stripped of family time, work time (meaningful work anyway), and leisure time—in the sense that they have control over their personal time—immediately upon entering a penal society. They are assigned the

---

<sup>52</sup> Here I am acknowledging that Goffman (1961) conceived of jails, prisons, military academies, and mental health institutions, etcetera as “total institutions” though I have conceived of the former as penal societies.

all-encompassing status of the *inmate*, which dramatically dampens any cognitive switches toward other roles or identities within the jail system. Whether the inmate is preparing for work as a trustee, lining up for a visit with a mental health nurse, or talking on the phone with his wife and children, his worlds, and hence, his roles and identities are unified in a highly stigmatized status—the *inmate*. Moreover, even in the dayrooms with working clocks, inmates had no control over when a new activity began, and the capricious manner in which certain activities (“church,” dayroom time, and recreation) were permitted rendered time nearly obsolete as a cognitive signal.

Also, time’s quantitative and qualitative properties are significantly modified in jail. Whereas the hallmark of a free society is the ability to do what one wants to do with one’s time, the hallmark of a penal society is an adversarial relationship between time and inmates. In free society, time is owned, exchanged, spent, and wasted partly as one sees fit, although there are certainly various institutional constraints on this, such as work and school schedules, etc.<sup>53</sup> Penal inmates, like subjects within other types of “total institutions” are greatly denied personal freedom over their use of time as they are required to follow rigid schedules authorized by institutional officials. By definition, an inmate *has* no time with which to negotiate in the sense that a free society individual has. In fact, inmates are told what to do with “their” time.<sup>54</sup> There is, however, “chow” or

---

<sup>53</sup> There is likely a correlation between the amounts of time an individual commands and the amount of wealth one possesses.

<sup>54</sup> James Spradley (1970) produced a very useful taxonomy of the definition of time in a penal society. My analysis mirrors much of what he found.

“feed time,” “lights out” time, “phone time,” “dayroom time,”<sup>55</sup> a time for taking pills, visitation time, a time for going to court, time for visiting with mental health nurses and doctors, “fed time,”<sup>56</sup> “state time,” “jail time,” “good time,” and time served. While these *times* systematize social interaction, the inmates do not control them. Jail administrators delineate inmate routines, and the beginning and ending of these *times* are outside of the control of inmates.

### ***Time as Punishment***

The quantitative and qualitative properties of time are transmuted by the goal of punishment in penal societies. Dealing first with the commodification of time, an explicit aspect of punishment that inmates experience through incarceration is the expropriation of personal time, and the public is outraged when it perceives that too little time has been required of someone found guilty of a crime. For America’s jail inmates, the expropriation of their time is particularly punishing—the majority of whom, are stripped of their time prior to being sentenced and found guilty of a crime.<sup>57</sup> If courts determine that they are innocent, their time served cannot be repaid. Indeed, no attempts are made in that regard. In effect, the criminal justice system quantifies and commodifies crimes in terms of time as the medium of exchange, which it issues to inmates as punishment—thus the common defense of beleaguered former inmates, *I did my time! I paid my debt to society!* Payment is made in terms of time, and punishment is considered separately from

---

<sup>55</sup> In closed dayrooms, this time meant that inmates were freed from their cells to roam about the common area, use the phone(s), and take a shower. In open dayrooms, this generally meant that the TV was turned on and that inmates could use the phone(s).

<sup>56</sup> “Fed time” and “state time” refer to the time inmates did in federal and state penal facilities respectively.

<sup>57</sup> In 2012, 60% of America’s jail inmates were unsentenced—a statistic that has been stable since time of this study (Minton 2013).

the facility in which the sentence is carried out. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the state commodifies and expropriates time as payment for crimes against itself, and at the moment that a person is captured and incarcerated, that person can no longer lay claim to owning time in the manner that free society persons do. The stripping of one's time is, itself, punishment.

Few mechanisms of punishment mortified inmates as effectively as the divestment of the freedom to determine when and for how long to carry out such basic human activities as eating when one wanted and cleaning one's body regularly and for as long as one saw fit. Whereas a man might find ways to deal with being told *what* to do, being told *when* to do it pricked the brain. Often an inmate would wait in line during the entire dayroom time to shower or use the phone only to have dayroom time end before he could do either. In some open dayrooms, inmates waited for deputies to announce (or signal) that the hot water was turned on so that they could shower. In other open dayrooms, the hot water was locked away in an adjoining room that was periodically opened for inmates for a short while. Seeing inmates bitterly stomping towards their bunks or cells with towels and toiletries in tow, having not showered or made a phone call was a regular occurrence. Over time, being told when to walk, speak, and eat, or more to the point, being denied the freedom to decide when *not* to perform a particular task, chafed at the psyche to such a degree that frustrations became displaced and focused upon the most trivial of issues. For instance, during dayroom time, G2 was beating me for the third consecutive time at chess when the pod announced, "Alright gentlemen. It's that time. TV and phones will be off in 30 seconds." The deputy repeated the

announcement, and we stood but kept playing. Until that moment, we had been playing chess and sharing laughs. Clearly annoyed, G2 hastily checkmated me, and we headed towards our respective cells. The abruptness of it all had frustrated him more than usual, and G2 was not interested in any of our usual back and forth banter about how I would beat him the next time.

Instead, as the cell doors popped open for us, he bitterly exclaimed, “Sick of this shit!”

“Me too, man,” I weakly offered in agreement, knowing that I had a release date, and he did not.

“Can’t even play a fuckin’ board game when I want,” G2 complained under his breath while walking into his cell.

There was nothing particularly unique about when dayroom time was concluded that day. Inmates were typically in the middle of some activity when that time ended, but the constant reminder that time was out of their hands engendered resentment among inmates. For G2, as was the case for many others, the issue was not that he could not play chess or engage in an activity that he wanted as much as it was that he had been stripped of the power to decide *when* and for how long he could do what he wanted to do.

### ***Time as a Task***

Inmates (by way of their status as inmates) not only suffer the expropriation of their time, but they must labor in a netherworld at time itself, which emerges as an objectified task—work to be done. It is here that the qualitative properties of time in a penal society begin to have the greatest impact, for the assignment of time as punishment

along with the near complete divestment of time as personal property helps to engender an adversarial relationship between inmates and time. The questions, “How much time did you get” and “How much time do you have” are more meaningfully translated to “How much time do you have to do?” For, the time that inmates are given confronts them as a unitary daunting task that must be *done*—enlarged in the consciousness of each man (Spradley 1970).

The task of time casts a large shadow on the cognitive and emotional landscapes of inmates, and how a man responded to time fluctuated throughout his moral career (Goffman 1961). In other words, an inmate’s subjective experience (polarity) of *doing* time oscillated between opposing poles. Whereas free society persons often describe time in gradations of “good” and “bad,” inmates spoke of “hard-timing-it” and “easy time.” Though perhaps intensified by the conditions in which inmates find themselves, the polarity of time in penal societies nevertheless reflects a positive or negative relationship between time and one’s experience.

The full range of factors shaping a shift in the perceived difficulty of spending time in Golden County jails was quite wide. The functions and goal orientations of penal societies change the relevant factors for determining this polarity. Again, this list is not exhaustive, but some of the most important events determining the perceived quality of time for an inmate were the presence or absence of negative experiences, such as perceived rejection and abandonment, and positive experiences, such as perceived attainment of progress, certainty, or experiences contributing to feelings of self-efficacy. These are not simple causal mechanisms that bring about the onset of hard time or easy

time. The presence of a particular factor can be meaningless without the presence of another factor for a given inmate at a particular time in his moral career. That is, inmates doing “hard time” often faced a multiplying effect with each negative event they experienced, so that time became nearly unbearable. Contrarily, an inmate doing easy time might not have half the amenities of an inmate doing hard time, yet the inmate doing easy time may experience a positive event that is very important to him, and for him, that event makes all the difference. A few examples are in order.

*Hard-timing-it.* One’s time was ever present as background noise, and it seemed that every now and then, the noise level rose high enough to disrupt a man’s ability to remain stoic in the face of the time he had been given to serve. At first glance, the onset of hard time might appear to take on a pattern of sorts, coming after court dates, mail deliveries, mental health check-ups, and other opportunities that inmates had to interact with free society persons, but upon closer examination, the pattern dissolves into the noise of background. Very often, the lack of perceived self-efficacy was all that was needed to bring about hard time.

Events lowering inmates’ perceived self-efficacy ranged from news that a child was sick and the subsequent knowledge that a man could do nothing about it to the daily reminder that, as a man, he was forced to beg for toilet paper from deputies or other inmates if he needed some. For instance, during one week LK received news that one of his three daughters was sick and that his sister had been hospitalized as a result of an assault. During that week, LK channeled his powerlessness to help his family into anger, frustration, and sadness. Recognizing his own volatility, he warned, “Niggas betta stay

the fuck outta my way. I just don't give a fuck 'bout no one and nothing right now.” LK's frustration and anger were coupled with deep sadness and withdrawal, which he claimed was for the best. “I'mma just stay in my fuckin' cell cuz if not, yo, Egypt, I'm just gonna hurt one these niggas, ya know? I just got a lot of hate right now. 'Don't want to be here. Can't do shit...,” he fatalistically muttered while walking away.

Another common stimulus for hard time was seeing others released. The event was bittersweet—but often more bitter than sweet. Seeing someone pack up their personal items in preparation for freedom reminded inmates that release was possible, but it also reminded men of their individual circumstances, which often precluded any hopes of a release in the near future. In jail, men quickly developed friendships, and despite promises made and addresses taken, an inmate's release usually marked the severance of those friendships. Thus, as my release date approached and I freely gave away my phone time, books, items I had accumulated, and as I purchased items for friends so that I would not be released with money on my books, I noticed that not every inmate was handling my release with grace. LK, had become increasingly acrimonious before finally admitting, “I just don't want' chu to leave. *I* wanna leave. I should be getting' out.” Fearing that he would purposely involve me in a fight in the hopes that it would extend my jail time, and, adhering to warnings that some inmates find it hard to let others get out, I stayed away from LK during my last week. During that week, he was noticeably withdrawn. He spent a lot of his time on the phone and very little interacting with others. During chow time, he said almost nothing, and no one spoke of my impending release in his presence.

A man need not have known an inmate who was being released in order to be affected. For example, from the cell door window, Scott watched an unknown Wood walk toward the sally port with his bed roll and box. Shaking his head with a dejected look about his countenance, he remarked, “Watching guys get out makes me wanna just go to sleep—like just lay down and sleep ‘til it’s my turn.” Seeing others prepare to be released reminded Scott and LK of the progress (too slow in their minds) that they were making toward completing their respective careers as inmates. This was particularly the case for LK and inmates like him who did not have a release date because the expropriation of their time and the task of the time ahead of them had no definable conclusion.

The perception that progress was being made toward release or matriculation to prison was crucial. Inmates often looked to court dates at benchmarks for such progress (Roth 1963). However, for most inmates there was a set of recurrent pre- and post- a court appearance events that approached predictive power. To the extent that a large number of inmates had similar experiences, the series of events nearly emerged as a model for the onset of hard time. As a case par excellence, Toll, who had been in jail for over three years when I met him, was excited about an impending court appearance that he believed would be the start of his trial or (at the very least) lead to a definite start date for his trial. He engaged in several conversations with other inmates about the merits of his case and how best to make arguments. He made sure to groom himself in preparation.

He got a haircut, clipped fingernails, and bed-pressed<sup>58</sup> his jail uniform the night before. On the day of court, he left hopeful that progress would be made in his case. He was escorted into the dayroom much later that day, and his disposition was noticeably sunken and defeated. He slept and slept. For the next few days, he was withdrawn and sullen. Word came from his celly that not only had Toll's trial not begun, "They gave the prosecutors more time. Don't really know what the fuck happened." Hard-timing-it after a court date was so normal that men meekly greeted an inmate returning from court, searching for clues that they should give the returning inmate his space. The lack of perceived progress through the criminal justice system—and hence one's moral career as an inmate—often engendered and multiplied feelings of uncertainty and inefficacy.

Many inmates—particularly first-time inmates—experience the greatest amount of uncertainty and inefficacy during intake. Often, newly inducted inmates struggled to make sense of the netherworld to which they have descended, and in order to gain a mental footing, they sought to know the time and the timetable for the next events. However, the privilege of knowing the time and what was to happen in the immediate future had been stripped of them upon being arrested. Nevertheless, men in intake regularly pestered passing deputies for information about their cases and the time, and they were typically ignored. Over time, an inmate might find himself transformed into the local gadfly as he became increasingly frantic and desperate to orient himself in the netherworld. *Hey dep'! Hey dep'. Excuse me, sir. Sir? What time is it? Could you tell*

---

<sup>58</sup> This is my term, which I use to describe how inmates folded their shirts, tops, and bottoms to their uniforms and placed them under their bedrolls while they slept to press creases in them with their body weight.

*me what time it is? How long will we be here? Do you know how much time I'm facing? When can I talk to the judge?* The more he begged, the more he would be ignored.<sup>59</sup> *I'm just trying to get the time.* Eventually, deputies would stop walking by the cell door altogether. It was then that the feelings of abject abandonment would be most intense, as inmates were taught (directly or indirectly through observation) that they could not rely upon deputies for a sense of security.<sup>60</sup>

*Easy time.* While abandonment triggered hard time, support (particularly reliable support) triggered the onset of easy time. For some inmates, support came in the form of regular or periodic visits from a loved one or friend “in the world.” Others found support through receiving mail on a regular basis. Still other inmates needed only money on their books, which provided emotional, psychological, and physical support in ways that a letter or visit could not. LK regularly received mail and a visit from his wife, which helped to temper his mood swings and assuage the frustration-based anger that so easily welled within him. Scott received a letter (and sometimes two letters) each day from his girlfriend. His entire day was manageable because of those letters. Sometimes he did not read the letters right away. He let them sit on his bunk so that he would have something to read for later, but with LK and Scott, when the mail came late or on the rare occasions that they did not receive a letter as expected, the pendulum of polarity quickly swung from easy time to hard time.

---

<sup>59</sup> Roth (1963) observed a similar phenomenon amongst TB patients who begged physicians for updates about their health.

<sup>60</sup> This is not the same as saying that inmates learned that deputies did not provide any security; although, the extent to which an inmate's physical security could be guaranteed by deputies was certainly an issue. Here, however, I am referring to an inmate's sense of trust.

For inmates who received support in the form of periodic deposits of money on their books, that support was typically sufficient to stave off bouts of hard-timing-it. G2 received mail infrequently, and he never had a visitor during the four months that I knew him. Nevertheless, he remained remarkably indifferent in the face of his jail time. He generally maintained even spirits except for those times when money in his account was running low, and he faced having to rely completely upon the jail for food and toiletries—an undesirable condition for any inmate to find himself.

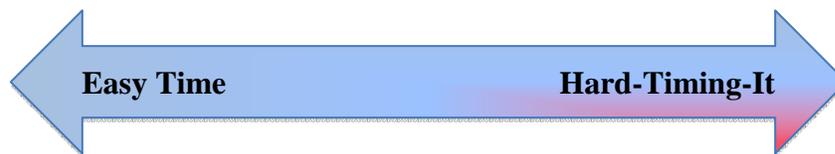
Among the more significant factors for the onset of easy time was requited love. It should be noted that the vast majority of men received their support from women in free society—mothers, aunts, cousins, women friends; however, those relationships took a backseat to the love interests of inmates. Few events ushered the onset of hard time like unrequited love, but a man who felt confident that he had a woman who loved and cared for him—a woman who was waiting for him to return from the netherworld—that man could handle nearly any deprivation and degradation thrown his way. Beaming with pride, inmates shared intricate homecoming plans that they had for their women with whomever would listen. *Yo! I'm gonna fuck the dog shit outta dat bitch. It's gonna be, pizza, beer, and pussy for days on end for me! Ha ha! Yup! The shit she be sending me—in dem letters nigga! A nigga cain't wait.* Each letter and visit that he received, confirming her love for him and devotion to him empowered him to rise beyond the cold air, the lights that never went off, the bad food, his inability to shower whenever he chose, the fact that he had not seen the sun in just under a month, and the poor job his public defender was doing with his case. Indeed, free society women in romantic

relationships with male inmates control an incredible amount of latent power in terms of their ability to inspire “hard time” or “easy time.”

An inmate’s polarity of time had little to do with administrative or structural deprivations. Two inmates dealing with the same deprivations in the same housing unit will have a different polarity based upon their perceived efficacy, certainty, progress, rejection, and abandonment. Inmates doing hard time were often withdrawn and depressed. They found it difficult to sleep or they slept more than they usually did. Contrarily, inmates doing easy time displayed a generally jovial disposition. They could be found singing and laughing and joking. It is important to bear in mind that inmates were not locked into perpetual “hard” or “easy” time states. Throughout their inmate careers, men experienced many events that determined the polarity of time, stacked upon one another, activating and deactivating one another like receptors reacting to stimuli. The duration of easy time or hard time was idiosyncratic. An inmate who, after receiving news that he was given a sentence of seven years to life, simply shrugged and went about his daily routine in preparation for prison. At the other extreme, an inmate received socks with holes in them during a regular clothing exchange, and he was broken for days. The point is that each man had his own threshold for the pains of punishment, and his interactions with others—both inside and outside of penal walls- and the accumulation of positive and negative experiences help us to better understanding how he perceived his time spent in jail. As a final point, I make no assumption that a polar shift meant that a man was immediately flung to the extremities of hard or easy time. There were

gradations of hard time and easy time such that the polarity intensified as an inmate approached the end of either pole. Figure 1 is a simple illustration of the polarity of time.

**FIGURE 2: POLARITY CONTINUUM**



## **TIMETABLES**

The significance of sunlight as it relates to counting time and organizing social activities hardly earns our attention in free society; however, the absence of the sun as a signifier presented unique challenges for inmates whose social world revolved in large part around time. Many Golden County Jail housing units did not receive any natural sunlight, and rec' [recreation] time was typically offered infrequently, sometimes at night, and not to all inmates. Thus it was possible for an inmate to go months without ever seeing the sun. Without working clocks and the rising and setting of the sun to mark the passing of a day, how did inmates count time? Considering the significance of time for inmates, by what methods did men keep track of time?<sup>61</sup>

Each man measured his career progression according to a set of timetables. A *timetable* is the structured passage of time through a career (Roth 1963), and as discussed above, the perception that one is making sufficient progress through one's career was paramount in determining the perceived quality of time. Thus, inmates broke their time

---

<sup>61</sup> I am greatly indebted to the work of Roth (1963), which has informed much of my thinking and analysis on the management of time in this section.

up into manageable tasks that could be *done*. Few men could do an indefinite sentence,<sup>62</sup> but most any man could manage nearly any deprivation from one mail issuance period to the next. Therefore, timetables served several purposes. Timetables helped inmates to avoid hard-timing-it by providing a sense of certainty of the future and the perception of career progress. They also made the task of time more manageable and less daunting by breaking the sentence up into smaller blocks; hence, the common aphorism, “you have to do your time one day at a time.”

From an administrative viewpoint, the lack of sunlight was of little consequence because the routine activities of Golden County jails were disassociated from the rising and setting of the sun. This was a netherworld, operating to its own rhythm. Lunch was served between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Dinner was served around 4 p.m., and breakfast was not given until 4 a.m. Orienting one’s self to this schedule represented one of the most difficult adjustments that inmates managed. Eventually, an inmate’s sleep rhythms were bent to the will of the institutional schedule, and the notion of “daytime hours” lost its meaning. For instance, after having been taken into custody during a late morning, I had been assigned to a relatively small open dayroom in Providence during daylight hours. The lights in the dayroom were on and bright, yet nearly every inmate was asleep or laying on his bunk in silence. Other than being pointed in the direction of my bunk, I had no interaction with anyone. I eventually fell asleep. Hours later, I was awakened to booming laughs and loud talking. The dayroom lights were out, but every inmate was awake and stirring about in a lively manner. The same dayroom that had been spiritless

---

<sup>62</sup> A great majority of inmates were serving indefinite sentences.

during daylight hours seemed to be alive with bodies and energy at “lights out.” The contrast was disorienting.

### ***Reference Groups & Points***

Inmates could not rely upon deputies for information regarding their individual cases, so they searched among their peers for a reference group (Roth 1963)—a subgroup comprised of inmates that apparently shared similar circumstances by which an inmate could measure his progress and estimate the time he might face. Golden County detention centers housed inmates facing murder charges in the same units as men incarcerated for traffic violations. Because inmates were admitted continuously instead of in cohorts, whom an inmate was processed with was of little consequence. Inmates also held regular roundtable strategizing sessions in pre-housing holding cells and in housing units in which the focus was how to avoid time in a jail *Oh you ran? Fuck man. You might be fucked, bro. Eh, just throw yourself on the mercy of the court, bro. Ha, ha, ha. Yeah, fuck. Eh, just say, you’re sorry and get your mom and sister to write letters and shit. I know a fool who did that shit, and it worked for him. He was out like that, eh.* Each strategizing session included an attempt to use another inmate<sup>63</sup> as a representative of a reference group by which a man could project his time, measure his progress, and reduce the uncertainty of the length of his sentence. In other words, inmates fashioned their peers into subgroups according to their circumstances that could be compared and contrasted as reference groups.

---

<sup>63</sup> Sometimes this “other” inmate took on a mythical character. One could never be sure whether the stories of an inmate that someone once knew ever existed.

Similarly, inmates learned to interpret events (perhaps incorrectly) as evidence of progress towards release or trial. Because a court appearance could not reliably be used as evidence that one was progressing through one's career as a jail inmate, men (re)interpreted other benchmarks. For instance, permanent transfers from Sunland to Providence where court proceedings were held was taken to mean that one's court case was progressing; however, inmates were bused to and from various detention centers within Golden County for myriad reasons, including to reduce overcrowding and to avoid security risks. Despite this fact, the myth that a transfer to Providence meant that trial was about to start prevailed.

### ***Managing Time***

During a conversation with Flip, I learned that there was variation in the manner in which men managed their timetables. The pod cut the lights out in the dayroom, and I casually sighed, "Another day" to which Flip responded by questioning the value of using "lights out" as a way of marking the passing of time. I explained that the pod cut the lights out nearly every night, so I felt comfortable using "lights out" as way keeping track of a day, and I knew what day of the week it was because my mother and advisor were sending me letters. I asked how he kept track of time, and offered this brief but illuminating explanation:

Welp, I go from meal to meal—breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Once I have three meals, I can count that as one day. And I just keep doing that until I get outta here. One day at a time—meal by meal. That's a day.

This conversation set me on course to determine how other inmates managed their sense of time. Once a week I saw Paul Bunyan, a Wood with a meek disposition to

contrast his imposing physical stature, with whom I had regular conversation. In recalling any event, Paul used months as a unit of measurement. For example, while talking about a past celly, he commented, “I had a Korean celly for fourteen months. He slept most of the time, but we got along okay.” However, when I told him that I thought his ability to keep track of time using months was remarkable, he offered, “I come here once a week and see Nurse Bee or the Doc, so I go by that. I been coming for a long time too—pretty much since I got here.”

Following a court appearance, I purposefully approached Ken to talk with him about how he managed his time. “You always come back in here like it’s just whatever after court,” I opened, trying to bait him. “Other dudes come back from court like they’re ready to die.”

“After a while, you stop thinking about it. You just go to court and two weeks later, you go to court again—like that.”

To this, Beast saddled up next Ken and added, “Yeah. You go from court date to court date, and for me that’s every three months.”

“Da fuck,” I asked, shocked. “Three months?”

“Yup,” Beast said with a sly smile. “Three months.”

Not every inmate managed his time in such large blocks. Scotty, who had been my celly for a couple of months, managed his time by the issuance of mail. Just as it is in free society, inmates receive mail every day except Sunday, and Scotty’s girlfriend wrote him every day with faith. When he did not receive a letter, he would sometimes announce, “It’s Sunday. I ain’t getting’ shit today.” For Scotty, the meaning of the day

of the week was mapped onto the mail delivery schedule, which he used to break the monotony of time. Similarly, LK received a regular visit from his wife twice a week, and his activities and time management strategies were oriented towards those two visitation days. Returning from the first visit of the week, he would pass by my cell with a smile and say, “That’s one, nigga.” His second visit marked the passing of another week, which for LK, made the task of his time more manageable.

Aside from these rather unique timetables, there were, perhaps, simpler methods for figuring out the date and sometimes the time in some dayrooms. Some units had working televisions that were periodically turned on at the whim of the deputies running the pod. Indeed, in dayrooms without working clocks, inmates turned to news channels when the television was turned on so that they could learn what time it was; however, television time was given too irregularly to be used as an effective time management tool. Thus, no inmate reported managing his time based on the showing of a particularly television program or the turning on of the television. Similarly, dayrooms often received a local newspaper, but an inmate could not guarantee himself access to that paper (even if it was in his dayroom). Consequently, a newspaper could be used to determine the date, but it could not be used to establish an effective timetable.

Timetables operate on two levels. At the career level, the structuring of the passage of time broke the task of time up into manageable pieces. At the individual (cognitive-emotional) level, timetables provided a sense of movement, which gave meaning to time. Without the perception that time was progressing, a man risked hard-timing-it, for a common sentiment expressed amongst Golden County inmates was that

they felt forgotten—by friends, family members, the outside world in general, and even by time itself. Managing timetables was not only useful; it was paramount for one’s mental health. This might help to explain the diversity of timetables found among inmates. At some point, counting meals, clothing exchanges, commissary delivery days, and keeping track of visits, “lights out” notices, and mail deliveries became mental games worthy of playing just to get through one’s time—games that *also* provide a sense of movement through time. This is precisely the essence of jailing—the development of effective coping strategies.

## **SUMMARY**

Surveying the panorama of factors that comprise jailing—rituals, norms, beliefs, and the social construction of time—the adoption of effective time management skills presents the greatest challenge to the inmate. Penal time is objectified and punishing. Most importantly, though, time holds dominion over inmates instead of inmates holding sway over time, and the indefinite nature of inmate career timetables makes time management a central issue for men hoping to cope with the austerity of penal living.

Jailing means successfully coping with penal life, which translates to the management of two features of time: the polarity between “hard time” and “easy time” and timetables. Managing the “hard/easy time” polarity—to the extent that one could—was necessary for mental health. The dichotomies discussed above do not represent the full range of possibilities, but issues pertaining to perceived rejection, abandonment, progress, certainty, and efficacy most often caused shifts in the perceived quality of time. Interestingly, though, the most common dynamics that determine the polarity of time—

what others might call the “quality of life”—had little to do with administrative factors like whether a dayroom had air conditioning, visiting hours, books, hot water, etcetera. Instead, it often depended on inmate’s interactions with those from the free world, whether they be judges, romantic partners, or family members and friends. My findings, suggest that while the presence or absence of inmate-on-inmate violence and misconduct, amenities like clean cells, a television, and palatable food, and programs like “church” do matter (DiIulio 1987), they may not be the most important factors that contribute to an inmate’s quality of time. Part of the issue here is a basic truth about challenging environments in inmate society: most individuals find a way to survive the punishing conditions.

Penal living is punishing. As I argued in chapter two, penal societies are fundamentally organized toward punishing its denizens.<sup>64</sup> The punishment is multidimensional and multilayered. Various forms of sensory deprivation, contamination, and emotional constriction were omnipresent for inmates. As discussed in Chapter 3, punishment was multilayered in terms of race, class, and one’s position within one’s racialized group hierarchy. The netherworld that is penal living taxed inmates daily for the crimes that they were charged with. Time itself was transmuted into a type of penance, and though the majority of the inmates had not yet been found guilty of any sin (crime), their presence in the netherworld was taken as evidence of their guilt. Thus, punishment was doled out with good measure irrespective of “due process.”

---

<sup>64</sup> I have purposely written this as a general statement to acknowledge that the deputies and likely the jail personnel sometimes felt punished while working in Golden County. A deputy once told me that he felt “trapped” with all the inmates—that “it sucks [it’s punishing]” for deputies too. Though penal societies are organized to punish inmates primarily, punishment is germane and to varying degrees, inescapable by others too.

Inmates did not “thrive” in Golden County in the sense that their coping strategies never completely removed the force of punishments they faced. It is more accurate to describe the coping strategies as attempts to survive jail living physically, psychologically, and emotionally. It was a daily process—jailing—in which inmates were constantly responding to the pressures and stressors that come with doing time in a jail. Jailing describes the process of developing and applying coping strategies to better manage jail living. There was no guarantee that a particular coping strategy would be successful, and many times, a strategy that had been successful in one situation at a given time, might fail in another situation. Part of the reason for this was because the conditions under which inmates made use of a coping strategy were never quite the same. A man’s ability to deal with the dehumanizing act of begging a deputy for toilet paper at a given time was situational. That same act, with the same actors, at a later time could yield different results because (if for no other reason) than the inmate was closer to the end of his moral career. Similarly, assuming that time could be held constant as a factor, life in the free world continued on, and news about an event in one’s family could affect how well one coped at any given time. Thus, inmates often stacked and used different types of coping strategies in order to survive.

Some of the primary coping skills that men needed to develop included time management, a “cool pose,” a useful set of projects, and the ability to manage expectations to an appropriate degree given the opportunities for contamination present. Jailing was not an optional process in the sense that failing to develop proper coping skills often resulted in an emotional breakdown of some sort. There were inmates who

tried to deal with punishment in different ways. For example, some tried to express their emotions regularly; however, outward displays of sadness and despair (common emotions felt by inmates) were met with hostility. “Reps” eventually had inmates who “whined” too much transferred to other dayrooms. There were some who tried to keep everything clean or who tried to avoid everything dirty. Both strategies always failed. Because inmates did not own public resources like showers, sinks, and toilets, eventually, the desire to keep them clean was given up. More importantly, though, deputies rarely gave inmates enough cleaning supplies to keep public areas clean. Trying to avoid all unclean things and persons would require one to be alone. Eventually, inmates settled on adjusting their level of expectations. Indeed, no man could sleep or stare at nothing day in and day out either. Projects kept the mind busy. Finally, avoiding time was an impossible task. No mental tricks allowed men to forget how much time they had given to Golden County or how much time they might still give. Moments were painful, and breaking time up into timetables helped to mitigate the largeness of time in men’s minds. Accordingly, jailing was not an optional process. It was necessary for emotional survival.

## CHAPTER 5: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Given the number of people cycling through American jails annually and the fact that jails provide a qualitatively different inmate experience than do prisons, the paucity of research that examines jails is striking. Moreover, city jails differ in form and function from county jails, so jails (in aggregate) represent untapped and important research sites for scholars interested in studying the human condition in general, the intersection of stratification forces and criminal justice practices, penology, and the construction of race and gender.

Juxtaposing the management of inmates with the experience of inmates reveals an incongruity between stated penal management goals and the experiences of those at the sharp end of management practices. I have centered my examination of penal living on the lives of the inmates in order to develop a clearer understanding of the practical application of incarceration. An analysis of this kind also provides an answer to the question, “why should we care about what the inmates or clients of correctional institutions think” (Collins et al. 2012). That such a question has yet to be fully developed in penological literature—that it should require asking at all—is more telling than the answer. Collins et al. (2012) suggested that inmate input might be used to develop better models of possible recidivists. In my view, penal systems are fundamentally constructed, organized, and experienced as apparatuses of punishment. It is incumbent upon researchers and practitioners to investigate and understand how these apparatuses are implemented—not merely with rates of recidivism in mind, but to better understand the human experience.

I began this dissertation with the retelling of an experience I had in a Golden County detention center to highlight the institutionalized degradation and dehumanization of life in jail and also to give a practical account of someone might contend with those penalties. With over 700,000 inmates in American jails at any given time (Minton 2013), it is likely that what I described is aberrational. Though often not in the consciousness of the public, jail inmates comprise communities of people (most of whom have not been found guilty of a crime) trying to find their way through experiences like the one I had. Given that the yearly turnover rate for American jails includes over 10 million souls (Minton 2012), researchers should focus more attention on what is going on inside penal walls.

From the viewpoint of jail inmates, the term “corrections” has little do with “correcting” anything, and the reality of this point is partially why I contend that correctional facilities are more accurately understood as penal societies. The value of this rearticulation is practical as well as analytical. When we acknowledge that penal societies like jails are designed to avenge the public’s moral outrage (Feeley and Simon 1992), a more informed discussion of the effectiveness of “corrections” can take place. We can begin to examine the construction of criminal public identities as a path to satisfying public outrage and to provide opportunities for political gain (Garland 1990; Hancock 2004). But this rearticulation also has implications for how incarcerated persons are managed. Thinking of jails and prisons as places where punishment is meted out, practitioners must turn their collective focus from risk reduction to how much and what kinds of punishments to inflict, and then the rather mechanical connotations

typically contained within the terms “inmate” and “client” can be rearticulated with the understanding that we are, in fact, talking about human beings. Additionally, thinking of jails and prisons as types of penal societies reminds us that the penalties that inmates receive and their responses to those penalties are all within the sphere of human life. They are not “extreme” in the sense that they exist on the fringes of the human experience (Goffman 1961). The numbers of men, women, and juveniles in penal societies should disabuse us of the notion that what these groups experience is strange and foreign. Thus, what penal inmates do and how they live should not be fetishized with talk of “hyper,” “uber,” or “extreme” living. The reach of penal societies is too far to ignore the normality of life in these places, and we should think in these terms.

Whether righteous, studying how we punish penal inmates tells us something about value structures in American society. The brunt of practices and policies that are leading us towards an increasingly punitive U.S. culture—a culture that extends beyond penal societies to the everyday practices of a host of organizations and institutions (Feeley and Simon 1992; Garland 2001b; Simon 2007; Russell-Brown 2009; Wacquant 2009; Rios 2011; Tonry 2011)—is borne by those who by virtue of a web of protective bureaucracies (Patenaude 2004; Waldram 2009) are most vulnerable. Thus, while the “spectacle of the scaffold” (Foucault 1979) has been removed from the public eye, punishment nevertheless takes place on center stages within penal societies. In fact, one might argue that the invisibility of inmate punishment is more insidious. For, as the voices of inmates put through “correctional” pains are muffled ten thousand leagues below the surface of free society in a netherworld, there is a feeling amongst inmates that

they might scream, but there is no one there to hear—hence the common axiom, “Hey. That’s jail.”

## **PUNISHMENT AND COPING**

In an effort to connect classifications of punishment from disparate literature bases that are, nonetheless, talking about the same thing, I conceived of punitive measures in Golden County as either an example of environmental or private punishments. My goal was to unify Toch’s (1992) important psychological studies of punishment and coping with the prolific work of Sykes (1958). Here again, my efforts are based upon inmate experiences. While I acknowledge that analytical gains to be made from parsing out different types of punishments, Golden County inmates did not generally experience jail in that way. Punishments are so intertwined and integrated to penal living on the whole that we lose something of the experience by over-compartmentalizing how inmates are punished. Consequently, I tried to simplify how we think of punishment in jail without sacrificing inmate’s voices.

There are advantages to thinking in terms of environmental and private punishments. First, reshaping our analyses in this way leads to a study of penal living that gives primacy to *how* penal living is done from the viewpoint of the ones doing the living, as it is difficult to imagine how one might understand how environmental and private stressors affect inmates if we do not consider such stressors in inmates’ terms. Second, it provides a viable pathway for analyzing distinct sets of punitive measures. That is, jail environments are punishing in and of themselves, and the malign neglect that characterizes so much of the inmate experience in Golden County facilities should be

studied outside of the more *private* forms of punishment. Then, we can build our understanding of the multiplicative affects of environmental and private punishments, but only after we understand the seriousness of these categories of punishment in and of themselves.

### ***Racialization as Punishment***

The significance of race and racialization can hardly be understated. My central argument is that race in Golden County may be understood in two ways: (1) as an organizing force, and (2) as a mechanism for punishing inmates. The former was accomplished primarily through a two-step racial project—the latter by way of the “politics.” At heart of both uses of race is a set of “institutional myths” (Meyer and Rowan 1977) about race relations that ultimately led to racialization processes at the organizational and micro-interactional levels.

Briefly, institutional myths are highly rationalized beliefs about social reality that are built upon the larger social context in which an institution is operating and which come to dominate the way an organization operates even at the expense of efficiency and effectiveness (Meyer and Rowan 1977). In this case, the myth of risk of management through racial segregation dominated much of the landscape of inmate interaction. As evidenced by the racial classification practices in their detention centers, Golden County jail administrators believed that separating inmates by race was a necessary procedure in order to reduce race-based violence, racial riots, and other race-based forms of disorder. The institutional myth of racial risk management reached hegemonic influence, as many

inmates came to believe that there would, indeed, be much more violence if not for the system of racialized interaction known as the “politics.”

The racialization of inmates in Golden County stands in diametric opposition to notions of colorblindness in a legal or social sense. Golden County facilities were highly racialized environments with housing units run and organized (at the inmate level), around a system of Jim Crow like rules for interracial interaction. The major difference, of course, is that Jim Crow rules were specifically designed to subjugate Black Americans whereas the “politics” were indiscriminate with the controlling of inmate bodies. What we learn is that racial democracy is more of a chimera than a reality.

The structure of the Golden County racial order problematizes the way we think of U.S. racial structures. Generally in free society, an analysis of “race,” “race relations,” or “racial segregation” would be incomplete without a discussion of the asymmetrical power relations between racial groups; however, in a flat hierarchy, groups may be hierarchical in one way and not in another. Future research might reconcile contemporary U.S. race relations and talks of “post-race” and colorblindness with the highly racialized spaces in Golden County and the impact of flat hierarchies.

Additionally, the that there were spaces within Golden County facilities in which the “politics” were muted or absent reflects the complexity of race relations within a penal society. More importantly though, race relations in Golden County jails reveals that beliefs about race permeate institutions and organizations in different ways with different intensities. Scholars who build upon my efforts here might look at how race is experienced within other institutions and organizations with an eye for varying intensities

of racialization. One would expect to find racialization processes operating differently in different regions of the U.S. For instance, might Asian Americans constitute their own racialized group in penal societies in which they constitute greater numbers? How is race experienced in minimum and medium security penal societies? Penal practitioners might rethink the idea that race equals gang member equals problems within the jail. The evidence presented here that conflating these memberships is not warranted, and it simplifies complicated processes.

### ***“Jailing”***

“Jailing,” as Toll coined it, referred to the process of developing, acquiring, and implementing strategies for coping within a tapestry of punishments. Jailing has less to do with adjusting or adapting to a penal environment in the way that one might think of someone reaching a state of equilibrium with a set of difficulties and challenges than it has to do with reducing stress. In my view, discussing a man’s *adaptability* to penal living is to think in terms of *fit*, which implies that some individuals are better suited for penal living than they are for free societal life. Jailing is not about fit, acceptance of penological goals, or the development of an adversarial relationship between inmates and jail managers in the way that Clemmer (1940) thought of “prisonization” or the way that Irwin (1985) thought of inmates becoming part of the “rabble.” Clemmer and Irwin were describing socialization—a rather passive process that describes the gradual taking on of the basic personality traits, values, and normative prescriptions of other inmates. Jailing does not refer to whether or how inmates were socialized into inmate culture. It is about managing one’s responses to constrictions related to emotions felt and expressed, sensory

deprivation, and contaminations of all kind. Thus, jailing signifies the agency of inmates in their attempts to resist punishment, and it demonstrates that just as punishment is built into the structure of jails, inmates, nevertheless, find ways to survive such punishments. Most inmates do become silently complicit to their subjugation. They resist, and the manner in which they do so is important, for coping strategies remind us that power (Foucault 1979) has its limits.

## **SUMMARY**

The evidence presented here suggests that whatever macrostructural impact “racialized mass incarceration” (Bobo and Thompson 2010) is having in free society, “tough on crime” policies certainly have an effect on the quality of life in penal societies. The *lock’em up and throw away the key* attitude with which Golden County jails were operated signifies shifts in the thinking about punishment (Feeley and Simon 1999; Garland 2001b) and the value of human life. In an effort to remove from the sight of free society those groups who offend our sensibilities and violate the law, strict punishments have become commonplace. Does this mean that jails should be abolished?

In my view, abolishing the American jail system is not the answer. I would venture to say that the system is broken in the sense that it is indiscriminately punitive in its application of punishment. In order to mitigate this a bit, jails might be reorganized internally in terms of sentenced and non-sentenced inmates. Those inmates who have been found guilty of a crime and sentenced to jail time would experience a particular type of punishment. The other group, however, would be given the opportunity to take advantage of better food, increased dayroom time, and the like. Though they would

remain in jail, a reorganization of resources in this way might provide a measure of justice for inmates fighting cases from behind jail bars.

It is my hope that future researchers take up Wacquant's (2002) charge that more ethnographic studies be conducted in penal societies. To date, few have taken up the challenge (including Wacquant). Meanwhile, knowledge of the inmate experience is built through piecemeal studies of statistics, and the daily lives of inmates continue to go unexamined. My efforts in conducting this research, though unique in circumstance, may lead other researchers to ask ponder, "We're locking up millions of people annually. Just what are they doing once they're gone from free society?" Perhaps, in seeking the answer to that question, further empirical studies will lead to the development of practical policy changes in favor of a more humane incarceration experience.

## References

- Adler, Patricia A., and Peter Adler. 1987. *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- AELE Monthly Law Journal. 2010. "Racial Classifications and Inmate Housing Assignments." *AELE MO. L. J.* 301. Retrieved March 6, 2013 (<http://www.aele.org/law/2010all01/2010-1MLJ301.pdf>).
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Almaguer, Tomas. 1994. *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Applegate, Brandon K. and Alicia H. Sitren. 2008. "The Jail and the Community: Comparing Jails in Rural and Urban Contexts." *The Prison Journal* 88(2):252-69.
- Atchley, Robert C. and M. Patrick McCabe. 1968. "Socialization in Correctional Communities: A Replication." *American Sociological Review* 33(5):774-85.
- Backstrand, John A., Don C. Gibbons, and Joseph F. Jones. 1992. "Who is in Jail? An Examination of the Rabble Hypothesis." *Crime & Delinquency* 38(2):219-229.
- Ballesteros, Octavio A. 1979. *Behind Jail Bars*. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc.
- Bandyopadhyay, Mahuya. 2006. "Competing Masculinities in a Prison." *Men and Masculinities* 9(2):186-203.
- Becker, Howard S. and Blanche Geer. 1960. "A Note on the Theory of Latent Social Roles." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 5(2):304-313.
- Berg, Mark T. and Matt DeLisi. 2006. "The Correctional Melting Pot: Race, Ethnicity, Citizenship, and Prison Violence." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 34:631-42.
- Board of State and Community Corrections. 2012. "Jail Profile Survey: Fourth Quarter Calendar Year 2012 Survey Results." Retrieved July 15, 2013 (<http://www.bscc.ca.gov/programs-and-services/fso/resources/jail-profile-survey>).

- Bobo, Lawrence D. and Victor Thompson. 2010. "Racialized Mass Incarceration: Poverty, Prejudice, and Punishment." *Doing Race* 21:322-55.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1997. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 62(3):465-80.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1999. "The Essential Social Fact of Race." *American Sociological Review* 64(6):899-906.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2001. *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2010. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism & Racial Inequality in Contemporary America*. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: New York.
- Bowen, Glenn A. 2008. "Naturalistic Inquiry and the Saturation Concept: A Research Note." *Qualitative Research* 8(1):137-52.
- Brennan, Tim. 1987. "Classification for Control in Jails and Prisons." *Crime and Justice* 9:323-66.
- Brennan, Tim. 1999. "Implementing Organizational Change in Criminal Justice: Some Lessons from Jail Classification Systems." *Northpointe Institute for Public Management, Inc.* Retrieved January 4, 2013 ([http://www.northpointeinc.com/files/publications/1999CMQ\\_-\\_Implementation.pdf](http://www.northpointeinc.com/files/publications/1999CMQ_-_Implementation.pdf)).
- Brennan, Tim, Dave Wells, and Randy Demory. 2004. "Classification Implementation Manual for Smaller Jails." *Northpointe Institute for Public Management, Inc.* Retrieved January 4, 2013 ([http://www.northpointeinc.com/files/publications/Smalls\\_Jails\\_Manual\\_Complete.pdf](http://www.northpointeinc.com/files/publications/Smalls_Jails_Manual_Complete.pdf)).
- Burke, Peter J. and Jan E. Stets. 2009. *Identity Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, Michael C. and Heather Schoenfeld. 2013. "The Transformation of America's Penal Order: A Historicized Political Sociology of Punishment." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(5):1375-1423.
- Carrigan, Time Bob Connell, and John Lee. 1985. "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity." *Theory and Society* 14(5):551-604.

- Carroll, Leo. 1974. *Hacks, Blacks, and Cons: Race Relations in a Maximum Security Prison*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Carson, E. Ann and William J. Sabol. 2012. "Prisoners in 2011." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Retrieved March 7, 2013 (<http://bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p11.pdf>).
- Carson, E. Ann and Daniela Golinelli. 2013. "Prisoners in 2011." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. NCJ 242467. Retrieved October 21, 2013 (<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p12ac.pdf>).
- Clear, Todd R. 2007. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clear, Todd R. 2008. "The Effects of High Imprisonment Rates on Communities." *Crime and Justice* 37(1):97-132.
- Clemmer, David. 1940. *The Prison Community*. New York: Rinehart and Co.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, Peter A., Brian Iannacchione, Marriane Hudson, Mary K. Stohr, and Craig Hemmens. 2013. "A Comparison of Jail Inmate and Staff Correctional Goal Orientations: Results from Across the Line." *Journal of Crime and Justice* 36(1):100-15.
- Comfort, Megan. 2008. *Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of the Prison*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Comfort, Megan. 2012. "'It Was Basically College for Us': Poverty, Prison, and Emerging Adulthood." *Journal of Poverty* 16(3):308-322.
- Connell, R. W. and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6):829-59.
- Conover, Ted. 2001. *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing*. New York: Random House, Inc.
- Contreras, Randol. 2013. *The Stickup Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence and the American Dream*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Contreras, Randol. Forthcoming. "Recalling to Life: Understanding Stickup Kids through Qualitative Research." *Advances in Criminological Theory*.

- Courtenay, Will. H. 2000. "Constructions of Masculinity and Their Influence on Men's Well-being: A Theory of Gender and Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 50:1385-1401.
- De Viggiani, Nick. 2006. "Surviving Prison: Exploring Prison Social Life as a Determinant of Health." *International Journal of Prisoner Health* 2(2):71-89.
- DeLisi, Matt, Mark T. Berg, and Andy Hochstetler. 2004. "Gang Members, Career Criminals and Prison Violence: Further Specification of the Importation Model of Inmate Behavior." *Criminal Justice Studies* 17(4):369-83.
- Denzin, Norman K. 1971. "The Logic of Naturalistic Inquiry." *Social Forces*, 50(2):166-182.
- Dhami, Mandeep K., Peter Ayton, and George Loewenstein. 2007. "Adaptation to Imprisonment: Indigenous or Imported." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 34(8):1085-1100.
- DiIulio, John J. 1987. *Governing Prisons: A Comparative Study of Correctional Management*. New York: The Free Press.
- Doane, Ashley W. 2003. "Rethinking Whiteness Studies." Pp. 3-20 in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, edited by A. W. Doane and E. Bonilla-Silva. New York: Routledge.
- Dolovich, Sharon. 2012. "Two Models of the Prison: Accidental Humanity and Hypermasculinity in the L.A. County Jail." *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 102(4):965-1118.
- Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 2011. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Historical Social Research* 36(4):273-90.
- Emerson, Robert M., ed. 2001. *Contemporary Field Research: A Collection of Readings*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Etter Sr., Gregg W., Michael L. Birzer, and Judy Fields. 2008. "The Jail as a Dumping Ground: The Incidental Incarceration of Mentally Ill Individuals." *Criminal Justice Studies* 21(1):79-89.
- Evans, Tony and Patti Wallace. 2008. "A Prison within a Prison?: The Masculinity Narratives of Male Prisoners." *Men and Masculinities* 10(4):484-507.

- Feeley, Malcolm M. and Jonathan Simon. 1992. "The New Penology: Notes on the Emerging Strategy of Corrections and Its Implications." *Criminology* 30(4):449-74.
- Fernandez, Kenneth E., and Max Neiman. 1998. "California's Inmate Classification System: Predicting Inmate Misconduct." *The Prison Journal* 78(4):406-22.
- Fine, Gary Alan. 1989. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22:267-96.
- Fitzpatrick, Kevin M. and Brad Myrstol. 2011. "The Jailing of America's Homeless: Evaluating the Rabble Management Thesis." *Crime & Delinquency* 57(2):271-97.
- Fleisher, Mark S. 1989. *Warehousing Violence*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Penguin.
- Foucault, Michel. 2009. "Alternatives to the Prison: Dissemination or Decline of Social Control?" *Theory*,
- Gans, Herbert, J. 1999. "Participant Observation in the Era of 'Ethnography.'" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28(5):540-48.
- Garfinkel, Harold. 1956. "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies." *American Journal of Sociology* 61(5):420-24.
- Garland, David. 1990. *Punishment and Modern Society: A Study in Social Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Garland, David, ed. 2001a. *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. London: Sage.
- Garland, David. 2001b. *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Garofalo, James and Richard D. Clark. 1985. "The Inmate Subculture in Jails." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 12(4):415-34.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2005. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 134(4):56-86.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Glaze, Lauren E. and Erinn J. Herberman. 2013. "Correctional Populations in the United States, 2012." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, NCJ 241264. Retrieved April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus12.pdf>).
- Goffman, Alice. 2009. "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto." *American Sociological Review* 74(3):339-57.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1989. "On Fieldwork." Transcribed and edited by Lyn H. Lofland *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18:123-32.
- Goldfarb, Ronald. 1976. *Jails: The Ultimate Ghetto*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Goodman, Phillip. 2008. "It's Just Black, White, or Hispanic": An Observational Study of Racializing Moves in California's Segregated Prison Reception Centers." *Law & Society* 42(4):735-70.
- Gottschalk, Marie. 2008. "Hiding in Plain Sight: American Politics and the Carceral State." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11:235-60.
- Hallett, Tim. 2010. "The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes, Turmoil, and Inhabited Institutions in an Urban Elementary School." *American Sociological Review* 75(1):52-74.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2004. *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*. New York University Press: New York.
- Harer, Miles D. and Darrell J. Steffensmeier. 1996. "Race and Prison Violence." *Criminology* 34(3):323-55.
- Hassard, John. 1990. *The Sociology of Time*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hemmens, Craig and James Marquart. 1999. "The Impact of Inmate Characteristics on Perceptions of Race Relations in Prison." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 43(2):230-47.

- Henderson, Martha L. Francis T. Cullen, Leo Carroll, and William Feinberg. 2000. Race, Rights, and Order in Prison: A National Survey of Wardens on the Racial Integration of Prison Cells." *The Prison Journal* 80(3):295-308.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1979. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 85(3):551-75.
- Houston, James G., Don C. Gibbons, and Joseph F. Jones. 1988. "Physical Environment and Jail Social Climate. 34(4):449-66.
- Hughes, Everett C. 1945. "Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status." *American Journal of Sociology* 50(5):353-59.
- Irwin, John. 1985. *The Jail: Managing the Underclass in American Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Irwin, John. [1970] 1987. *The Felon*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Irwin, John. 2005. *The Warehouse Prison: Disposal of the New Dangerous Class*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Jackson, Patrick G. 1991. "Competing Ideologies of Jail Confinement." Pp. 22-39 in *American Jails: Public Policy Issues*, edited by J. A. Thompson and G. L. Mays. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Jacobs, James B. 1974. "Participant Observation in Prison." *Urban Life and Culture* 3(2):221-40.
- Jacobs, James B. 1977. *Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobs, James B. 1979. "Race Relations and the Prisoner Subculture." *Crime and Justice* 1:1-27.
- Jankowski, Martin Sanchez. 1991. *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Jewkes, Yvonne. 2005. "Men Behind Bars: 'Doing' Masculinity as an Adaptation to Imprisonment." *Men and Masculinities* 8(1):44-63.
- Kalinich, David B., Stan Stojkovic, and John Klofas. 1988. "Toward a Political-Community Theory of Prison Organization." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 16:217-30.

- Kerle, Kenneth E. 1998. *American Jails: Looking to the Future*. Wobur, Lynch, James P. and William J. Sabol. 2004. "Assessing the Effects of Mass Incarceration on Informal Social Control in Communities." *Criminology & Public Policy* 3(2):267-94.
- Kerle, Ken. 1999a. "Short-Term Institutions at the Local Level." Pp. 59-65 in *Prison and Jail Administration: Practice and Theory*, edited by P. M. C. Carlson and J. S. Garrett. Gaithersburg, MD: An Aspen Publication.
- Kerle, Ken. 1999b. "Jails as Long-Term Facilities." Pp. 66-72 in *Prison and Jail Administration: Practice and Theory*, edited by P. M. C. Carlson and J. S. Garrett. Gaithersburg, MD: An Aspen Publication.
- Klitzman, Robert. 2007. "'Patient-Time,' 'Doctor-Time,' and 'Institution-Time': Perceptions and Definitions of Time among Doctors who Become Patients." *Patient Education and Counseling* 66:147-55.
- Klofas, John M. 1984. "Resources for Change in Local Jails." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 28(2):93-103.
- Labaree, Robert V. 2002. "The Risk of 'Going' Observationalist: Negotiating the Hidden Dilemmas of Being an Insider Participant Observer." *Qualitative Research* 2(1):97-122.
- Light, Stephen C. 1990. "Measurement Error in Official Statistics: Prison Rule Infraction Data." *Federal Probation* 54(4):63-69.
- Lindquist, Christine H. 2000. "Social Integration and Mental Well-Being among Jail Inmates." *Sociological Forum* 15(3):431-55.
- Liska, Allen E., Fred E. Markowitz, Rachel Bridges Whaley, and Paul Bellair. 1999. "Modeling the Relationship between the Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(6):1744-75.
- Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Lynch, James P. and William J. Sabol. 2004. "Assessing the Effects of Mass Incarceration on Informal Social Control in Communities." *Criminology & Public Policy* 3(2):267-94.
- Massey, Douglas S. 2007. *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Majors, Richard and Janet Mancini Billson. 1992. *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. New York: Lexington Books.

- Marquart, James W. 1986. "Prison Guards and the Use of Physical Coercion as a Mechanism of Prisoner Control." *Criminology* 24(2):347-66.
- May, David C., Brandon K. Applegate, Rick Ruddell, and Peter B. Wood. 2013. "Going to Jail Sucks (and It Really Doesn't Matter Who You Ask)." *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 1-17.
- Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83(2):340-63.
- Merton, Robert K. 1972. "Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(1):9-47.
- Messerschmidt, James W. 1993. *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Minton, Todd D. 2010. "Jail Inmates at Midyear 2009: Statistical Tables." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, NCJ230122. Retrieved January 3, 2013.
- Minton, Todd D. 2012. "Jail Inmates at Midyear 2011: Statistical Tables." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, NCJ 237961. Retrieved March 7, 2013 (<http://bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/jim11st.pdf>).
- Minton, Todd D. 2013. "Jail Inmates at Midyear 2012: Statistical Tables." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, NCJ 241264. Retrieved October 21, 2013 (<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/jim12st.pdf>).
- Murray, Joseph and David P. Farrington. 2008. "The Effect of Parental Imprisonment on Children." *Crime and Justice* 37(1):133-206.
- Minton, Todd D. 2013. "Jail Inmates at Midyear 2012: Statistical Tables." *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, NCJ 241264. Retrieved October 21, 2013 (<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/jim12st.pdf>).
- Murray, Joseph and David P. Farrington. 2008. "The Effect of Parental Imprisonment on Children." *Crime and Justice* 37(1):133-206.
- National Institute of Corrections. 2011. *Jail Design Guide*. Retrieved January 20, 2014 (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/024806.pdf>).
- Nilan, Pamela. 2002. "'Dangerous Fieldwork' Re-Examined: The Question of Researcher Subject Position." *Qualitative Research* 2(3):363-86.

- Noll, Dale. 2012. "Building a New Identity: Race, Gangs, and Violence in California Prisons." *University of Miami Law Review* 66(3):847-78.
- Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 1997. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. New York: Routledge.
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960 to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge.
- Pager, Devah. 2007. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Pager, Devah, Bruce Western, and Naomi Sugie. 2009. "Sequencing Disadvantage: Barriers to Employment Facing Young Black and White Men with Criminal Records." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 623:195-213.
- Patenaude, Allan L. 2004. "'No Promises, but I'm Willing to Listen and Tell What I Hear': Conducting Qualitative Research among Prison Inmates and Staff." *The Prison Journal* 84(4):69S-91S.
- Paterline, Brent A. and David M. Petersen. 1999. "Structural and Social Psychological Determinants of Prisonization." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 27(5):427-41.
- Pettit, Becky and Bruce Western. 2004. "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration." *American Sociological Review* 69(2):151-69.
- Petersilia, Joan, Susan Turner, and Terry Fain. 2000. *Profiling Inmates in the Los Angeles County Jails: Risks, Recidivism, and Release Options*. Rand Corporation. Retrieved January 2, 2013 (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/189733.pdf>).
- Pew Research Center. 2013. "Mapping the Latino Population, by State, County and City." Retrieved January 2, 2013 ([http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/08/latino\\_populations\\_in\\_the\\_states\\_counties\\_and\\_cities\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/08/latino_populations_in_the_states_counties_and_cities_FINAL.pdf)).
- Pew Research Center. 2013. "Incarceration Gap Widens between Whites and Blacks." Retrieved October 21, 2013 (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/09/06/incarceration-gap-between-whites-and-blacks-widens/>).
- Phillips, Jenny. 2001. "The Cultural Construction of Manhood in Prison." *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* 2(1): 13-23.

- Piche, Justin and Kevin Walby. 2010. "Problematizing Carceral Tours." *British Journal of Criminology* 50:570-81.
- Piche, Justin and Kevin Walby. 2012. "Carceral Tours and the Need for Reflexivity: A Response to Wilson, Spina, and Canaan." *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 51(4):411-18.
- Pogrebin, Mark. 1982. "Scarce Resources and Jail Management." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 26(3):263-74.
- Pontell, Henry N. and Wayne N. Welsh. 1994. "Incarceration as a Deviant Form of Social Control: Jail Overcrowding in California." *Crime and Delinquency* 40(1):18-36.
- Prinn, Seth J, Osher, Fred C. Steadman, and Henry J. Robbins, and Pamela Clark; Brian Case. 2012. "Exploring Racial Disparities in the Brief Jail Mental Health." *Criminal Justice* 39 (5):53645.
- Reisig, Michael D. 2001. "The Champion, Contender, and Challenger: Top-Ranked Books in Prison Studies." *The Prison Journal* 81(3):389-407.
- Rhodes, Lorna A. 2001. "Towards an Anthropology of Prisons." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30:65-83.
- Rhodes, Lorna A. 2004. *Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rhodes, Lorna A. 2009. "Ethnography in Sites of Total Confinement." *Anthropology News* 50(1):6
- Richmond, Laurel P. and Corey W. Johnson. 2009. "'It's a Race War:' Race and Leisure Experiences in California State Prison." *Journal of Leisure Research* 41(4):565-80.
- Rios, Victor M. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York: New York University Press.
- Roberts, Dorothy E. 2004. "The Social and Moral Costs of Mass Incarceration in African American Communities." *Stanford Law Review* 56(5):1271-1305.
- Robinson, Russell K. 2011. "Masculinity as Prison: Sexual Identity, Race, and Incarceration." *Berkeley Law Scholarship Repository* 99:1303—1408.

- Ross, Jeffrey Ian and Stephen C. Richards. 2002. *Behind Bars: Surviving Prison*. Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books.
- Russell-Brown, Katheryn. 2009. *The Color of Crime*. New York: New York University Press.
- Santos, Michael G. 2007. *Inside: Life Behind Bars in America*. New York: First St. Martin's Griffin.
- Scarce, Rik. 2002. "Doing Time as an Act of Survival." *Symbolic Interaction* 25(3):303-321.
- Schrock, Douglas and Michael Schwalbe. 2009. "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:277-95.
- Schwartz, Morris and Charlotte Schwartz. 1955. "Problems in Participant Observation." *American Journal of Sociology* 60:343-54.
- Schwartz, Richard D. and Jerome Skolnick. 1962. "Two Studies of Legal Stigma." *Social Problems* 10:133-42. Schwartz, Morris and Charlotte Schwartz. 1955. "Problems in Participant Observation." *American Journal of Sociology* 60:343-54.
- Seymour, Kate. 2003. "Imprisoning Masculinity." *Sexuality & Culture* 7(4):27-55.
- Sibley, David and Bettina van Hoven. 2009. "The Contamination of Personal Space: Boundary Construction in a Prison Environment." *Royal Geographical Society-Area* 41(2):198-206.
- Simon, Jonathan. 2007. *Governing through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spiegel, Sarah. 2007. "'Race Riots': An Easy Case for Segregation?" *California Law Review* 95(6):2261-93.
- Spradley, James P. 1970. *You Owe Yourself a Drunk: An Ethnography of Urban Nomads*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Stohr, Mary K. Craig Hemmens, Peter A. Collins, Brian Iannacchione Marianne Hudson, and Hailey Johnson. 2012. "Assessing the Organizational Culture in a Jail Setting." *The Prison Journal* 9(3):358-87.

- Sutton, James. 2011. "An Ethnographic Account of Doing Survey Research in Prison: Descriptions, Reflections, and Suggestions from the Field." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 8(2):45-63.
- Sykes, Gresham M. [1958] 2007. *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sykes, Gresham M. [1958] 2007. *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tartaro, Christine. 2002. "The Impact of Density on Jail Violence." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30:499-510.
- Tartaro, Christine. 2006. Watered Down: Partial Implementation of the New General Jail Philosophy. *The Prison Journal* 86(3):284-300 .
- Taylor, Julie. 2003. "Racial Segregation in California Prisons." *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 37(8):139-52.
- Thomas, Charles W. and Samuel C. Foster. 1972. "Prisonization in the Inmate Contraculture." *Social Problems* 20(2):229-39.
- Thomas, Charles W. 1973. "Prisonization or Resocialization?: A Study of External Factors Associated with the Impact of Imprisonment." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 10:13-21.
- Tobin, Gerard A. and Cecily M. Begley. 2004. "Methodological Rigor within a Qualitative Framework." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 48(4):388-96.
- Toch, Hans, Kenneth Adams, and J. Douglas Grant. 1989. *Coping: Maladaptation in Prisons*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Toch, Hans. 1992. *Living In Prison: The Ecology of Survival*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Tonry, Michael. 2011. *Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Trulson, Chad R., James W. Marquart, and Janet L. Mullings. 2004. "Breaking in: Gaining Entry to Prisons and Other Hard-to-Access Organizations." *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 15(2):451-78.

- Trulson, Chad R., James W. Marquart, Craig Hemmens, and Leo Carroll. 2008. "Racial Desegregation in Prisons." *The Prison Journal* 88(2):270-99.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 1972. *Patterns of Social Organization: A Survey of Social Institutions*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 2006. *Sociology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 2010. *Theoretical Principles of Sociology, Volume 2: Microdynamics*. Springer: New York.
- Turner, John C., Michael A. Hogg, Penelope J. Oakes, Stephen D. Reicher, and Margaret S. Wetherell. 1987. *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2013. "State and County QuickFacts." Retrieved January 2, 2013 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06065.html>).
- Wacquant, Loic. 2000. "The New 'Peculiar Institution': On the Prison as Surrogate Ghetto." *Theoretical Criminology* 4(3):377-89.
- Wacquant, Loic. 2001. "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh." *Punishment & Society* 3(1):95-134.
- Wacquant, Loic. 2002. "The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration." *Ethnography* 3: 371-99.
- Wacquant, Loic. 2009. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Wakefield, Sara and Christopher Uggen. 2010. "Incarceration and Stratification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:387-406.
- Wakefield, Sara and Christopher Wildeman. 2013. *Children of the Prison Boom: Mass Incarceration and the Future of American Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Waldram, James. 2009. "Challenges of Prison Ethnography." *Anthropology News* January:4-5.
- Wallenstein, Arthur. 1999. "Intake and Release in Evolving Jail Practice." Pp. 47-58 in *Prison and Jail Administration: Practice and Theory*, edited by P. M. C. Carlson and J. S. Garrett. Gaithersburg, MD: An Aspen Publication.

- West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1(2):125-51.
- Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wheeler, Stanton. 1961. "Socialization in Correctional Communities." *American Sociological Review* 26(5):697-712.
- Wilson, David, Roy Spina, and Joyce E. Canaan. 2011. "In Praise of the Carceral Tour: Learning from the Grendon Experience." *The Howard Journal* 50(4):343-55.
- Wilson, William Julius and Anmol Chaddha. 2009. "The Role of Theory in Ethnographic Research." *Ethnography* 10(4):549-64.
- Winant, Howard. 2000. "Race and Race Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:169-85.
- Wildeman, Christopher. 200 "Parental Imprisonment, the Prison Boom, and the Concentration of Childhood Disadvantage." *Demography* 46(2):265-80.
- Woodson, Carter G. 1998. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. African World Press, Inc.: Trenton, NJ.
- Woodward, C. Vann. 1974. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, Kevin N. 1989. "Race and Economic Marginality in Explaining Prison Adjustment." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 26(1):67-89.
- Yeager, Matthew G. 2008. "Getting the Usual Treatment: Research Censorship and the Dangerous Offender." *Contemporary Justice Review* 11(4):413-25.