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Consuming Confinement: Real Prisons on Screen, 1970 – Present

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ABSTRACT

Consuming Confinement: Real Prisons on Screen, 1970 – Present

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This dissertation is a contribution to the depth and breadth of prison media history. I position prison media of the 1970s as key antecedents to the prison reality television of the 2000s and today. The purpose of this arrangement is to bring attention to an era of prison media that has been neglected in prison film histories and to highlight some commonalities between the 1970s and the mid 2000s +, as periods of potential carceral change, where incarceration is a topic of public discourse and critique.

The first half of the dissertation is focused on media of the 1970s and adds to prison media scholarship in a number of ways. I argue that the success of *Scared Straight!* (1978) was made possible in part through the negotiation of racial tensions and its justification as a public service amid the televisual wasteland of the time. Having established the production of prison media for the public as a negotiation between prison administrators and media makers, I turn to a heretofore unexamined arena of prison media in chapter 2, instructional film, specifically The *Correctional Officer* film series. I argue that films aimed at instructing corrections officers are an important, untapped archive for unpacking how a 'professional' corrections officer should act and conceive of the work of corrections. I also established corrections officers as an important audience.

The second half of the dissertation focuses on media produced after 2000, beginning with MSNBC's *Lockup* in chapter 3. I describe some of the ways that corrections has had a hand in particular *Lockup* productions and in doing so, argue for the

importance of directing attention at the process of production as well as the depiction of corrections in prison reality television. I consider *Lockup* as a participant and product of neoliberal paternalism. I also offer narrative analyses of *Lockup* that are not directly related to mass incarceration, connecting the consumption of prison reality to anxieties around surveillance. Finally, chapter four steps 'outside the gates' to consider *Love After Lockup* and I argue that *Love After Lockup* makes visible the reach of the carceral system while simultaneously questioning the rationality of caring for the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated.

This project considers prison media history an important area of scholarly interest, one that requires more investigation if we are to understand the roots of mass incarceration. I draw attention to the restrictions and means by which prison media are produced and to corrections as distinct from prison administrations, as a party with its own interests and power. I have pointed to instructional films and reality television as archives that demand additional attention and I conclude this dissertation with the suggestion that the question of care, rather than knowledge or 'realness,' is one to be grappled with if we are to move further along the path to conceptualizing a future where confinement is not the answer for a multitude of social ills.

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INTRODUCTION

"Lord, that Hollywood train, forever coming round the bend!"
James Baldwin
The Devil Finds Work, 68.

Consuming Confinement

Incarceration in the United States in the new millennium is a lived experience for a massive amount of people and yet for many more, prison is a space only known through media. The geographic and societal isolation of sites of incarceration position prison on screen as a main access point to the carceral for many Americans. Prison administrators are under no obligation to allow journalists access to prison spaces therefor popular, fictional prison media has little competition in the public sphere.[1] Given this dynamic, how might prison media relate to the policies, financial realities, attitudes and experiences of mass incarceration in the United States?[2] How might it not? This project approaches this topic with an eye towards the ideological content of prison media and the ways that the prison and media industries have become entangled from the 1970s into the

[1] Bill Yousman, "The News/Entertainment Gap," *Prime Time Prisons on U.S. TV*: *Representation of Incarceration* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 9.
[2] John Pfaff, *Locked In: The True Causes of Mass Incarceration and How to Achieve Real Reform*, (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 8.

present day. Specifically, this project aims to historicize and analyze the emergence, in the early 2000s, of a new, unscripted sub-genre, prison reality television, exemplified by MSNBC's *Lockup.*

Prison media, as a genre, has continually offered the public the following arrangement: the exceptional space of the prison brought into the ordinary space of the home or theater. Prison media has consistently emphasized its ability to access restricted space over the last hundred years but never to the extent that prison reality television has afforded. Prison reality television of the early 2000s brought real, operating prisons into American living rooms in extraordinary volume, inviting viewers "inside the gates," even as mass incarceration has increasingly made the space of prison a more and more common experience for a disproportionately Black, Brown and poor population. This new televisual niche has made the consumption of confinement a regular, bingeable, and profitable enterprise. Despite producing an unprecedented visual archive of incarceration in the new millennium (*Lockup* alone produced 230 episodes over 25 seasons, 2005 - 2017), prison reality television has received little scholarly attention. This project addresses this gap in scholarship by not only focusing attention on specific series within the prison reality genre but also connecting this newer iteration with the longer history of prison media. Each chapter focuses on objects that have received little, if any scholarly attention. The first half of the dissertation is focused on media produced in the 1970s and the second half on media produced after 2000. The purpose of this arrangement is to not only bring attention to an era of prison media that had been discounted in prison film histories but also to highlight some commonalities between the 1970s and the mid 2000s + , as periods of potential carceral change, where incarceration is a topic of public

discourse and critique. This project is a contribution to the depth and breadth of prison media history. It is also motivated by the fact that a fuller understanding of the history of prisons on screen also contributes to our knowledge of prison discourse overall. Angela Davis points to prison media as a means by which we have become comfortable with prison and by which "prison has become a key ingredient of our common sense."[3] Our ability to imagine a future where confinement is not the answer for a multitude of social ills can only be bolstered by a deeper knowledge of how we arrived at our current screen-moment. Neither the prison media of the 1970s nor the media of the 2000s are simple representations of carceral logic but rather products resulting from the negotiation of multiple industrial interests. I draw attention to the restrictions and means by which prison media get produced, to the profession of corrections, as a party with its own interests and power, and to instructional films and reality television as archives that demand additional attention. Prison abolitionism motivates my inquiry into prison media history, contemporary reality television, and my consideration of prison media scholarship's focus on authenticity.

Prison & the 1970s

As a whole, this project positions prison media of the 1970s as an underappreciated and necessary precursor to the prison media we have now. As Lee Bernstein writes in *America is the Prison,* the meaning of prisons was a subject of debate and conflict during the 1970s in the United States. Prisons during the seventies become a symbol of inequality for some, and a symbol of administrative failure and lenience to

[3] Angela Y Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (Open Media Series), Seven Stories Press. Kindle Edition Loc. 162

others. Liz Samuels describes the development, in the early to mid-1970s of a revolutionary prisoners movement that would decline in the later part of the decade due to "the mounting toll of repression, the decline of other social movements outside of prison, and an expanding acceptance of "law and order" approaches to imprisonment and surveillance."[4] A common set of ideas and strategies around abolitionism developed during this period, as evidenced by the abolitionist handbook *Instead of Prisons* (1976), produced by the Prison Research Education Action Project (PREAP).[5] Jeffery Ross notes in his work on the turn to supermax prisons that the progressive movements of the 1960s were met by a "triple backlash" against the civil rights movement, labor gains and the welfare state in the 1970s.[6] Incarceration and activism involving prison were caught up in this general backlash. Dan Berger argues "prisoners elucidated a national philosophy of racial formation… Trying to force the country to see its sites of punishment as discriminatory locations of repressions, prisoners used spectacular confrontation to dramatize their conditions of confinement as epitomizing American inequality."[7] The racialization of prison and the backlash against social and political pushes for change in the United States resulted in a strange and revealing combination of symbolic meanings attached to the prison. As Bernstein puts it, "If the 1970s brought to light the view that prisons were symbols of American racism and inequality, it immediately preceded policies inspired by the contradictory conviction that they were too few and too

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[4] Liz Samuels, "Improvising on Reality: The Roots of Prison Abolition," in *The Hidden 1970s; Histories of Radicalism*, ed. Dan Berger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 22.
[5] Samuels, "Improvising on Reality," 28.
[6] Jeffrey Ian Ross, *The Globalization of Supermax Prisons*, Critical Issues in Crime and Society (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), ix.
[7] Dan Berger, "We Are the Revolutionaries": Visibility, Protest, and Racial Formation in 1970s Prison Radicalism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010), ix.

comfortable."[8] Lary May in "Redeeming The Lost War" argues that Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* films, Charles Bronson's *Death Wish* films and several Chuck Norris films belong to a group of backlash films that emerged in the 1970s and continued into the early 1990s. These films, May argues, depicted the liberal state and the protection of criminals' rights as causes of the corrosion of law and order and they offered a dramatized ethos of neoliberalism, heroic imagery, and harsh punishment as a rectifying response.[9] May's analysis shines a light on the larger genre of crime films and situates these 'backlash films' in conjunction with conservative politics to explain one-way right-wing neoliberal ideology became mainstream. Prison media during the 1970s are an important precursor to the societal, ideological and political backlash that followed.

Despite the prominence of prison in public discourse during the 1970s, prison film histories have little to say about prison film during this time, or about the genre and its relation to incarceration. The astounding increase in incarceration that the United States has seen in the last four decades begins in the seventies because of the aforementioned backlash, so for scholars coming from the fields of Sociology and Criminology (where most prison film scholarship originates), the media of the 1970s should not be overlooked. Paul Mason's analysis of Hollywood-produced films in *Captured by the Media* (2006) states that the 70's produced "few prison films of note" but just a few sentences later also cites Nellis and Hale's (*The Prison Film,* 1982) observation that a "series of press exposés, the rise of gay liberation and the greater frankness of cinema generally combined to ensure that the new prison movies gave

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[8] Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison Arts and Politics in Prison in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 194.
[9] Lary May, "Redeeming the Lost War," in *Punishment in Popular Culture* ed. Charles J. Ogletree, Jr, and Austin Sarat, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 49.

considerable space to it [homosexuality], in both its violent and affectionate forms.'"[10] Nellis and Hale connect political realities to prison film in this quote but fail to find either the connection itself or the specific topics of homosexuality and assault consequential enough to warrant further attention to the films of this period. Wilson and O'Sullivan's *Images of Incarceration* (2004) describe the 1970s as a period where the prison on-screen became 'meaner', but they leave hanging the question of why.

Prison & the 2000s

During the 2000s, concerns of long-time critics of mass incarceration and fiscal hawks' attention to its ballooning cost combined to draw attention to the United States' position as the world's foremost incarcerator from both sides of the political aisle. Similarly, in the 1970s, as Lee Bernstein discusses, varying political perspectives actively positioned prisons as a societal problem and a failure. In 1971, the Attica Rebellion in New York explicitly precipitated the scrutiny of corrections as a profession. The Attica Report, produced by the Special Commission on Attica a year later (released in print and televised), attacked the motivations, hierarchy and even the label of "correctional" officer. The early 2000s have also had moments of severe public criticism and exposure for corrections. The abuses at Abu Ghraib came to light in 2004 and the inhumane treatment of Iraqi prisoners by the U.S. military was exposed in 2010.[11] The abuses were the subject of international condemnation and the *60 Minutes II* report that broke the news

[10] Paul Mason, "Relocating Hollywood's prison film discourse" in *Captured by the Media*, edited by Paul Mason (Cullompton, UK: Willan Publishing, 2006), 200.
[11] United States Army field logs, also referred to as the Iraq War Logs, were published online through WikiLeaks on October 22, 2010. Records from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars can be searched online via https://wardiaries.wikileaks.org/.

featured an interview with one man who participated in the abuse and whose civilian job was a correctional officer at a prison in Virginia.[12] The establishment of the Camp X-Ray detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba raised similar concerns when a *New York Times* article in 2004 reported that The International Committee of the Red Cross had inspected the camp and accused the military of torture similar to what had occurred in Abu Ghraib. The news that the United States was engaged in the abuse of prisoners abroad was authenticated through visual media. Photographs of the abuse, some of which were taken by the officers themselves, were circulated on a variety of platforms. These images, for a time at least, called into question American imprisonment practices and raised the question (once again) of who was 'watching the watchers.'

More contemporarily, incarceration was also a topic during the 2016 presidential race. Black Lives Matter activists confronted Hillary Clinton about her and her husband's contributions to the disproportionate and destructive incarceration of black Americans and Clinton promised "end-to-end" criminal justice reform. Donald Trump's campaign was a stark contrast, with tough on crime rhetoric and prominent law and order spokesmen like Rudolph Giuliani. In 2018, as further evidence that decarceration has become a viable stance, regardless of political affiliation, President Trump supported and signed into law the First Step Act, the largest attempt to change the criminal justice system in decades.[13] The Trump administrations' impact on the rate of and national discussion about mass incarceration remains to be seen, particularly considering the

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[12] Rebecca Leung, "Abuse at Abu Ghraib," *60 Minutes II,* May 5, 2004, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/abuse-at-abu-ghraib/.

[13] Nicholas Fandos and Maggie Haberman, "Trump Embraces a Path to Revise U.S. Sentencing and Prison Laws," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/14/us/politics/prison-sentencing-trump.html.

'getting tough' rhetoric of his campaign has been forcibly directed toward refugees and the undocumented.[14] Decarceration has become a viable political topic at the state level as well. In November of 2019, over 400 incarcerated people in Oklahoma were released, the result of the largest single-day mass commutation in United States' history.[15] Governor Kevin Stitt, a Republican, has explicitly stated that he aims to change Oklahoma's incarceration rate, "…we're number one in the country in incarceration rates. We have been for decades. And when I became governor, I said, this is ridiculous. … We should be number 50 at that."[16] As the forty-year, forceful surge of mass incarceration has started to ebb[17] but the U.S. continues to be the foremost incarcerator in the world, we find ourselves in a space of potential transition: seemingly willing at times to admit the failure of mass incarceration and the damage it has caused and yet also not ready to cede confinement as a viable solution to a host of societal issues, including immigration.[18] Similar to the carceral moment of the late 1970s, many will attest to the failure of incarceration to some extent but, where we will go from here is unclear. This project is grounded in a conception of prison media as a complicated component of prison discourse and an important contributor to the assumed possibilities and boundaries delimiting the future. Prison media is an important factor to consider when discussing

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[14] So far, the administration's approach to undocumented families has brought attention to the capability of the state to detain/hold/imprison within the U.S. regardless of criminal conviction or age.

[15] Daniel Arkin, "Hundreds of Oklahoma inmates being released Monday in largest commutation in U.S. history," *NBCNEWS.COM*, November 4, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hundreds-oklahoma-inmates-will-be-released-monday-largest-commutation-u-n1076056.

[16] William Brangham, "Oklahoma's governor on 2nd chances and reducing mass incarceration" *PBS News Hour,* November 5, 2019, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/oklahomas-governor-on-2nd-chances-and-reducing-mass-incarceration.

[17] National and state incarceration rates peaked in 2008 but the decline in incarceration rates and populations (notably separate statistics) has been unevenly divided by state.
John F. Pfaff, *Locked In,* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 14.

[18] Ruth Gilmore describes prisons as "partial geographic solutions to political economic crises."
Ruth Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California,* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007), 28.

how we as a society can imagine a future without prisons. As Angela Davis writes, "The prison industrial complex is much more than the sum of all the jails and prisons in this country. It is a set of symbiotic relationships among correctional communities, transnational corporations, media conglomerates, guards' unions, and legislative and court agendas."[19]

Prison as Genre & Real Prison

This project uses a definition of prison media based on Paul Mason's definition of prison film: media about civil imprisonment in some fashion that is mainly set within the walls of a prison or uses prison as a central theme.[20] Mason is not the only scholar to define prison film, indeed much of the previous scholarly work that focuses on prison film is concerned with defining and providing taxonomies of the genre.[21] Mason's definition, however, provides the most flexibility, staying clear of concrete assertions as to the ideological investment of prison film, instead, leaving space for the creation of many, over time. My aim here is to contribute to the known history of prison media and prison film, not attempt to definitively define or limit it for all of time. It seems to me that at this point, more work needs to be done *in* the genre (with an expansive understanding of what that includes) rather than laboring to define it. Mason's description combines the main semantic locus of the genre, the location of prison, with the somewhat vague but

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[19] Angela Y Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Open Media Series (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), Kindle Edition location 1382.
[20] Mason, *Criminal Visions,* 283.
[21] Derral Cheatwood, "Prison Movies: Films About Adult, Male, Civilian Prisons: 1929-1995," in *Popular Culture, Crime and Justice*, eds. F. Bailey and D. Hale (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1998), 211.
Nichole Rafter, *Shots in the Mirror*, 117-120.
Nellis and Hale in *The Prison Film* identify "no more than a dozen different plots" (6).
Wilson and O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 62.

syntactically inclined option of 'prison as theme.' This definition emphasizes the space of prison as semantically important without limiting all discussion of prison's impact or logic to that material space. As Rick Altman puts it, the task of the historian and the theoretician can be "the study of the interrelationship between semantic elements and syntactic bonds."[22]

Outside the issue of genre and genre taxonomies, the scholarship on prison media has been dominated by the concern that it wholly forms the public's perception of prison and fails to depict the true nature of incarceration. As Michelle Brown explains, "The study of representation in criminology is dramatically directed at disparities between what is 'real' and what is 'imagined' with special attention to the empirical manner in which crime images fail to represent what is known about crime realities yet serve to moderate public discourse on crime."[23] The failure of prison media, as understood in this framework is multiple. Prison media fails to deliver authenticity, it fails to inform the public, and it fails to inspire empathy and action. Wilson and O'Sullivan's call for more prison films rather than less, to increase the chances that they may "make a positive contribution to public appreciation of the relevant issues,"[24] is a positive spin to the same framework that insists that the prison film's existence must be justified by its ability to inform the public about real prison. While the very beginning of this introduction certainly differentiates between the lived experience of mass incarceration and the spectator's experience viewing prison on screen, my aim is not to corroborate the fact

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[22] Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach To Film Genre," *Cinema Journal,* Vol 23, No.3 (University of Texas Press, 1984), 13.
[23] Michelle Brown, *The Culture of Punishment: Prison Society and Spectacle,* Alternative Criminology Series (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 52.
[24] David Wilson and Sean O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration: Representations of Prison in Film and Television Drama* (Hook: Waterside Press, 2008), 88-89.

that prison media fails to reflect an unmediated version of reality, waiting to be exposed. Historically, the justification for film studies has often centered on the question of the ontology of film and reflections on the ontology of film continually concern film's relationship to reality. André Bazin in *What is Cinema?* celebrated photography and cinema for their ability to re-present reality, providing a photochemical trace of the real, as distinguished from other representational arts. Bazin favored realist aesthetics that he considered reflective of this relationship of the material transfer of the world onto celluloid, utilizing long shots, deep focus and continuity editing. Subsequent responses to Bazin questioned a priori conception of reality itself. Jean Narboni and Jean-Louis Comolli's critique of realism, drawing from Althusser, positioned film, not as the means by which reality was re-presented but rather how ideology's version of the world, the way the world seemed according to "bourgeois realism," was communicated and perpetuated.[25] The poststructuralist denial of a world before signs (pre-linguistic, pre-cinematic) and the postmodern blurring of the distinction between reality and the image, center the reference to reality as a loaded and contestable claim in film studies.

The move from celluloid to digital media production has further undermined the conception of film technology as simplistically indexing the material world.[26] The questioning of reality and its relation to cinema has particular repercussions for how documentary film is understood and judged. As Jane Gaines put it, "But if it can no longer be said that documentary has 'reality' on its side, what can be said of it? Can we at least say that documentary has an inside track on reality, that it has a something, even if it

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[25] Jean Narboni and Jean-Louis Comolli, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," *Cahiers du Cinéma* 216, (October 1969) 61.
[26] David Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 173.

can no longer be said to have a 'trace' of the real?"[27]

Bill Nichols, responding to Baudrillard's description of the 'implosion of image and reality'[28] asserts the importance of history as a reality that cannot be ignored:

> It is quite possible, however, to accept the grain of truth about the immorality of images in Baudrillard's argument without jumping into a nihilist sandbox with him. Lives continue to be lost in events such as the invasion of Grenada even if such a "war" is reported and perceived far more as a simulation of war than war itself. The reality of pain and loss that is not part of any simulation, in fact, is what makes the difference between representation and historical reality of crucial importance. It is not beyond the power of documentary to make this difference available for consideration.[29]

Nichols rejects the idea that film and reality cannot be related and referenced and his rejection centers on affirming the existence of real pain and loss in the material world. In later work, Nichols has defined documentary as film that:

> speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves within a framework. This frame conveys a plausible perspective on the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes the film into a way of understanding the historical world directly rather than through a fictional allegory.[30]

In contrast to Nichols's description, Patricia Aufderheide offers, "A documentary film tells a story about real life, with claims to truthfulness"[31] but only as a starting point to the ongoing, moving target that is defining documentary.

Classic prison films have an established tendency to be based on explicitly real

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[27] Jane Gaines, "Introduction: The Real Returns," *Collecting Visible Evidence* ed. Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 6.
[28] Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images* (Sydney: Power Institute Publications, 1988), 27-28.
[29] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 7.
[30] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, *Third Edition*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017), Kindle Edition, Loc. 371.
[31] Patricia Aufderheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

prisons or real prison experiences,[32] claiming to inform the public about real prison in some fashion. Bill Nichols describes fictional films "sprinkling doses of authentic historical references…known places or prominent figures"[33] as achieving a "reality effect." Fictional prison film is perhaps unique in that, due to the lack of journalistic access to prisons, there are fewer documentary films and representations to offer a more direct claim to represent prison spaces and prison reality on screen. As a result, a main point of interest in the popular and scholarly criticism of fictional prison film has often been how authentic or realistic the depiction of prison life in a particular media object is. This project draws from critiques of cinematic realism as well as theories of the uses of realism in cinema[34] to address the claim to authenticity, made by fictional and documentary/reality prison media without stopping at the point of simply evaluating the distance between representation and actuality. The calls to reform prison media to be 'more realistic' echo the historic call to reform prisons themselves. A demand for reform is no threat to the institutional confinement, after all, incarceration was itself an invention of reformers.[35] While seemingly well-intentioned, calls for prison reform concentrate attention and resources on prison and as a result "produce the stultifying idea that nothing lies beyond prison."[36] Calls for more authentic, more real prisons on screen similarly concentrate attention and resources on the creation of ever more realist, yet never entirely,

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[32] Nichole Rafter, *Shots in the Mirror*: *Crime, Film, and Society* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 174.
[33] Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 28.
[34] Jane Gaines, "Political Mimesis," *Collecting Visible Evidence,* ed. Jane Gaines and Michael Renov, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 93.
[35] Caleb Smith, *The Prison and the American Imagination,* Yale Studies in English, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, Kindle Location 147.
[36] Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?,* Open Media Series (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), Kindle Edition location 196.

authoritative texts.[37] This project recognizes the citation of the real as an important but at times limiting point of analysis. I invite a closer look at prison media history and interrogate the ways we relate prison, media, and the carceral network to each other.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one considers *Scared Straight!*'s legitimation of the predatory prison and the contrasting versions of raced masculinity offered by *Riot* and *Penitentiary.* Beginning with Walter Barnsdale's *Prison Bars* (1901) and Thomas Edison's *The Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* (1901) the first part of this chapter sketches a history of prison film trends over the last century and is followed by a consideration of the scholarly analyses of the prison film genre thus far. This section is followed by close analyses of three popular prison films, beginning with *Riot* (1969), a film that Wilson and O'Sullivan identified as "probably the 'tipping point' of US prison film... towards a more predatory prison."[38] My second object is *Scared Straight!* (1978), probably one of the most critically acclaimed and impactful modern prison films in the U.S. Lastly, I focus attention on *Penitentiary* (1979) a successful, independently produced boxing-blaxploitation-prison hybrid.

Scared Straight! is the central object of this chapter, due to its success and long-lasting impact. I consider how *Scared Straight!* navigated racial tension and was positioned as a public service by its producer ultimately allowing for the normalization of predation in male prisons on screen. This chapter blurs the divisions between types of

[37] Heather Schuster, "Framing the (W)hole: Representing the Prison in the Era of U.S. Mass Imprisonment, 1972-Present" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001), 8.
[38] Wilson & O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 73.

prison media by examining fictional, feature mainstream production, independent film, and made-for-television documentary together. I examine these objects together, as participants in prison discourse, with particular attention being paid to raced masculinity. I use narrative and textual analysis to consider how *Riot* and *Penitentiary* framed predation and masculinity differently from *Scared Straight!*, pulling from similar social anxieties but producing models of exceptional, heroic masculinity in contrast to *Scared Straight!'s* grim pessimism. In addition, Monona Wali's UCLA thesis film, *Grey Area* (1982), is positioned as a direct critique of *Scared Straight!* and evidence of an awareness and suspicion of *Scared Straight!*'s logic coming from an emerging group of young Black directors.

Chapter one also considers the critical response to *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary*. Where the authenticity of the violence and sexuality in *Riot* and *Penitentiary* was debated, the bleak, predatory prison that *Scared Straight!* relied on as a deterrent was accepted as fact, normalizing sexual predation on screen. While *Riot* and *Penitentiary* offer contrasting examples of prison-based masculinity and sexuality, *Scared Straight!'s* categorization as a documentary (winning the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 1979) and its continued reappearance on the small screen, participated in the legitimation of sexual assault as a fact of life within the penitentiary. The critical and often the scholarly response to prison media has frequently been to demand a more real, more authentic prison yet the success and impact of *Scared Straight!* should offer a cautionary tale to counter the consistent call for a more real prison.

Chapter 2 addresses material from an area of film production that has thus far been left out of the critical examination of prisons on-screen altogether. Instructional

films for corrections officers are, I suggest these films are important to the larger project of understanding how media and the prison industrial complex interact. Beginning in the mid-1970s Charles Cahill Associates produced a series of films for the training of correctional officers on a variety of topics ranging from daily tasks such as *Cell Searches* (1978) to crisis negotiation in *If You're Taken Hostage* (1981).[39] As the first series of its kind archived in the Bureau of Prison's records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the *Correctional Officer (CO)* series offers insight into how corrections addressed itself as a profession in the wake of severe public criticism just as the policies that begot mass incarceration itself were being formed.

The scholarly discussion of prisons on screen has been so intently focused on the impact of prison media on the public that far less attention has been given to other ways that prison and media may be connected. Yvonne Jewkes sociological investigation in *Captive Audience: Media, masculinity, and power in prisons* (2002) addressed this gap in scholarship by considering the media consumption of incarcerated men in the U.K. and its impact on identity and group formation. From the fields of film and media studies, Alison Griffiths' *Carceral Fantasies* (2016) has addressed this gap by focusing on how early film entered carceral spaces and operated as an equalizer and a tool of acculturation, asking "what kind of film unfolded in the minds of spectators divorced from the actual public sphere?"[40]

Chapter 2 tackles the aforementioned gap in scholarship from another angle by considering corrections officers as a unique audience. I ask what use did the producers of

[39] Charles Cahill Associates was purchased in 1982 and became AIMS Media.
[40] Allison Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies: Cinema and Prison in Early Twentieth-Century America,* Film and Culture Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 145.

instructional films for corrections officers during the 1970s imagine their films to have? Focusing on instructional films for corrections officers reminds us that prison is a multivalent space and while it is certainly a site of unfreedom, control, and oppression, it is also a workplace.[41]

Where *Riot*, *Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* focused on the danger that the incarcerated posed to each other, the *Corrections Officer* series offers a perspective aimed at officers, without the need to proclaim its authenticity to the general public. This chapter offers a case study of three films from the *Correctional Officer* series, *Courtroom Demeanor* (1978*), Inmate Body Searches* (1978), and *Con Games Inmates Play* (1981). These films provide examples of how instructional film was mobilized in the service of professionalization and was a means by which the corrections officer was positioned as valuable, necessary and modern. In doing so, the *Correctional Officer* series simultaneously makes anxieties around professional loyalty, sexuality, and race visible.

Chapter 3 focuses on MSNBC's televised series *Lockup* as a participant and product of neoliberal paternalism that positions the job of corrections and officers' ability to 'make do' as imperfect yet necessary. Prison reality television has positioned itself as the bridge between mass incarceration and the un-incarcerated masses. MSNBC's *Lockup*, the first and longest-running reality prison series promised to 'unlock the gates' and take viewers 'inside.' *Lockup* made prison reality television binge-able. By positioning *Scared Straight!*, *Grey Area, Riot*, *Penitentiary* and the *Correctional Officer*

[41] I use 'unfreedom' rather than 'captivity' to refer to unfreedom/freedom as structuring concepts of our society and our daily lives, incarceration being one instance of unfreedom. See Dylan Rodgriquez's book *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (2006).

series as important antecedents to *Lockup*, I bring together the legal limitations for media access to prison, the interests of industry, the notion of predatory black masculinity, and the correctional officer (the individual and the profession) to understand *Lockup* as a complex and sometimes contradictory production, both a process and a product. *Lockup* is not simply a justification or repudiation of mass incarceration nor is it only a reflection of the media industry's visualization of a neoliberal agenda. Toby Miller states that media "both incarnate social change as aspects of neoliberal policy and commodification *and* report on it. As such they perform simultaneous functions of exemplification and meta commentary. They are test cases and rhetorical platforms all at once."[42] By providing insight into both the ideological content of *Lockup* and considering the production of the show itself, it becomes clear that Lockup is a product of neoliberal paternalism specifically and it makes visible the competing interests that are wrangled together to progress this form of governmentality. I argue in this chapter that *Lockup* positions the corrections officer as crucial to the continued stability of society. I also offer narrative analyses of *Lockup* that are not directly related to mass incarceration, connecting the consumption of prison reality to anxieties around surveillance.

Lockup is an argument for not only the continuation of incarceration but also for the respectability and necessity of corrections as a profession. As important as the dehumanization of incarcerated men and women is, so too is the humanization or even valorization of corrections officers, the 'keepers' that make incarceration possible. Furthermore, corrections officers, as they are depicted in *Lockup*, are models of the mentality of rule that makes the progression of neoliberal paternalism possible.

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[42] Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 178.

The final chapter considers WeTV's *Love After Lockup* (2018 -) which can be positioned within a newer batch of prison reality television focused specifically on romantic relationships (*Prison Wives Club* and *Prison Wives*). *Love After Lockup* was the fastest-growing new cable series in 2018 and now, in its second season, its popularity has only increased. Following a handful of couples, comprised of one incarcerated person and one not, *Love After Lockup* focuses on the anticipatory planning and eventual reality of each couple's unification and marriage 'outside.' *Love After Lockup* is a unique contribution to the prison reality televisual archive, due to its focus on the process of release and the transition away from complete incarceration. By focusing on those who are released, *Love After Lockup* moves away from prison as a fetishized space and brings attention to the structural difficulties that confront the currently and formerly incarcerated and those trying to assist them.

I consider the moments in which structural barriers are narratively and visually exposed amidst the show's generally suspicious disposition toward the individuals that comprise these couples. I pay particular attention to the ways in which the incarcerated are positioned as objectively worthy of doubt and the free partner's reason and rationality are questioned. I utilize critical disability studies to consider the ways that *Love After Lockup* destabilizes the line between 'inside' and 'outside,' as the formerly incarcerated make their way in the 'free' world despite a debilitated status. I argue that as *Love After Lockup* undermines the inside/outside dichotomy, it also simultaneously undermines the reasonability of care and connection. *Love After Lockup* may be, I argue, productively understood as a messy and unique means by which the social viability of caring for the incarcerated is being worked through.

Conclusion

These chapters are grounded in an abolitionist politics that appreciates prisons on screen as participants in our society's ability to creatively imagine a future absent of prisons. I position prison media of the 1970s as key antecedents to the prison reality television of today, which has carved out its own televisual niche. I consider a diverse range of prison media; fictional, feature mainstream production, independent film, made-for-television documentary, instructional film and reality television. This is an intentional expansion of the array of media objects that have been the focus of prison media studies, historically grounded in prison film as a genre. While indebted to the work of those who have contemplated the meanings and history of prison film as a genre, this project is not engaged in defining genre boundaries but rather tracing prison discourse across objects as prison in the U.S. became a raced and sexualized place in the public imaginary. This requires particular attention be paid to the ways prison media participates in racial capitalism, constructing particular bodies as other, as crazy, and as scary as a means of justifying segregation and debilitation. I also argue that prison media's ideological content is complexly tied to anxieties about technology, surveillance, work, and care. Prison media cannot be characterized en masse as simplistic renderings of carceral logic but rather contradictory products of multiple industries at particular historical moments.

CHAPTER 1

Bad Teens, Smug Hacks & Good TV: The success and legacy of *Scared Straight!*

The 1970s is not known, qualitatively or quantitatively, as a remarkable decade when it comes to prison films. The 1970s is, however, understood as a period in which incarceration was an important topic in American public discourse and the decade in which the seeds for mass incarceration were planted. This chapter is grounded in the premise that, given the importance of the 1970s to the history of incarceration in the United States, a return to representations of prison in films of this era is warranted.

Paul Mason's analysis of Hollywood-produced films states that the 1970s produced "few prison films of note." But just a few sentences later nevertheless cites Nellis and Hale's observation that a "series of press exposés, the rise of gay liberation and the greater frankness of cinema generally combined to ensure that the new prison movies gave considerable space to it [homosexuality], in both its violent and affectionate forms.'"[43] Wilson and O'Sullivan's *Images of Incarceration* describes the 1970s as a period where the prison on-screen became "meaner", but they leave hanging the question of why the 1970s produced the prison films it did. This chapter argues that we should

[43] Mason, *Captured by the Media*, 200.

expand what is considered "of note" to better understand why the 1970s produced the prison films it did and how the media participated in and responded to the discourse of incarceration at the time. In addition, given the lack of attention afforded to specific prison films from the 1970s, I also highlight how these films were negotiations of race, gender, and sexuality in complex ways.

I begin with *Riot* (1969), a film that Wilson and O'Sullivan identified as "probably the 'tipping point' of US prison film... towards a more predatory prison."[44] I take a closer look at *Riot* and the critical response to it. Next, I explore *Scared Straight!* (1978), one of the most critically acclaimed and impactful modern made-for-TV prison films in the U.S. *Scared Straight* is quite often left out of prison film histories and taxonomies. This may partly be due to the fact that a sizeable portion of the collections attempting to address prison film as a genre are written by scholars in the U.K, where *Scared Straight!* did not air. Also, many of the academic attempts to cover the entirety of the prison film genre focus on Hollywood feature film productions almost exclusively. I contextualize the production and success of *Scared Straight!* as part of the prison film genre and as non-fiction, made-for-television film. Lastly, I focus attention on *Penitentiary* (1979) a successful, independently produced boxing-blaxploitation-prison hybrid. *Penitentiary* provides a depiction of prison from outside the mainstream Hollywood production apparatus and is remarkable for its box office success and its portrayal of prison as a black space.

This chapter seeks to shed new light on a period of prison film that has been discounted as unremarkable by expanding our purview outside of Hollywood. Scholars

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[44] Wilson & O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 73.

have identified the late 1960s and 1970s as the period where prison on screen became a racialized, sexualized and a more violent space, yet they have paid little attention to the way that this occurs and to what (differing) effects. The films that I discuss in this chapter all participated in shaping what prisons on-screen could and would look like. Each of these films pushed the envelope in some fashion; indeed, all three can be tied together by critical responses that center on each film's violence and salaciousness. The commentary on the validity of their content is usually questioned alongside a consideration of their authenticity. I suggest that these films moved the needle in terms of what was acceptable to see in prisons on screen but in different ways and to different effects.

Riot, Scared Straight! and *Penitentiary* are not unique in their claims to authenticity; according to Nichole Rafter, about half of classic prison films claim to be either based on a true story or fictionalized versions of a real event.[45] But their bid for legitimate prison-ness brings to light an issue with the genre itself and too often the scholarship has repeated rather than addressed it: a consistent demand for a more real prison. *Scared Straight!* in particular, due to its categorization as a documentary, impacted not only the formulation of 'real' prison on screen but also official state policies and programs addressing juvenile delinquency across the U.S.

Undergirding my inquiry into prison film is the postulation that we cannot understand the prison media we have now without a better understanding of its predecessors. This chapter aims to elucidate why the 1970s produced the prison films it did and how these particular films participated in prison discourse. This dissertation as a whole considers the 1970s and the early 2000s alongside each other not only to fill a gap

[45] Rafter, *Shots in the Mirror*, 174.

in prison film scholarship but also to allow some space to draw parallels between the political climate and media's participation in public discourse surrounding prison in these two periods. The 1970s offered a grittier prison, framed as a 'more real' prison. The prison reality television programming of the new millennium offered the 'realest' prison yet. I hope that by taking a closer look at examples from these two periods, we may ask new questions about prisons on screen and their possibilities and limitations.

The following chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides an overview of the prison film genre. The second addresses the 1970s in general, to provide some carceral context for the media discussed. The third section takes an in-depth look at *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* with particular attention to how each film made a claim to authenticity. The fourth section considers these films together and their appeal to the real as a problem for the assumed project of prison media and the presumed distinction between fictional and documentary prison film.

Prison Film in the United States

Prison film has, from the beginning of the 20th century, positioned itself as a means by which audiences can access prison life and prison space. The prison film genre is one way that the appetite to 'see inside' has been sated and in turn, a means by which the general public's understanding of prison has been shaped. Cinema, and motion pictures more generally, continue to construct "an enduring carceral imaginary."[46] As Alison Griffiths notes, the cinema has played a key role in the present absence of prison

[46] Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies*, 268.

for the American public.[47] Despite the massive increase in the number of Americans put imprisoned in the second half of the 20th century, the institution itself has remained out of sight for the majority, whose main view 'inside' has been through media.

I begin with a chronological overview of prison film history, starting with early prison film, to establish the fact that film has been utilized to provide access to prison in some fashion (and at a distance) for nearly as long as cinema has existed. This overview of prison film history is not exhaustive but rather meant to provide an outline, a general shape of the trajectory and growth of the genre. I also briefly cover the definition of prison media and prison film as a genre that I utilize in this project and the reasoning behind its use.

Prison film histories often begin in the 1930s, but films that featured prison as an environment and topic were produced as early as 1901. Thomas Edison's *The Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* (1901), which Alison Griffiths discusses at length in *Carceral Fantasies,* is one of the earliest, most famous and accessible early prison films.[48] *The Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* is a little over three minutes long. The film begins with a slow-moving panorama of Auburn first at ground level (including a bit of the railway line and passenger car that tourists took to visit the prison) and then at a higher angle showing the tops of trees and buildings. Auburn prison had a very recognizable exterior, reminiscent of a castle or fortress and was already a tourist attraction at the time the film was made.[49] The film then dissolves into an interior shot where we see the man playing Czolgosz, the assassin of President

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[47] Ibid, 2.
[48] Copies of *The Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* online are not difficult to find (though some have added jarring soundtracks to the short film), https://youtu.be/bZl-Z8LKSo0.
[49] Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies*, 33.

William McKinley, through a door with vertical bars on the left; guards walk from the right side of the frame to escort Czolgosz out of the cell to his execution by electrocution.

The Execution of Czolgosz was utilized, alongside Thomas Edison's expert testimony, to champion the use of electrocution as the most humane and modern method for execution despite continued evidence to the contrary.[50] I position *The Execution of Czolgosz* as an example of the very beginnings of prison film blending documentation and reenactment, with the actual exterior of Auburn prison lending weight to the reenactment that follows. Early prison film, indeed all prison film, has been produced in a context in which access to prison space, the main identifier of the genre is in some fashion subject to constraint. Execution, in particular, has been off-limits to cameras, though not to journalists in general.

The use of reenactment with regard to capital punishment has been necessary for films concerned with execution in the last hundred years, since cameras are banned from filming them.[5152] Tom Howard took the first known photograph of an execution by electric chair on January 13, 1928. Howard used a single-use camera attached to his leg to surreptitiously capture a black and white photo of Ruth Snyder being executed by electric chair in Sing Sing prison. The photo, taken from an (understandably) lower perspective, looks up at Snyder strapped to the chair with her face covered, the outline of her figure slightly blurred as if in tremor. *The New York Daily News* published the

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[50] Ibid, 2.
[51] Rainey Bethea's execution in Owensboro, Kentucky in 1936 is the last public execution held in the United States. Timothy McVeigh's execution was an invite-only event, witnessed by survivors, rescuers and family members via closed-circuit television, despite requests for a public execution.
[52] John Bessler, "Televised Executions and the Constitution: Recognizing a First Amendment Right of Access to State Executions," 45 Fed. Comm. L.J.355 (1993), 365.

photograph of Snyder on its cover with the caption "Dead!"[53] The resulting controversy changed the process of electrocution and its witness at Sing Sing, with the warden handpicking (strictly searched) journalists and dimming the lighting of the execution itself.[54]

Tom Howard's photograph and its subsequent publishing in *The Daily News* is evidence of the appetite for visual evidence or witness to the moment of execution. The appetite and desire for images of public executions predate motion pictures.[55] Griffiths discusses *The Execution of Czolgosz* and other execution films as examples of the "epistephilic longing" for access to the darkest recesses of the prison.[56] I highlight the use of actual prison spaces and the blended nature of prison depictions from the very start to show the thirst for knowledge of the interior space and populations of prison through prison media.

The same year that *The Execution of Czolgosz* was produced, *Prison Bars* (1901) was also produced.[57] *Prison Bars,* sometimes cited as the first known prison film, is occasionally mentioned but never discussed in-depth in chronologies of prison film. Credited to Walter Barnsdale, *Prison Bars* was probably created by using a mix of photographic slides and film of the Wisconsin state prison, Waupun.[58] *Prison Bars* was not Barnsdale's only prison-related film; he is also credited with *Life Behind Bars* in

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[53] *New York Daily News,* January 13, 1928.
[54] Jessie Ramey, "The Bloody Blonde and the Marble Woman: Gender and Power in the Case of Ruth Snyder," *Journal of Social History* 37.3 (2004): 627, Project MUSE.
[55] Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies,* 18.
[56] Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies*, 15.
[57] Mason, *Captured by the Media,* 197.
[58] Michael Organ, "Walter Barnsdale's Electric Moving Pictures," (University of Wollongong, website, 2010), http://www.uow.edu.au/~morgan/barnsdale.htm.

1903. Barnsdale was a prolific photographer[59], documenting (his) family life at the turn of the century while also going out of his way to take pictures in Waupun prison (most of his pictures were shot in Portage County, his home).[60] According to a booklet that accompanied *Life Behind Bars*, Barnsdale notes that he arranged a trade with the prison – in exchange for showing the prisoners films, he gained the right to film them.[61] Barnsdale's exchange, film for access, was perhaps one of the earliest examples of what became a Hollywood practice that Griffiths states was a "trademark of prison films from the 1910s onward."[62]

The posters for both *Prison Bars* and *Life Behind Bars* are the only material traces of the films that have thus far surfaced. Auction records have kept their image available to the general public online. The posters for *Prison Bars* and *Life Behind Bars* both center on a solitary individual inside a prison cell. The *Prison Bars* poster features a young white woman with reddish-blond hair, head cocked to the side somewhat sadly as her delicate fingers hold the bars of the prison window in front of her. The window bars dominate the image as the young woman looks directly, pleadingly out at the viewer. *Life Behind Bars* presents a white man dressed in black and off-white stripes, standing with his hands down at his sides as he looks with an inscrutable expression at something out of view. Apropos the film's title, the individual in *Life Behind Bars,* is seen from within a cell, so that the viewer can also look out of the barred door and the barred window to see

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[59] Walter Barnsdale's glass collection is currently preserved in the archives of the Albertson Learning Resource Center of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point.
[60] Malcolm Rosholt, *Photos from Wisconsin's Past*, (Wisconsin: Rosholt House, 1986) McMillan Memorial Library Digital Collections, 22, https://content.mpl.org/digital/collection/mcml/id/5145.
[61] Barnsdale's work seems to be primarily preserved through ephemera so the content of these films remains largely unknown. See the following for some of Barnsdale's productions posters: http://www.uow.edu.au/~morgan/barnsdale.htm
[62] Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies,* 86.

light and blue sky on the other side of the prison wall. Not only is the man in the cell wearing horizontal stripes, but the bedspread is also striped and the door and the window have vertical bars. Nearly half the poster is covered with a parallel line design of some sort, emphasizing bars and prison stripes as important to understanding this space as a prison cell. Without reading too heavily into the ephemera of these films, it can be noted that their advertisements invite a fascination (through their invitation and promise of access) with life inside. In other words, the existence of Barnsdale's films and posters frame prison as a space that is different enough from other spaces to require explanation and exploration.[63]

While the content of Barnsdale's films is probably lost to history, their ephemera give us a clue as to the focus of the films, positioning Barnsdale as an early example of a filmmaker interested in documenting prison life and prison space. Barnsdale, utilizing a portable electric generator[64] and improving on Edison's original projector to lessen the flickering of early pictures,[65] brought films to rural, central Wisconsin through his traveling show entitled "Barnsdale's Viveorama."[66] Barnsdale exhibited films produced locally as well as globally, which means that *Prison Bars* and *Life Behind Bars* were potentially exhibited alongside films of the San Francisco earthquake and elephants logging in India, as well as travel films, comedies, and dramas.[67] While we may never

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[63] Barnsdale's prison pictures also establish the interest in prison as never solely orientated on prisons for men and the early use of prison iconography like bars in their ephemera to denote incarceration.
[64] See the Portage County Historical Records http://www.pchswi.org/archives/timeline-1900.html Barnsdale's films were popular attractions in area circuses and carnivals, eventually declining in popularity as electricity became accessible, even in rural areas. Barnsdale's sons Frank and Dick continued the entertaining tradition by becoming circus performers, Frank being the better known of the two as the world-renowned Colonel Tom Thumb.
[65] Rosholt, *Photos from Wisconsin's Past*, 23.
[66] "Walter Barnsdale Obituary," *The Billboard,* January 20, 1951.
[67] "Walter Barnsdale Obituary, "*Box Office*, January 20, 1951.

know the personal motivation of Barnsdale and his wish to document Waupun, his prison films demand that any discussion of prison film as a genre pays particular attention to the ethnographic impulse towards prison life.

Barnsdale and Edison's prison films are proof of an early fascination and desire to access the space of prison and the importance of verisimilitude in that effort. (Later in this chapter I will return to these two points.) *Prison Bars* and *The Execution of Czolgosz* establish 1901 as the beginning of our timeline for prison film. The 1930s is the next important period for prison film history as it is in this period that prison film production experienced the biggest boom in volume, before or since.[68]

Hollywood's interest in prisons during the 1930s was spurred by journalists' reports of cruel conditions, [69] the brutality of southern chain gangs[70] and the riots at Dannemora and Auburn prisons in New York in 1929.[71] Examples from this period include the prison melodrama *The Big House* (1930), as well as *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932*)*, and *Hells Highway* (1932). This same period also generated the prison comedy sub-genre, with films such as *The Second Hundred Years* (1927) and *Up the River* (1938). Big House iconography, which is described in detail in Stephen Cox's *The Big House: Image and Reality of the American Prison*, has remained present long

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[68] Paul Mason, "The screen machine: Cinematic representations of prisons," In *Criminal visions: Media representations of crime and justice*, Edited by P. Mason, (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2003), 285.
[69] Bruce Crowther, *Captured on Film : The Prison Movie* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1989) 25-26.
[70] The film *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) was based on a book with the same title that Robert Elliot Burns wrote about his experience on a Georgia chain. Burns was sentenced to a 6-10-year term on a Georgia chain gang for a $6 grocery store robbery. He subsequently escaped, was recaptured and then escaped again and wrote articles that would eventually be published in book form.
[71] Crowther, *Captured on Film,* 7.

after these "cathedrals of corrections" ceased being the model for the physical, institutional space.[72]

The 1930s prison films featured convicts who were good, often innocent men wrongly convicted and prison guards that were often brutal and corrupt. The increase in prison films during the 1930s occurred just as the Motion Picture Production Code was written and began to be enforced. Scholars have pointed to the Hays Code (as it is commonly called, after its author Will Hays) as a major reason that the films of this period trend toward innocent protagonists.[73] Crime can't pay so innocent protagonists are used to balance out the criticism of the prison administration and system at this time. Some scholars have discussed prison film during this period as indicative of the frustration and lost opportunity caused by the Great Depression and increased anxiety in regard to state power. The focus on incarceration from this perspective becomes a metaphor for general "social entrapment."[74]

Whether they were set in big houses in the north or chain gangs in the south, the average film of this decade (and there were well over 60 made[75]) was usually focused on white men in prison. *Hell's Highway* depicts more men of color on the chain gang than the average film of this time, coming closer to the racial mix of an actual chain gang than most. In general, men of color were relegated to extremely minor parts in prison films of the 1930s and prison was depicted as a white space.

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[72] Stephen Cox, *The Big House: Image and Reality of the American Prison* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
[73] James Parker, "The Organizational Environment Of The Motion Picture Sector," in *Media, Audience and Social Structure,* eds. S. Ball-Rokeach and M. Cantor (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986), 146.
[74] Peter Roffman and James Purdy, *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair and Politics from the Depression to the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 26.
[75] Paul Mason, "The screen machine," 285.

Hollywood studios shift focus in the 1940s and the production of prison film declines, with film noirs coming into favor. During the 1950s Hollywood attempts to capture the growing teenage market[76] and speak to anxieties about teens themselves with social problem films such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). Prisoner-of-war films (*Stalag 17* (1954) are a notable addition to the prison film genre in the 1950s. The 1960s saw a continued decline in the number of prison film productions (less than 30). While small in number, some of the prison films of the 1960s are notable in their focus on societal concerns (reminiscent of the 30s) and for producing two enduring classics of the genre, Stuart Rosenberg's *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) and John Frankenheimer's *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962).

As I mentioned earlier, the prison films of the 1970s are not usually positioned in prison film histories as important or even really impactful in regard to the trajectory of the genre. *The Glasshouse* (1972), *Papillon* (1973), *The Longest Yard* (1974) and *Midnight Express* (1978) are some of the 1970s films most often remarked upon (*Midnight Express* and *Papillon* both focus on prison conditions outside of the United States). Women-in-prison films are sometimes noted as a minor sub-genre of the 1970s, an exception to the rule of masculine-focused prison film in general. Oren Shai in "The Women in Prison Film: From Reform to Revolution 1922-1974," treats the women-in-prison (WIP) genre to a historical analysis that tracks the major changes in theme over time and places the origination of WIP significantly earlier than most accounts. Shai offers a substantive look at the figure of the woman behind bars that starkly contrasts the

[76] Paul Mason, *Captured By Media,* 199.

casual write-off of WIP films elsewhere, often through the label of exploitation.[77] While I have limited the scope of my project to productions in which prison is a male designated space, I take a cue from Shai's work emphasizing the gendered history of prison representation when discussing the films of the 1970s later in this chapter.

Prison films in the 1980s continued with the violent depictions of penitentiary life that began in the 1970s. *Brubaker* (1980), produced in the late 1970s, based on the account of Tom Murtion in *Accomplices to the Crime: The Arkansas Prison Scandal* (1969) was a retrospective prison film that portrayed the penitentiary as corrupt and brutal. Reform in *Brubaker* (which meant an end to the abuse of prisoners by officers and trustees) was nearly impossible at the level of individual acts (even if that individual was a Warden). While *Brubaker* looked back, new prison science fiction hybrids such as *Escape from New York* (1981) and *The Running Man* (1987) (set in 2019) provided dystopic visions of the carceral future. The filmic consideration of future prison continues in the 1990s with films such as *Demolition Man* (1993), *No Escape* (1994) and *Escape from L.A*. (1996), often abandoning any association of prison with reform or rehabilitation.[78] The most well-known prison film from the 1990s however, *Shawshank Redemption* (1994) was set in the 1940s and resulted in a small surge of more nostalgic prison films. *The Green Mile* (1999) for example was set in the 1930s and *Murder in the First* (1995) begins in the 1930s and ends in the early 1940s.

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[77] Oren Shai, "The Women in Prison Film: From Reform to Revolution 1922-1974," *Bright Lights Film Journal* (January 31, 2013), https://brightlightsfilm.com/the-women-in-prison-film-from-reform-to-revolution-1922-1974/#.Xo9EBm57n_Q.

[78] *Demolition Man* (1993) could also be considered part of this subgenre. In this future, cryogenically freezing felons is the norm and while frozen they are exposed to subconscious rehabilitation techniques, which fail. The Australian film *Fortress* (1992) and the French film *Lockout* (2012) also imagine a dystopian carceral future.

The prison film still exists in the 21st century but, as I will discuss in chapters three and four, television has also taken up the project of offering audiences access to prison life at an accelerated pace. According to Dawn K. Cecil, less than fifty prison films have been released since 2000.[79] Prison films run the gamut from drama to hybrid sub-genre, comedies, and action films. *Animal Factory* (2000), *Monster's Ball* (2001), *25th Hour* (2002)[80], *The Longest Yard* (2005) *Let's Go to Prison (*2006), *Death Race* (2008) and *I Love You Phillip Morris* (2009) are a few examples of prison films from the 2000s. No single film during this period is usually presented as representative of a turning point or change in the genre but rather films like *Death Race* are critiqued for lacking any investment in the complexities of prison life.

Prison in the 1970s

The following section highlights several key aspects of the political and social landscape that are helpful in understanding the increased attention to prison in the 1970s and the contradictory meanings and associations with incarceration that occurred in public discourse. As Lee Bernstein writes in *America is the Prison, Arts and Politics in Prison in the 1970s*, the meaning of prisons was a subject of debate and conflict during the 1970s in the United States. Prison reform initiatives during this period gave prisoners access to a wide range of programs, and prisoners themselves were organizing as political actors and laborers.[81] Prisons during the seventies become a symbol of inequality for

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[79] Dawn K. Cecil, *Prison Life in Popular Culture: from the big house to orange is the new black* (Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015).
[80] *25th Hour* is not always considered a prison film but it is about the prospect and meaning of life in prison and so I include it based on the genre boundaries that I describe in the next section.
[81] Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison,* 19.

some, and a symbol of administrative failure and lenience to others. Bernstein positions prisons during the 1970s as a "flashpoint for a country in transition" and a precursor to the 'culture wars' of the 1980s and 1990s.[82] The 1970s saw an increased public interest in the writings, images, and speeches of the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated.

In *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, Dan Berger notes that the 1970s were a moment when activism "continued, changed and in some cases, grew." He suggests that much of the radicalism attributed to the 1960s actually occurred in the 1970s, complicating the characterization of the 1970s as both a distinct de-politicized period and the decade when activist groups only tore themselves apart.[83] The Attica prison rebellion (1971), the passing of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) and the nation-wide sit-ins in 1977 to support its actual enforcement, The Combahee River Collective statement (1977), Black Power, and protests against the Vietnam War (finally over by 1975) are just a few examples of the various trajectories from which activism and calls for change were coming from in the 1970s. To characterize the 1970s as a period of radical activism is accurate. But this period was also characterized by a turn inward for the purpose of personal transformation. Sam Binkley's *Getting Loose* argues that the counter culture's legacy is the "fundamental relation to the self as an object of manipulation and choice in the practice of daily life."[84] Both characterizations of the 1970s and their attendant ideologies play a part in making prison the "flashpoint" that Bernstein labels it.

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[82] Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison,* 20.
[83] Dan Berger, *The Hidden 1970,* 4.
[84] Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose*: *Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 19.

In 1970 the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee was formed and supported by a wide range of public figures (Marlon Brando and Noam Chomsky for example) to help defend three inmates who were accused of murder in Soledad Prison, following the acquittal of a corrections officer who killed three inmates in the recreation yard. Jonathan Jackson, younger brother to George Jackson (one of the three accused inmates) attempted to free the Soledad Brothers by holding up a courtroom and taking hostages. Jonathan Jackson and three hostages were killed, including Superior Court Judge Harold Haley, by a shotgun that had been taped to his neck. Almost a year later and a few days before his trial, George Jackson led an uprising in San Quentin (with the San Quentin Six) and was killed in the process.

The Soledad brothers kept prisons and prison violence part of the public discussion for a good portion of the early 70s. Angela Davis, who had already attracted national attention for losing her teaching position at UCLA due to her affiliation with the Communist Party, was also in the news with the Soledad Brothers. Davis was accused of owning the guns that Jonathan Jackson brought into the courtroom that day and thereby participating in murder, kidnapping and criminal conspiracy. She was put on the FBI's "10 Most Wanted List" and was a fugitive from the law until her arrest in New York, October 13, 1971. Her trial and subsequent acquittal in June 1972, continued to keep radical prison activism in the news.

Jeffery Ross notes in *The Globalization of Supermax Prisons* the progressive movements of the 1960s are met by a "triple backlash" against the civil rights movement,

labor gains and the welfare state in the 1970s.[85] I suggest, however, that there was also a backlash against the visibility of prisoners. As Berger argues in his dissertation:

> Prisoners elucidated a national philosophy of racial formation… Trying to force the country to see its sites of punishment as discriminatory locations of repressions, prisoners used spectacular confrontation to dramatize their conditions of confinement as epitomizing American inequality.[86]

The spectacle of violence is utilized by prison activist groups during this period to push the prison into the public consciousness. The centrality of race to these protests should not be surprising since incarceration in the U.S. has always had ties to a system of racial oppression. The criminalization of blackness has deep historical roots that has through slavery and Jim Crow laws continually connected black communities to prison.[87]

John Sloop in *The Cultural Prison: Discourse, Prisoners, and Punishment* examines the representation of prisons in 600 articles, in mass-market U.S. magazines between 1950 and 1993.[88] According to Sloop, the 1960s saw a racial bifurcation: white prisoners were still thought of as redeemable, perhaps wrongfully convicted; black prisoners began to pose as their counter image, naturally violent and dangerous.[89] During the 1970s there was a divide within the depiction of black prisoners. They were all still rendered violent but, in some cases, that violence was a justified reaction to racism; everyone else is depicted as essentially evil. The prototypical prisoner was depicted as black at this time even though 65 percent of the prison population was white during this era. From 1975 to 1993, Sloop states that the last trend he sees is the depiction of

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[85] Jeffery Ross, *The Globalization of Supermax Prisons* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013), ix.
[86] Dan Berger, "'We Are the Revolutionaries': Visibility, Protest, and Racial Formation in 1970s Prison Radicalism" (Ph. D. Diss: University of Pennsylvania, 2010), ix.
[87] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* (New York: New Press, 2010).
[88] John M Sloop, *The cultural prison: Discourse, prisoners, and punishment* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996).
[89] Ibid, 85.

sentencing as just (prison as just desserts) with prisoners increasingly portrayed as animalistic and hyper-violent. Sloop's analysis of print materials assists in highlighting the fact that the mass media representation of incarceration became tied to race in a way that it had not before and specifically was related to associations with violence and blackness.

The 1970s is the period when prison and blackness become intertwined in the public imagination so that battles over prison policy were necessarily racially imbued. As activists worked to make prison visible, they used the language of (and comparisons to) slavery to do so, and as a result, they encouraged its visibility as a space of blackness. This is not to say that radicals of the 70s were to blame for the continual association of blackness with prison and its attendant and escalating damage to black communities, but rather that the backlash against civil rights and 'progressive' prison reform, as well as abolitionist and black power ideas, were tied together with each other. The racialization of prison and the backlash against the social and political pushes for change resulted in a strange combination of symbolic meanings attached to prison. As Bernstein puts it, "If the 1970s brought to light the view that prisons were symbols of American racism and inequality, it immediately preceded policies inspired by the contradictory conviction that they were too few and too comfortable."[90]

Riot, Scared Straight! & Penitentiary

The films that I chose to consider in detail for this chapter are films that I picked for their depiction of racial dynamics and their participation in the move towards (the

[90] Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison*, 194.

now taken for granted) predatory atmosphere of men's prisons on screen. Wilson and O'Sullivan note that prison film overall became more multi-racial and less optimistic during this period,[91] but they do not connect the increase in law and order politics and the public discourse on prisons to these facts. The question that they leave hanging is: "why the 1970s produced the type of prison film that they did?"[92] My goal here is to take a step back and look at the three films at hand as individual products rather than examples of a type. In addition, I also take a look at how these films were produced, with particular attention given to how they presented themselves as authentic depictions of prison life. Any prison film from the 1970s could be brought into a discussion of the cinematic relationship of film to prison discourse, but each of these three films was either criticized or praised for their immoderate use of violence and sex and they have received little scholarly attention. The violent and sexual content of each has perhaps made it easier for their complexity to be discounted. Each of these films (unlike the most popular, critically acclaimed feature prison films of the era) features black men in important if not starring roles, positioning them as part of the shift in prison film depictions from an all or mostly white to a more diverse population.[93] *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* also all depict the penitentiary as run being by the incarcerated, at least to some extent. The power of the administrators and the integrity of the corrections officers fade to the background in all three for a large portion of each film as fellow prisoners pose the greatest and most immediate threat to the protagonists.

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[91] Wilson and O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 74.
[92] Wilson and O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration*, 75
[93] Unlike the most well-known prison films of the 1970s *Midnight Express* (1978), *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979) and *The Longest Yard* (1974).

Riot

Riot, directed by Buzz Kulik and starring Jim Brown and Gene Hackman, was filmed in an Arizona prison and based on the story of an actual riot from formerly incarcerated Frank Elli's bestselling non-fiction novel.[94] *Riot* also used current inmates as extras. The fact that *Riot* was filmed at an Arizona State prison and that the warden, staff, and inmates of that prison assisted in its making is announced in the opening credits. *Riot* was released just as the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) was replacing the Production Code Administration in 1968. Hollywood films were no longer governed by an all-inclusive code of regulation (as it was in the classical studio era by the Hay's Code) but instead moved to the letter system (G, M, R, and X ratings[95]). Paramount, in an effort to pre-censor, removed some obscene dialogue from *Riot* in order to receive an R rating, which was eventually reduced to an M.[96]

Bruce Crowther notes that in the late 1960s and 1970s "both sides of prison riots took advantage of the possibilities offered by media-hyping."[97] This brief note acknowledges that media coverage began to play a part in the negotiation and strategy of actual prison riots. Also, Crowther suggests that the prison riot on-screen provided a means by which filmmakers could expand the "apparently narrow scope of the subject" and introduce adventure and "two way violence."[98] *Captured on Film* does not provide further context but these brief observations are situated near his description and comparison of *Riot in Cell Block Eleven* (1954), *Riot* (1969) and *Brute Force* (1947).

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[94] Frank Elli, *The Riot: a novel,* (New York: Coward – McCann, 1966).
[95] The MPAA replaced the X with NC-17 in 1990.
[96] Kevin S. Sandler, "The Naked Truth: *Showgirls* and the Fate of the X/NC-17 Rating" *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 40, no. 3 (2001), 72.
[97] Crowther, *Captured on Film,* 16.
[98] Crowther, *Captured on Film,* 15.

Crowther utilizes *Riot* as a foil to argue for the superior quality of *Brute Force*, but his passing observations hint at the idea that the dynamics of riots had changed in the United States due to the news media's ability to report on riots quickly and that riots offered ways to expand the plot outside the carceral space for filmmakers.

Wilson and O'Sullivan briefly mention *Riot* in *Images of Incarceration* (2004), describing *Riot* as "probably the tipping point of US prison film... towards a more predatory prison." Unlike the riot films of the 1950s, the premise, the riot in *Riot,* is planned as a cover for an escape attempt, not a protest action to address grievances or a strategy for reform. The cover riot becomes uncontrolled and the prison "descends into decadence."[99] Though they identify *Riot* as a possible "tipping point," O'Sullivan and Wilson do not offer a conclusive reason for why the character of prison on-screen changed during this period, to what they refer to as a "meaner environment." "Was it a reflection of changing penal realities and the way that they were perceived? Or was it simply a product of changing film trends following the ending of the US Motion Picture Production Code in the mid-1960s?"[100]

After some initial scenes of groups of inmates working under the hot Arizona sun, the first individual inmate we meet is a shiny and shirtless, impressively muscular Cully, played by Jim Brown. Cully is attempting to hide some moonshine and a shorter white officer (all the corrections officers in this film are white) confronts him, calls him a boy and makes him leave his workstation to presumably be reprimanded by the deputy warden. The deputy almost lets Cully off with a warning, but the officer accuses Cully of

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[99] Wilson and O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 73.
[100] David and Sean O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration: Representations of Prison in Film and Television Drama,* (Waterside Press, 2004), 73.

being a troublemaker and calls him a “honkey son-of-a-bitch.” Cully angrily protests this lie and calls the officer a “sadistic son-of-a-bitch,” landing himself a trip to solitary in the prison’s maximum-security section. At the same time, the inmates in this area have overpowered the guards, taken them as hostages, and then proceed to take control of this section of the prison campus.

Red, played by Gene Hackman, is the leader of the group that has overpowered the guards. While they were hoping to escape before the rest of the prison notices, an alarm goes off alerting the entire prison that mischief is afoot. Red then comes up with the strategy of presenting the takeover as a protest of the conditions in solitary, to buy them time while they complete their escape tunnel. Red announces, using a megaphone to the officers pointing rifles at him and the other prison, “This is not a riot, this is an orderly demonstration in preparation for negotiations.”

From the very beginning, Cully is skeptical of the likelihood of escape and emphatic Red that he needs to plan and be strategic. Red knows that Cully commands respect and asks him to make sure the guards are kept alive and away from the general population prisoners, which he does, making himself a leader of the rebellion despite his efforts to disassociate and escape responsibility for the other men.

Approximately two-thirds of the way into the film, there is a long scene of "Queens' Row", with an inmate in drag in a decorated cell, dancing for a crowd of eager prisoners, drinking raisin-jack. This scene lasts for over a minute, sometimes in close up and sometimes at mid-length, intercutting the dancer with men reaching and watching. Other inmates who are styled femininely are shown affectionately embracing presumably cis men. Mary, played by Clifford David, an orderly (in contrast to the others on Queens'

Row, dressed in a simple white uniform) asks Cully to his cell. Cully follows Mary to the cell and then Mary propositions him to have a drink with the curtains closed. Cully pauses, glares a bit and does not say anything in response but then rushes down to the mess hall to find the general population has run amuck and started on the moonshine early.

Surefoot, who is depicted as bloodthirsty and chaotic, attempts to kill the hostages but Cully stops his attempt. Despite his unwillingness to take orders or follow the plan, Red insists on allowing Surefoot (referring to him as 'the Indian') to come along with the escape party due to his connections and his knowledge of how to survive the Arizona desert.[101] After Cully locks the corrections officers out of harms' way, a montage of abuse and chaos begins. Men who had broken into the administration's files earlier are now meting out punishment to men they had discovered were informants. The informants are shown being beaten by a mass of men with bats and batons, some wearing bits and pieces of athletic equipment (helmets, shoulder pads, etc.).

The next time we see Mary is right before Red and Cully are getting into the escape tunnel, using the chaos (that they have lost control over) to mask their escape attempt. Mary begs to go with them, offering connections. Surefoot responds, "What? The queer?!" and Mary replies, "Oh for Christ's sake, what the hell does that mean now, huh?" Cully says, "Beat it" and in response, Mary threatens to expose them if they don't let them come along. Cully relents but as everyone is about to enter the tunnel, Surefoot stabs Mary in the back. Red and Cully look shocked but in the next moment continue into the tunnel. Little do they know that there is an ambush waiting for them, as the warden

[101] Surefoot is played by Ben Carruthers.

has figured out their escape plan. Red, Cully, and Surefoot are the only inmates to survive the onslaught of bullets and gas that greet the men that leave the tunnel ahead of them. The main prison buildings are simultaneously gassed and overrun with bat-swinging corrections officers. The three shuffle back into the tunnel in a panic and then wait till nightfall to find another passageway to a wall tower. Surefoot goes up first, taking out the unsuspecting guard but is injured in the process. Cully safely jumps down off the wall and waits for Red. As Red is preparing to drop he is cut down, quite literally, with a vivid slash across his neck delivered by Surefoot (before he himself collapses). Cully sprints off into the night while the camera stays focused on his footprints in the sand becoming less and less visible as it begins to rain and wash them away.

Reviewing *Riot*

A review in the *Chicago Tribune* by Terry Clifford describes *Riot* as 'silly' and states, "While "Riot" was filmed entirely on location in the Arizona State prison, the real focus is on the inside of the box office. Wading into sadism and perversion, Director Buzz Kulik ["Warning Shot," "Villa Rides"] obviously had a harder task killing time than the convicts." The very last bit of Clifford's review notes,

> In spite of everything, the film does continue the trend in pigmentation pioneering. In "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," Sidney Poitier kissed a white girl. In "In the Heat of the Night" Sidney Poitier hit a white man. In "Riot," Jim Brown is propositioned by a white homosexual.[102]

[102] Terry Clifford, "Silly 'Riot' should be Quelled," *Chicago Tribune* (1963-Current File), Feb 07, 1969. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/168839924?accountid=12861.

Clifford accuses the filmmakers of money-grubbing by creating a film meant to sell tickets, as opposed to focusing on a more realistic depiction of prison life. The critical and glib tone of Clifford's review extends to his discussion of Mary and Cully's interaction within a category that included Sidney Poitier's recent (1967) roles. On the one hand, Poitier's roles offer a respectable counterpoint or even foil to Jim Brown's uncomfortable interaction with Mary. On the other hand, Clifford ridicules the push to depict interracial intimacy to begin with, by referring to it as 'pigmentation pioneering.'

Clifford was not alone in his abhorrence of Queens' Row and Mary. The *Los Angeles Times* review by Charles Champlin similarly describes *Riot* as a "violent, vivid little exploitation picture in an era when exploitation pictures have to try harder" and a film that "reeks with authenticity. And yet it doesn't."[103] *Riot*, according to Champlin has a "great too much of the mincing homosexuals in drag… unforgivably explicit violence" and lacked depth and thoughtfulness.

The most direct and explicit homophobia comes from the reviews of *Riot,* rather than the film itself, which lingers on Queens Row but does not denounce its inhabitants outright. Cully does not react to Mary's propositioning with violence or even words; while he is certainly not pleased to be propositioned, he does not (and the film does not give him time to) reject Mary outright. Cully leaves Mary's cell because his own survival demands it: he prioritizes his escape over the entire interaction in general. The camera lingers on the dancer and the leering faces of the men watching the dance. While the dance scene is framed as part of the descent into chaos caused by raisin-jack and the

[103]Charles Champlin, "MOVIE REVIEW," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File),* Jan 30, 1969. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/156121266?accountid=12861

inmates' inability to rise above their urges, there is also a bit of earnest affection shown between cis men and the queens. While the lack of more homophobic language in the film itself might be a result of Paramount's efforts to stay on the more profitable side of the MPAA ratings, there is no violence toward the 'queens' and no sexual assault shown in the entire film. While this film may present a 'meaner' prison, one where inmates hurt and maim each other, sometimes in vengeance, sometimes for no reason at all, it was not shown to be a place of sexual predation as it is in current-day prison media over four decades later. When Mary drops by Cully's cell to invite him to Queens' Row, Mary teases Cully's cellmate (an older black man uninvolved in either the escape plan or the debauchery) by pursing lips and poking him on the nose with his kissed finger. Cully's cellmate says, "If anybody, oooo, just anybody else, POW [punching his hand] but somehow I just can't bring myself to slug a queen."

The predation that occurs in *Riot* is violent but not sexual, and while the queerness that is displayed on-screen is certainly not celebrated (Queen's Row is framed as a vice, the party happening as a sign of decline), it does not in and of itself provoke violence. The scene with Cully's cellmate and Cully's reaction to Mary's proposition hints at a kind of etiquette around those designated as queens, at least from those characters that are positioned as worthwhile, civilized men. It is Surefoot, the most egregiously stereotypical character in *Riot*, who takes Mary's life without warning. All we ever learn about Surefoot is that he is "Indian," he can live in the desert, and he enjoys stabbing people. Therefore, his murder of Mary is in character in its needlessness. Surefoot is the epitome of the dangerous savage stereotype and his murder of Mary is used to draw a clear line between the strategic, patient, and rational masculinity of Red and Cully and

the chaotic and uncontrolled masculinity of Surefoot. Mary's murder is a shock that Red and Cully shake off (quickly) in their haste to escape but it is also a warning and a foreshadowing that Surefoot is unruly and ultimately without reason.

"Stereotyping," writes Homi Bhabha, "is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse."[104] Stereotypes endure not only because they are found to be useful but because they are fluid and polysemic enough to continue to be meaningful and useful in multiple contexts and periods. The figure of the Native American man has been utilized in relation to civilization and manliness even as the ideals of those notions for white American men have changed.[105] Native American men have been positioned as symbolic of a lost masculinity of a primitive past, representative of a freedom that is idealized and a savagery that should be repulsive.[106] Surefoot's murders and his death are utilized to position Red and Cully together, that is, as civilized, rational, masculine actors. In the process, Surefoot is, in the familiar taxidermic approach that Fatimah Rony has criticized in ethnographic documentary,[107] positioned as a figure of a wild past, in opposition to civilization and with no discernable future. Mary's death is the final warning that

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[104] Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 82.
[105] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917,* Women in Culture and Society Series (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1996), 236-238.
[106] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Yale Historical Publications Series (Hartford: Yale University Press, 1999), 94.
[107] Fatimah Tobing Rony, "Chapter 4 Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography," *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

Surefoot's violence cannot be controlled or predicted, a point which is brought to its dramatic climax when Surefoot kills Red.

The novelty of Queen's Row and of Mary's direct proposition of Cully seems to have distracted critics from any consideration of Red and Cully's relationship. Red's relationship with Cully is not utilized to facilitate making Red or any other white character "become who they need to be" as *Shawshank Rebellion* and other films in the 1990s do.[108] Cully and Red are not exactly bosom buddies but they relate to each other as equals. Their ability to work together and respect each other underlines the division between the incarcerated men and the officers. No inmate demeans Cully by calling him 'boy.' Racism is depicted in *Riot* in the hand of the people with authority and it is not a hindrance to Cully and Red working together.

Perhaps because Cully is not the group's leader per se nor a political activist, race, in general, does not seem to figure into critics' analysis, except for *The Chicago Tribune'*s sarcastic inclusion of Cully and Mary's interaction as pioneering. Race does, in fact, matter in the film because it is the very thing that puts Cully in a vulnerable position, subject to discrimination by guards and then situated amid Red and his troublemakers. Vincent Canby's review of *Riot* for *The New York Times* notes that Cully, Jim Brown's character, was originally written as a white man in Frank Elli's novel. While I cannot speak to why this change was made, the opening scene between Cully and the officer depends on the officer's whiteness and Cully's blackness. This scene immediately establishes the corrections officer as an overt racist and inclined to abuse his power in service to his bigotry. Unlike later films, racial tension does not appear to be a significant

[108] Peter Caster, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity in Twentieth Century U.S. Literature and Film*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 130.

factor amongst the prisoners in *Riot*. Instead, Cully's blackness is repeatedly highlighted in his interactions with corrections officers. When Cully walks the grounds, we are shown the exclusively white officers aiming their rifles at him, and the camera's perspective changes to show Cully in the middle of crosshairs with Bill Medley singing "100 Years" mournfully as the audio accompaniment.

What are we to make of a film where the very premise of arguing for better treatment of the incarcerated is a ruse? Where the officers are abusive and the men inside vengeful and unorganized? Where seemingly the only person who does not wind up shot, stabbed, beaten, or back in prison is a black man who protected officers from abuse and was not in on the escape plan initially? *Riot* is a violent and pessimistic film with contradictory meanings. Prison in *Riot* is a place from which anyone would want to escape and yet the punishment for attempting to do so is a brutal death. Men in *Riot* are generally lacking in self-control and compassion, yet Red and Cully work and strategize together to try to keep themselves safe and make their way to freedom. Cully's temperate use of force, his respect for life, and his detachment from mob mentality and his ability to judge the character of others win the day. While the outlook on masculinity in *Riot* is bleak, ultimately individuality and self-control are celebrated. Cully refuses to let liquor, drama, sex or vengeance ruin his shot at freedom and the post-script of the film assures us that Cully is still at large. While not quite a story aligned to the bootstrap myth, Cully's ability to look out for himself, his flexibility, his adaptability, and his impressive physical self-possession make him valuable to others and more likely to survive. It is Cully's brand of independent masculine individuality that is ultimately allowed back into society.

Cully, particularly in contrast to the unreasonable, counterproductive savage stereotype that is Surefoot, models a perseverant, self-reliant and self-controlled black masculinity.

My own interpretation notwithstanding, newspaper reviews of *Riot* from 1969 offer an assortment of takes and opinions. Returning to the *Chicago Tribune's* review, Clifford's skepticism and disregard for the importance of seeing black men in leading roles on screen contrasts sharply with the review of *Riot* in the *Chicago Daily Defender.* The *Defender* review focuses entirely on how the film utilized real settings and real inmates as well as the history of riots at the Arizona State prison itself. *The Defender* concludes with, "The inmates were quite cooperative and as a result were able to help produce one of the most exciting movies recently released from Hollywood."[109] A review for *The Sun* by R. H. Gardner takes exception to the brutality in the film, but not just of the inmates:

> Brutality, on the part of both inmates and guards, is, of course, the film's principle cliché. But it attains a new peak in the monstrousness of the warden's approach. An administrator who obviously believes that violence is the only answer to violence…[110]

Vincent Canby weighs in with, "*Riot* is not a great movie, but it is a respectable one." In regard to the potential for *Riot* to communicate prison life, Canby writes, "There is not a feeling of particular authenticity to the story, which is so much in a fictional tradition that its factualness is somehow neutralized." But Canby later does highlight *Riot*'s use of real

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[109] "Movie Actors Gain Realism with Prisoners in 'Riot,'" *Chicago Daily Defender* (Daily Edition) (1960-1973), Feb 05, 1969.http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/494395319?accountid=12861.

[110] R. H. Gardner, "Of Stage & Screen," *The Sun (1837-1992),* Mar 19, 1969. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/539170531?accountid=12861.

incarcerated men's faces in the background and "authentic sounding Okie accents" as one of the "good things" about it.[111]

Finally, Bob Geurink of *The Atlanta Constitution*, writes, "*Riot* has a lot of good things going for it, and the best is Jim Brown" but also ultimately states, "the worst fink, however, is the camera…. This movie is not like it is; it's like director Buzz Kulik wants it to be." The film's big drawback, according to Geurink, is what the camera chooses to dwell on. "Riot tends to dwell on sheer cruddiness in the name of realism." Geurink ends with, "However, as strictly a movie about what goes on behind bars, *Riot* is, for the most part, a success. Whether you'll like it may depend on whether your flipping stomach comes up for or against."[112]

Nearly every review of *Riot* has a good portion devoted to how authentic or fake the movie seems to be, and with good reason. Before its nationwide release in 1969, a seven-minute television featurette called, "The Convict Who Became an Actor" provided a behind the scenes look at the production of *Riot.* This short was about the coaching and performances of the inmate actors (who comprise all but eight of the roles). "The Convict" advertises the authenticity of *Riot,* announcing it as the first motion picture to be filmed entirely in an operating prison (and that it would be previewed at the very same prison).[113] Articles such as "Convicts Paid to Portray Selves in Jim Brown's New Prison Film" in the *Philadelphia Tribune* also preceded the film's release. The *Philadelphia Tribune* article touted *Riot* as "the first film in which prison inmates have been permitted

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[111] Vincent Canby, "Screen: Jim Brown Leads Prison Riot," *New York Times (1923-Current File),* Jan 16, 1969.
[112] Bob, Geurink, "'Riot' can Bother Stomach," *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984),* Mar 28, 1969.
[113] "Convicts Star in Short Depicting 'Riot' Production." *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993),* Dec 28, 1968.

to portray themselves" and were paid $400 to $3,000 to do so, allowing one inmate to hire a lawyer to successfully appeal his sentence of 33 years which was now reduced to 23 years.[114] "Real Life Killers are Co-Stars With Jim Brown in Prison Movie" in the *Philadelphia Tribune* also touted the use of inmates as actors and states that the director Buzz Kulik was now "an ardent defender of prison reform." The same article also quotes Kulik as stating that the authorities in the prison were not happy about the Queens' Row scene but "homosexuality is rampant in all prisons. That's why we insisted on including a sequence in the picture dealing with it openly."[115]

Riot's position as the first film to be entirely shot in an operating penal institution established the film's bid for authenticity before it even arrived in the theaters. While the genre is predisposed to claims to authenticity, *Riot* doubled down on these claims through production practices and its publicity. Whether the film was a success, for the critics, seems to hinge on whether the offensiveness of the brutal punishment of the informant prisoners and the 'rampant' homosexuality on Queens' Row outweighed the film's claims to authenticity.

Scared Straight!

The dynamic of an intimidating and agitated convict shouting in the face of a scared teenager, verbally assaulting the youth with ominous predictions of what their life in prison will be like, is a scene that has been repeated and parodied in popular culture for

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[114] "Convicts Paid to Portray Selves in Jim Brown's New Prison Film," *Philadelphia Tribune (1912-2001),* Dec 14, 1968. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/532509627?accountid=12861

[115] "Real Life Killers are Co-Stars with Jim Brown in Prison Movie." 1969.*Philadelphia Tribune (1912-2001)*, Jan 18, 23. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/532521044?accountid=12861.

decades.[116] The legibility of this scene is a testament to the enduring imprint that its originator, *Scared Straight!* (1978) the made-for-television film, has had on popular culture. The in-your-face approach (literally) of the men of the Juvenile Awareness Project at Rahway Prison[117] as captured by *Scared Straight!,* has made an indelible impact on the shape of prison representation and the public discussion around juvenile delinquency and prison more generally. Originally aired on KTLA Los Angles, November 2nd, 1978, the made-for-television film proved so popular that Signal Companies, Inc. decided to air it nationally during the week of March 5, 1979. *Scared Straight!* would go on to win an Oscar and an Emmy in 1979 and influence policy discussions for decades. *Scared Straight!* is also the forefather for contemporary programming like MSNBC's *Lockup,* my focus in Chapter 3. *Scared Straight!* also has a direct legacy that extends to current cable offerings. With an iteration each decade, each produced, like the original, by Arnold Shapiro, *Scared Straight!* has not only set a precedent for prison representation on television, it has cyclically reinforced this precedent with *Scared Straight! Another Story* (1980), *Scared Straight! 10 Years Later (*1987*), Scared Straight!20 Years Later* (1999*)* and its most recent iteration, *Beyond Scared Straight* (2011-2015) on the cable network A&E.

Given its popular and critical success, *Scared Straight!* has received little scholarly attention. The majority of academic writing about *Scared Straight!* is focused on the "scared straight" approach to juvenile delinquency and its ineffectiveness, not the film itself. In this section, I position *Scared Straight!* as a major contributor to the

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[116] *Beavis & Butt-Head* (Episode 42), *Saturday Night Live* (Season 33, Episode 11), *The Office* (Third Season, Episode 9) and *How I Met Your Mother* (Season 8, Episode 8), just to name a few.
[117] Now Eastern State Penitentiary

acceptance of prison, particularly male prisons, as places of predation on screen. Of the three films I discuss, *Scared Straight!* is by far the most popular and concretely impactful. This section focuses on the film, as a text, and as a product, to illuminate how *Scared Straight!* was able to achieve such immense success and set precedents which assist in explaining the shape and character of contemporary prison television. If *Riot* was the tipping point toward a more predatory prison, *Scared Straight!*, nine years later, focuses in on sexual predation as not only a fact of prison life but one that can be used as a deterrent.

Access has always been an issue for prison filmmakers. Going back to Barnsdale, any filmmaker wanting to film in an active penitentiary faces the challenge of accessing a space that is severely restricted. During the 1970s the Supreme Court solidified the control of prison administrators over media access to their facilities. Not only would *Scared Straight!* never have been filmed without the cooperation of prison administrators, the following decisions made the possibility for any competing documentation of prison life and prison space unlikely.

Media Access

The Supreme Court was and is a means by which incarcerated persons can seek redress for grievances for infringement upon their constitutional rights, but those rights are not considered untouchable in prison. The Court has established in a multitude of cases that when considering the rights of incarcerated persons, the institutional goals of the prison must be balanced against the constitutional rights of incarcerated individuals. For example, *Lee v. Washington* (1968) affirmed that racial segregation was as

unconstitutional inside prisons as it was outside, except in the service of "the necessities of prison security and discipline." Where individual, constitutionally protected rights and institutional goals appear to conflict, the Supreme Court has been very reticent to interfere, suggest or otherwise guide institutional policy.

The Supreme Court decided in *Pell v. Procunier* (1974) that a California prison's regulation that prohibited face-to-face interviews between journalists and individual inmates did not violate the inmate's freedom of speech since they had access to other means of communication, nor the journalists' freedom of the press since the press had access to the same information sources as the general public. Both dissents in *Pell v. Procunier* centered on the idea that an absolute ban on prison-press interviews unduly and broadly prevented the press from informing the public about their own government. The companion case to *Pell, Saxbe v. Washington Post* centered on a similar regulation by the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the two cases were consolidated and decided on together. These decisions overturned lower courts' decisions that had declared blanket bans on press interviews unconstitutional, specifically in violation of the freedom of the press. *Pell* and *Saxbe* continued the court's pattern of deferring to what the prison institution framed as policy necessary to its operation. *Pell* set a precedent that would be called upon again in one more key case during the 1970s, *Houchins v. KQED* (1978).

Following the suicide of an incarcerated man at Alameda County Jail, KQED, a California educational television station, and the local branch of the NAACP sought access to the jail to investigate potentially dangerous conditions and practices. The Sheriff instituted regular public tours of the jail that the press could participate in but did not allow cameras or recording equipment. A federal court, in 1975, issued an order

requiring Sheriff Houchins to allow KQED to enter the jail and investigate conditions, using television cameras and tape recorders. The Supreme Court later ruled that the federal court had erred in ordering the Sheriff to give journalists more extensive access to the prison facility than the general public. Chief Justice Burger cited *Pell* and *Saxbe* and declared that,

> The news media have no constitutional right of access to the county jail, over and above that of other persons, to interview inmates and make sound recordings, films, and photographs for publication and broadcasting by newspapers, radio, and television.[118]

Justice Stewart decided with the majority but wrote a concurring judgment and argued that KQED should have been allowed more limited injunctive relief,

> A person touring Santa Rita jail can grasp its reality with his own eyes and ears. But if a television reporter is to convey the jail's sights and sounds to those who cannot personally visit the place, he must use cameras and sound equipment. In short, terms of access that are reasonably imposed on individual members of the public may, if they impede effective reporting without sufficient justification, be unreasonable as applied to journalists who are there to convey to the general public what the visitors see.[119]

Justice Stewart's opinion distinguished between print and televisual reporting and did not assume that one could substitute for the other. Televisual reporting required technology and was recognized as not only communicating information differently but containing different information. Stewart's opinion provides us with some recognition of the notion that visual and audible recording communicates a version of prison reality for which the written word cannot substitute. The dissent, written by Justice Stevens, argued (similarly to the dissent in *Pell v. Procunier*) that the press should have some right to information at

[118] Houchins v KQED, Inc., 438 U.S. 1 (1978), 2.
[119] Houchins v KQED, 17.

public institutions, otherwise "the process of self-governance contemplated by the Framers would be stripped of its substance."[120]

While the concurring judgment and the dissent provide evidence that televisual reporting *could* be defended as distinct from written journalism and journalists *could* potentially be framed as having a right to access beyond the general public's, the court has deferred to prison administrations in regards to media access policies and ultimately refused to contemplate the press as an entity separate from the general public.

The media access decisions that the Supreme Court made during the 70s were part of a response to the use of prison as a symbol of oppression, as a focal point. The prison administrations' initial denial of media access (causing these cases to go to the Supreme Court) must be contextualized by the increased attention to and public dissatisfaction with the status quo of incarceration in the United States during this period. The denial of access itself is an indicator of the prison administration's desire for control of the public image of prison and awareness that such an image could be used in multiple ways, including as fuel for the prison rights and abolitionist movements. The ability of prison administrators to deny media access to prison beyond what the general public already had and to form their own policies in accordance to local contexts assisted in giving them the ability to gain back some control over the meaning of prison and to limit prisoners' ability to document and communicate their conditions and grievances to the outside. While activists rallied around prisons as a symbol of oppression, corrections officers began to rally to protect themselves and their occupation.

[120] Houchins v KQED, 32.

Physical assault on officers increased after the Soledad Brothers, as prisoner groups not only protested the misuse, abuse and manipulation they accused corrections officers of, but retaliated with violence.[121] As violence increased so did the negative portrayals of corrections officers, and guards and prison administrators became defensive, perceiving themselves as under attack both inside and outside prison walls.[122] The California Correctional Officers Association (CCOA) transformed from a social club with no real bargaining power into a much more radical and pro-active group during the 1970s. In 1971 the CCOA demanded updated safety protocols for officers and threatened to file a complaint with the State Department of Industrial Relations.[123] In 1971, as part of an investigation into the violence at San Quentin, CCOA recommended the creation of a supermax prison to contain revolutionary prisoners. In 1976 CCOA threatened to organize a strike in direct reaction to the potential formation of a Prisoners Union.[124]

The CCOA would continue to grow in numbers and lobbying power, taking a defensive stance regarding the media portrayal of officers.[125] The perception that media mostly portrayed officers as what Ray Surette calls the "smug hack" stereotype, a depiction of corrections officers as "caricatures of brutality, incompetence, low intelligence and indifferent to human suffering" made officers particularly critical and

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[121] According to the "Joint Legislative Committee on Prison Construction and Operations, *Violence at Folsom Prison: Causes, Possible Solutions*" (Sacramento, 1985), A-12.
[122] John Irwin, Prisons in Turmoil (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 133.
[123] Joshua Page, "The Radicalization of the California Correctional Officers Association," *The Toughest Beat: Politics, Punishment, and the Prison Officers Union in California,* Studies in Crime and Public Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) Kindle Location 722.
[124] Joshua Page, *The Toughest Beat*, Kindle Location 760.
[125] The California Correctional Officers Association (CCOA) is now the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) and is one of the most active labor unions in California.

wary of their portrayal on film and television.[126] The corrections officers in *Riot* fit the smug hack stereotype well, given their blatant racism and the unblinking manner they cut down nearly all the escapees. In the intervening time between *Riot* (1969) and *Scared Straight!* (1978), corrections became a subject of public scrutiny (I discuss the fallout after Attica in Chapter 2) and control of media access to prisons, particularly with visual recording devices, was definitively given to prison administrators. *Scared Straight!* is not coincidentally the product of a cooperation between filmmakers and prison administrators, it would never have existed without it.

Getting *Scared Straight!*

In the beginning of *Scared Straight!,* (before we meet the teens who disregard the law or the convicts who are going to try to scare them onto the straight and narrow) viewers are warned about the explicit language to which they will soon be exposed. Before the appearance of the on-screen host, Peter Falk, the viewer is shown a yellow text warning on a black screen that Falk voices: "This program contains explicit and coarse street language. It is not intended for children's viewing. Parental guidance is advised."

Viewers then see the teenagers who are the subjects of *Scared Straight!* walk to the prison doors. The teens are filmed walking past the camera, smiling, and waving with a bit of bravado as they stream towards Rahway Prison. This is followed by a cut to the Lifers, who make their way through the prison to meet with the teens. The contrast is clear, between teen arrogance and hardened, sober convicts. In the first few minutes of

[126] Ray Surette, Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities, and Policies, 5th Ed. (Cengage Learning, 2011), 171.

Scared Straight!, Falk looks directly into the camera and asks the public to "Imagine yourself, the innocent victim of one of these youngsters." Falk proclaims, "Today's prisons are filled with yesterday's juvenile delinquents," clearly framing the intervention that is about to happen as preventative. The teens are then asked, by an unseen interviewer, "How do you feel about your victims?" The teens, filmed against several different backdrops (chain link fence, in front of a baseball field, in a run-down parking lot) and from varying perspectives respond, "I don't really care," with a smile.

The teens are first taken on a brief tour of the prison, shown a cell, and then taken to a meeting room. While touring the facility, before the teens are brought to the discussion room, an incarcerated man is shown pointing and commenting out loud, "That's a sweet motherfucker right there" as the teens pass. Peter Falk (through off-screen narration) notes, "prisoners in solitary verbally molest the young boys with homosexual taunts." After the tour is over, the teens enter a large room and sit on a bench in a row facing a group of Lifers, as individual men stand up to talk or yell, at them. The Lifers are labeled (with superimposed text) not with names but rather with their conviction – their sentence and the crime for which they were sentenced. The first topic is sexual desire, brought up by a white Lifer who is doing time for murder. Referring to the three girls in the group of teens, the Lifer proclaims, "I've been in here ten years and I'm gonna die in this stinking joint and if they wanted to give me these three bitches right here, I would leap over them like a kangaroo just to get to one pretty, young, fat fuck like you" (leaning in to speak with a blond young white man). This is quickly followed by a story about what would happen to one of the young men in prison, beginning with their rape. The next Lifer, a black man with sunglasses doing time for armed robbery, takes the teens'

shoes and discusses the consequences of theft. The speakers switch (with the teens' shoes still in pile) to a different white Lifer, doing time for murder. The Lifer tells a blond teen boy that he will take his blue eye out and squish it. He tells the teens that part of being in prison is thinking about killing and being killed daily. Again, the speakers switch, to a black Lifer, wearing a knit cap and sunglasses, doing a life sentence for murder, who starts by taking the shoes of two of the boys and throwing them off-screen, "go home barefoot, faggot." The same Lifer continues, "It's pretty bad what happens to young boys when they come to prison, ain't it? Ain't it!? You think that's bad? This is even badder. Girls beaten and raped. 18 years old, she'd been molested 11 times by other women in the prison. Don't you want to be like her?" The camera lingers on a blond young woman during this brief speech. In general, the camera tends to rest on the expressions and reactions of the teens but this is the first time (thirty minutes in) that the girls of the group are addressed directly. The vast majority of *Scared Straight!* is addressed to the boys of the group.

The Lifers then state their identification numbers and their sentences. At this point, the talk takes a turn toward the positive, "Go to school! Get that education!... A gun ain't going to tear that thirty-foot wall down out there, a pipe is not going to tear that 30ft wall down out there, but an education just may tear that motherfucker down." Three more Lifers finish out the discussion, returning to warning the teens that they are looking at their future, that they may be owned in prison and used sexually and finishing with a young black Lifer who concludes with, “Why do you think I’m standing up here putting everything into this here? Do you know why? It’s because if somebody would have done this to me, I wouldn’t be here. Ya’ll have the best opportunity in the world… we telling

you what it is and you'd got to be a goddam fool not take it. You'd have to be a fucking fool not to take it." A montage of teen faces is shown before the screen fades to an exterior shot of the prison itself. *Scared Straight!* ends with post-prison interviews of the teens and a follow up three months later in which Peter Falk labels all but one teen still "straight."

The audible spectacle of 'coarse language' is a clear part of the draw of *Scared Straight!* The response to the film accepted the language as real, authentic, and necessary. In an article from March 8, 1979 (the same week that *Scared Straight!* is nationally broadcast), Shapiro is quoted, "Surprisingly, the unusually harsh language in the program did not evoke a hailstorm of complaints at the station where it was first shown. "I was amazed," Shapiro admits, "A lot of parents said, 'Could you air it earlier next time, so the kids can watch?'"[127]

Only a few years after George Carlin first listed the "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television" (1972), the men in *Scared Straight!* use a number of Carlin's words and describe sexual assault and brutalization, mostly aimed at young me, all without a public outcry. The positive response to *Scared Straight!'s* broadcast on KTLA was remarkable. Playing at 10 p.m. (so within the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. time window that broadcasters were allowed to show 'indecent' material), KTLA reported that 13 hours after showing the documentary it had received 1,016 calls in regards to *Scared Straight!* with only 57 negative; *Scared Straight!* beat all its time slot competitors handily.[128] Even reviews of *Scared Straight! 20 Years Later*, hosted by Danny Glover, continued to

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[127] Tom Shales, "SCARED STRAIGHT! AN Ex-Con Takes Teen-Agers And TV Viewers Behind A Few Forbidding Bars" *The Washington Post* March 8, 1979, LexisNexis accessed October 4, 2014.
[128] "Radio-Television: Big Numbers for 'Scared Straight!'" *Variety* (Archive: 1905-2000), November 8, 1978, 42, ProQuest accessed October 5, 2014.

mention that the program "contains every profanity in the book, including the dreaded f-word."[129] One reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "the language and manner of the convicts is crude and abrasive, but their motives and effectiveness are laudable. The mixture is exciting. Simply put, 'Scared Straight' is extraordinary, one of the most unusual and powerful television programs ever broadcast."[130] A *New York Times* reviewer called the confrontation between teens and convicts "searing," "fascinating" and notes that censoring would have been impossible and reduced the soundtrack "to a series of blips."[131]

When it initially began in 1976, the Juvenile Awareness Project did not emphasize the use of intimidation and shock tactics. According to an interview of Frank Bindhammer (one of the Lifers) conducted by James Finckenauer (a Criminology Professor at Rutgers University), the program turned from a big-brother conversational approach to shock tactics after Lifers realized that one juvenile had visited the program four times because he thought the incarcerated men were cool.[132] Frustrated with the persistence of the "Hollywood stereotype" of prisoners as cool, the inmates changed their approach, moving to the model that was shown, and heard, in *Scared Straight!* The confrontational approach and 'street' language were a direct attempt to respond to a perception of incarceration as glamorous. This is just one example of how *Scared Straight!* was a response to the discourse about prisons and the incarcerated at the time.

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[129] Rob Owen, "'Scared Straight!' Again- TV Producer Returns To Prison for 20th Anniversary of Documentary," [Sooner Edition] *Pittsburgh Post – Gazette*, April 14, 1999, Print, E–5.
[130] Margulies Lee, "TELEVISION REVIEW," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File): November 2, 1978, ProQuest Accessed October 5, 2014.
[131] John J. O'Connor, "TV:'Scared Straight,' Documentary." *New York Times* (1923-Current file): 1, March 8, 1979, ProQuest Accessed October 5, 2014.
[132] Patricia W. Gavin and James O. Finckenauer, *Scared Straight: The Panacea Problem Revisited,* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 1999), 26.

Fear of the glamorization of incarceration produced a description of prison as a brutal and deadly place of pain and unending violence.

While we do not have records of what kinds of interactions occurred between filmmakers and prison staff, *Scared Straight!* would never have been made without the administrators' approval because allowing cameras into prison was a policy decision That the Supreme Court left to administrators. In light of that dynamic, it follows that we should turn a critical eye toward how corrections and those incarcerated are depicted. *Scared Straight!* does not dwell on the job of corrections or the officers themselves, but it does show corrections officers assisting in the deterrence of juvenile crime. The incarcerated men play the part of intimidating monsters and the officers are neutral and for most the film, absent custodians. *Scared Straight!* positioned officers as helpful and the Lifers and the prison itself as lost causes. By affording individual histories and identities only to the teens (not even naming the Lifers) and keeping the officers' screen time to a minimum, the film makes it appear that the prison is dominated and even run by the incarcerated. Given how the Lifers describe their life in Rahway, prison is not just a horrible place in *Scared Straight!* it is also a place that is horrible because of the men in it.

Reviewing Race & *Scared Straight!*

While the critical response to *Scared Straight!* was overwhelmingly positive, a few writers were critical of its approach to children. Stephen Randolph, writing for *The Baltimore Afro-American*, described *Scared Straight!* as barbaric and described the

Rahway approach as allowing "the Rahway inmates a chance to release their anger and revenge on the young adults for their own violations of the laws of society."[133]

Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis both wrote reviews of *Scared Straight!* for the *New York Amsterdam News* a few months apart from one another. Dee and Davis were critical of *Scared Straight!*, finding the idea of scaring kids away from prison compelling and also an insufficient approach to the problem of crime itself. Davis writes,

> What we need is a way to scare this country, to scream, and threaten, and bully our own government, until something is done about what turns kids into criminals in the first place: inferior education, unfit and indecent housing and most of all unemployment.[134]

Dee's critique is more direct but still centered on the idea that the focus of the effort to avert crime was misplaced. "They trying to scare the hell straight out of the wrong group of people. Get those children out of there!" Ruby Dee goes on to discuss the dissonance between the amount of damage done by white-collar crime and the focus of anti-crime initiatives on petty theft. She concludes by saying,

> If anyone really believes the Rahway program can help stop crime, why not send a group of doctors, lawyers, government administrators, Wall Street executives, mafiosos, and most of all, politicians into Rahway prison for a session with lifers. Somebody **ought** to scare the hell out of them! $44 billion worth![135]

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[133] Stephen Randolph, "TV Production's 'Barbaric Approach,'" *Afro-American (1893-1988),* Mar 24, 1979. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/532403557?accountid=12861.

[134] Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis (guest columnist) "'Scared Straight', Moving and Disturbing show." *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993),* Mar 24, 1979. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/226488669?accountid=12861.

[135] Ruby Dee, ""All Tore Up" Watching Scared Straight TV Special." *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993),* Oct 06, 1979. http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/docview/226396326?accountid=12861.

Mainstream reviews gushed that *Scared Straight* was extraordinary, fascinating, and searing and the few negative reviews of *Scared Straight!* focused on the absurdity of scaring children as an answer or solution to crime. No review took up the conditions of the prison described in *Scared Straight!* as an issue. Race was also not a topic in these reviews, perhaps because *Scared Straight!* itself deftly navigated around it. The absence of a discussion is striking given *Scared Straight!* aired during a period in which prison activism bluntly addressed prison as a tool of racial oppression. Two years after the mini-series *Roots* (1977) was a huge success and Richard Pryor collected three consecutive Grammy Awards for comedic recordings that directly addressed race we might wonder, how does *Scared Straight!* not mention or even motion toward race?

In his testimony before the Oversight Committee, Dr. Jerome Miller did discuss race. Miller stated (addressing the Juvenile Awareness Program, not *Scared Straight!):*

> One of the things that comes through very clearly is that a large portion of those kids going to that program…are white middle-class kids. I would guess that the majority of threatening comments made are made by black inmates that fulfill certain scary stereotypes for white, middle-class kids.[136]

The depictions of the incarcerated in *Scared Straight!* do reflect an investment in the association of blackness with criminality and stereotypes of black men in particular as threatening and potentially violent individuals. There is however a difference between who is going through the Juvenile Awareness Program on an average day and who went through it for Arnold Shapiro's production. Shapiro states in his testimony that he deliberately asked the counselors with whom he was working for a diverse group of teens, "I did not want all black or all whites, all girls or all boys, all hardcore or all

[136] U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Education and Labor, *Oversight on Scared Straight*, (96th Congress, 1st sess., 1979), 18.

softcore offenders."[137] The group that we see on *Scared Straight!* is much more racially mixed than the average, with nearly half being young men of color. The Lifers who address the teens are also about half white and half black and they appear in a racially alternating pattern. Another pattern becomes apparent as well – the white Lifers tend to yell at white teens. The black Lifers yell at everybody. This means that those face-to-face confrontations that *Scared Straight!* is so famous for, have more black men yelling at teens than white men. There are also no scenes of white men yelling in the faces of black teens about rape, which is perhaps a lot more likely to recall racial oppression and the history of slavery in the United States generally than vice versa. Thus, Miller's statement about the Juvenile Awareness Project holds true for *Scared Straight!* there is an emphasis, on black inmates (even though at this time the prison system population is still predominantly white).[138] If we attend only to demographics then the racial dynamics within *Scared Straight!* remain obscured by a seemingly progressive impression of a group of racially diverse convicts working together to address juvenile delinquency. *Scared Straight!* subtly reinforced an already existing stereotype of black men as aggressive, uncontrolled criminality, just not exclusively.

The reception of *Scared Straight!* by the press was remarkably positive but, as we saw in Dee and Davis' reviews, not universal. Monona Wali's UCLA thesis film, *Grey Area* (1982) offers a filmic critique of *Scared Straight!'s* approach. The very first scene of *Grey Area* mimics the scene of group confrontation between juvenile delinquents and the men identified as convicts in *Scared Straight.* A prisoner grabs a boy

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[137] United States Congress, *Oversight Hearing on Scared Straight*, 43.
[138] Patrick A. Langan, *Race of Prisoners Admitted to State and Federal Institutions, 1926-1986,* NCJ-125618, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 1991, https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/125618.pdf.

and tells him that men inside like young boys like him. Moving one step further than *Scared Straight*, this prisoner winds up on top of the boy, with a knee to his chest, restraining his hands and asking him if he is a boy or a girl. A second prisoner forces a different boy to drop his pants. The third man to speak to the children, Cecile, marks the turning point in the scene. He asks the children, "How many white folks you see in here?" When one of the children answers, "3 honkeys," Cecile explains that this is because "the prisoners here are political prisoners. Our only crime has been to be born into this fuckin' system. Our only remaining crime is that we have not yet destroyed it." As the very first moments of *Grey Area* mimic and then even exaggerate the sexualized fear-mongering for which *Scared Straight!* is famous, Cecile's departure from the scare tactics takes the rhetoric of personal responsibility that permeates *Scared Straight!* and turns it on its head. Instead of proposing that individual will power and discipline can keep the youths out of prison, Cecile pleads with them, grabbing their hands, almost begging them to disrupt the established political structure. In a later scene between the filmmaker Yvonne and Cecile, Yvonne asks Cecil what he thinks is the best way to keep children out of jail. Cecile replies, "Tear down the jails." *Grey Area* offers a stark contrast to *Scared Straight!* and a response that critiques the concept of deterrence as a viable goal.

Scared Straight! positioned violence, specifically male sexual violence, as the foregone conclusion of prison, the fact upon which deterrence could be based. The prison described in *Scared Straight!* is in no way, shape or fashion rehabilitative; rather, it is pure punishment and the punishment most often cited is not the one given by the state but rather the assault by other incarcerated men. The film accepts this fact – the point of *Scared Straight!* is not to better prison conditions or make anyone aware of the

fact that sexual assault was rampant in prisons. Ultimately, *Scared Straight!* is about fear-based deterrence and watching the teens' reactions, their change in affect from the beginning of the film. The film takes for granted the conditions it exploits for the purported purpose of 'straightening out' the teens. *Scared Straight!* neatly avoids association with prison reform (and certainly prison abolition) activists by appearing racially neutral. It not only posits that horrible prison conditions could be a deterrent but also reinforces the idea that juvenile delinquency is a rising, national problem, which in turn implies that prisons themselves will continue to be necessary.

Using 'raw' language, *Scared Straight!* offered a new experience, framed as progressive without really centering on the exposure of prison space itself (after all, the vast majority of *Scared Straight!* is a group of men yelling at a group of teens in a strangely painted room). *Scared Straight!* aired during a period of heightened competition for networks. The established networks were beginning to feel the pressure of competition, facing the potential challenge posed by cable networks that could produce and air their own films (unbound by the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules (Fin-Syn) adopted in 1970).[139] *Scared Straight!* managed to successfully push the envelope just as the television industry began to experience heightened programming competition.[140] Framed as informative entertainment, *Scared Straight!* offered a comeuppance directed at arrogant teens, justified in the film text by the program's

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[139] Jennifer Holt, *Empires of Entertainment: Media Industries and the Politics of Deregulation, 1980 -1996* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2011), 33.
[140] William Uricchio, "Contextualizing the Broadcast Era: Nation, Commerce, and Constraint The End of Television? Its Impact on the World (So Far)" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 625, (Sep., 2009), 70.

success in changing young people's lives. In doing so, *Scared Straight!* acclimated the American public to the normalization of sexual assault in prison.

Scared Straight! as Public Service

Scared Straight! sparked so much public interest and discussion that the subcommittee on human resources for the Congressional Committee on Education and Labor held a hearing on *Scared Straight!* and the Juvenile Awareness Project on June 4, 1979. The testimony from this hearing highlights the entanglement between the Juvenile Awareness Project and the film, particularly with regard to how the recidivism statistics for the Project quoted in the film were a large part of the film's success.
Shapiro's testimony, as well as the testimony of John T. Reynolds (Executive Vice President of Golden West Television, employer of Arnold Shapiro), draw on a state-provided study to imply that the state of New Jersey had proved the methods shown in *Scared Straight!* worked and approved of their continuation. Jerome G. Miller, president of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, the first to testify, describes the Juvenile Awareness Project as an obscure project that was "hyped" to the level of "national panacea" by the film.[141] He also notes that if it were not for the exaggerated success claims made in *Scared Straight!*, the film itself would not have received such an enthusiastic reception. Miller goes on to question the veracity of the statistics (90% success rate) quoted in the film.

After his statement, Miller is asked by a member of the subcommittee, Mr. Kildee, "Would you characterize the film *Scared Straight!* as a hoax?" Dr. Miller

[141] United States Congress, *Oversight Hearing on Scared Straight*, 3.

answers: “No… it is a very powerful documentary. I think the conclusions that are drawn from the promotional literature as it is developed is erroneous. This is not a panacea…”. Mr. Kildee, “So for the record you would be reluctant to use the word “hoax”; you would call it erroneous? Mr. Miller replies, “I would say that the conclusions drawn by the public having seen the film are erroneous and it leads to erroneous conclusions.”[142] Miller, and indeed all those testifying, had to parse the Juvenile Awareness Program, the film *Scared Straight!,* the intentions of those who have produced both, and then how the public and other prison administrations have interpreted both. Here we see a question about actual intention: Miller will not call *Scared Straight!* a hoax since doing so would imply that those involved with the production of *Scared Straight!* deliberately intended to misrepresent the program and its outcomes. But his earlier statements, which invited the question from Mr. Kildee, clearly question *Scared Straight!* as a documentary. Miller skirts the direct accusation, perhaps also because situated in the middle of these debates is the Lifer's themselves, who, rather than advocating for themselves (like other, more troublesome inmates in the 70s), are volunteering to do what they feel they can to help teens. The film itself paints the Lifers as extremely well-intentioned: “The lifers are through taking lives, they’re now saving them. In a unique crime prevention program created and run by the convicts.”

During Shapiro's testimony, it becomes clear that he had only read a 15-page version of a much longer study by New Jersey's Department Of Corrections which ultimately recommended that "scare tactics be eliminated from the program." Given the criticism of the 'success' statistics in *Scared Straight!* (both in the 1970s and in the

[142] Ibid, 18.

research since), it may seem that the Congressional Committee's hearing offers little insight into the continued popularity of *Scared Straight!*, however, in the latter part of the hearing *Scared Straight's* position as a broadcast documentary is itself put in the spotlight in a way that elucidates how the film and its progeny have been framed as valuable and of service.

Reynolds states,

> As broadcasters we have a responsibility to communicate to the world some of the things that go in the world. There is such a hue and cry today by many knowledgeable people about the lack of importance in television programming; the bad, if you will, that is seen so many times on television. Indeed, there is a lot of bad but we also feel there are many hours and many moments of beauty and intellectual stimulation in television. We decided to make this product and to do this film and put it on the air after much thought because we thought it was an important message.[143]

Reynolds then quotes a letter he received from someone who works at the FCC calling it "good television." Continuing to quote this letter, Reynolds says:

> Right or wrong, it is the occasional appearance of adventuresome and bold artists who provide an oasis of originality in the Newton Minnow's wasteland." We feel while controversial we have at least brought an oasis with this program, a program of importance that people will discuss and debate and the results can only be good for the use of America.[144]

Reynold's reference to public service is immediately picked up on by subcommittee member Mr. Stack: "Are you suggesting, Mr. Reynolds, that this is a public service? You are not a nonprofit corporation, are you?" to which Reynolds replies:

> No, sir. When we refer to a public service film that is a descriptive phrase that defines a program that is designed to serve the public as against designed to entertain or amuse. We don't feel that there is anything wrong in making a profit

[143] Ibid, 67.
[144] Ibid, 67.

> out of public service films because we will then make more public service films.[145]

The reference to Newton Minow's wasteland made in the letter that Reynolds cites ties this discussion of *Scared Straight!* to earlier discussions of television's responsibility to serve the public. Minow's first speech as chairman of the FCC is known for labeling television a 'vast wasteland' but the speech was actually entitled, "Television and the Public Interest" (1961). Minow emphasized the duty to provide programming in the public interest in return for allowing broadcasters to make a profit off of public property. This was a direct attack on the commercialization of television; Minow was critical of the inadequate educational television available. Reynolds positions *Scared Straight!* as part of an effort to provide television programming in the public interest, to argue that this is still possible in a commercial television industry. In other words, in an era of increased programming competition, Reynolds draws on the contempt for the televisual landscape no longer partly shaped by public service requirements to define *Scared Straight!* as service, as informative, as educational. The categorization of *Scared Straight!* as a documentary (which Dr. Miller tries to question in his testimony) also emphasized its content as authoritative and authentic.

The first program broadcast in many markets to use the word 'fuck,' to describe anal rape, to show grown men screaming at teenagers is framed here as instructive and in the service of the public good.[146] *Scared Straight's* use of real teens, real incarcerated

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[145] Ibid, 67.

[146] Indeed, when Golden West Television approached Signal Cos. (a conglomerate that held a 49% interest in Golden West) for the financial backing to make *Scared Straight!*, Signal agreed to underwrite the costs as a public service. "Programing: Prison Program Gets the Ratings for KTLA, Will Air on Other Outlets." *Broadcasting* (Archive: 1957-1993) Nov 13 1978: 62-3, ProQuest Accessed October 5, 2014.

men, in a real, operational prison space served to buttress its claim to display an authentic process – the 'straightening out' of the teens. The media access decisions in the early part of the decade ensured little competition would be likely to surface that would contravene any of *Scared Straight's* depiction of prison or its narratives. In a political climate where corrections, as a profession, was defensive, the focus was on the fate and effect on the teens – not the men incarcerated and not the corrections officers or even the prison itself. The focus on teens created a seemingly neutral subject in a highly politicized space.

Penitentiary

If *Riot* opened the door to a predacious prison, *Penitentiary* (1979) broke that door off its hinges. Ten years after *Riot,* Jama Fanaka's *Penitentiary* was shot in seven weeks primarily at the Lincoln Heights jail and became the most popular independent film of 1980. Funded through a mix of grants and donations, *Penitentiary* cost $600,000 to make and went on to gross $32 million worldwide.[147]

Penitentiary begins with Martel "Too Sweet" Gordone, played by Leon Isaac Kennedy, catching a ride in a red van from a woman named Linda who we very quickly learn is a prostitute. Linda responds to a call on her CB Radio with "Beaver 7 here Charlie 1" and is directed to her next customers' location. Linda's customers are unhappy, white bikers. They insult Linda and call Martel the 'n' word. Linda snaps back at them and when Martel comes to her defense by hitting one of the men, the scene ends with a blow to the head that knocks him out. *Penitentiary* wastes no time on Martel's arrest or

[147] Tammy Sims, "Struggles of Black Film Maker Jamaa Fanaka," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)* 28 July 1988.

trial; the next time we see our protagonist, he is in prison. The prison in *Penitentiary* is not introduced with a rundown of prison procedure (as is commonplace in the genre) but rather the wide-eyed face of a young black man who has a smoking cigarette stuck in his ear as he walks past a row of cells.

The next scene focuses on a new inmate (not Martel) being tricked by other inmates to show them his rear. Six months later (as an intertitle) we see Too Sweet unceremoniously bring a bedroll into a cell and then walk the prison yard. The yard is a hub of activity: older men are playing basketball, people are talking, and one inmate named Sweet Pea has styled prison-issue clothing into a dress skirt and crop top, dances vigorously while blowing a kiss at the camera. A darkly lit cell soon replaces the cheery atmosphere of the yard. Too Sweet's new cellmate, Half Dead, oils himself up and tells Too Sweet about the upcoming boxing tournament. Too Sweet's cellmate also emphasizes the need to "take care of yourself in here… if you don't handle the fools they handle you." Half Dead's leer is interrupted by Eugene (the new, naïve inmate that was part of our introduction to the penitentiary) being beaten by his cellmate for peeing while standing up. Eugene's fate foreshadows the potential future of Too Sweet; as the next scene is a conversation amongst a group of inmates, including Half-Dead about 'breaking in' Too Sweet. Sexual predation and sexual assault are the main engines of drama in *Penitentiary,* but the villainous assailants are exaggerated to the point of caricature so that the film departs from the prison genre's commitment to gritty realism and finds itself somewhat closer to camp than perhaps any other prison film before it. Scenes of assault are not only dismal depictions of predation. They are executed in a montage of absurd facial expressions, unlikely positions, and colloquial quips. When Too Sweet successfully

fights off Half-Dead, choking him with the pipe with whichHalf-Dead tried to beat him, the scene ends with Too Sweet triumphantly eating Half-Dead's Mr.Goodbar candy.

While the predation that characterizes the drama of *Penitentiary* is an intra-inmate affair, the film still makes clear criticisms of corrections. The prison is depicted as a world where inmates have to fight amongst themselves for their lives and their dignity, while the administration ignores them. The head guard and his wealthy brother-in-law (who comes to the prison to scout for boxing talent) are both white. But the corrections force overall is mixed and seldom seen. The guards themselves are not predators; indeed, reviews of *Penitentiary* praise the film for not making the head guard a "caricatured honkey."[148] But the guards certainly never seem to actively protect anyone or intervene until after the damage has already been done.

No guard interferes with the abuse of the young man who appears at the beginning of the film. When this young man meets Too Sweet in the yard, he tells him he is Jess's property, to which Too Sweet replies, "Don't nobody have to be nobody's property." Too Sweet, in an intimate moment, takes the other man's hand and forms it into a fist. This leads to a confrontation between Jess and Too Sweet, which lands both of them two weeks in solitary and a meeting with the head corrections officer who promises them an 'ass whooping' if they fight anymore outside of the rink. Too Sweet decides to enter the boxing competition after learning that Eugene (formerly known as Jess's property) had begun training to fight. Later the stakes are raised when the Lieutenant states that the winner of the tournament will be given a night for a 'connubial' (conjugal) visit.

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[148] Arthur Knight, "*Penitentiary," Hollywood Reporter,* December 21, 1979.

Comedic moments are utilized to mock recognizable film conventions throughout *Penitentiary.* For example, the training montage offers the usual scenes of men hitting punching bags, sparring and hitting against pads but there are also a few seconds of a man who just cannot figure out how to jump rope. Before Eugene's win (of his first fight) is official, the announcer thanks the ladies from the nearby institution for visiting and Sweet Pea jumps up (with a back row of other femininely styled inmates) to loudly say thank you in response. *Penitentiary* repeatedly uses these queer characters to comedic effect during the boxing matches. While marginal and undeveloped, queer characters in *Penitentiary* are depicted as a consistent part of prison life. Few L.A. Rebellion artists had any queer storylines or characters in their work,[149] so while these characters may be minor and used for laughs they do deserve some recognition as a depiction of queerness becoming more visible on-screen and more normative in prisons on screen in particular. In this case, these characters are never co-opted into some kind of specific moral repudiation of homosexuality.

When Too Sweet wins the boxing competition he finds himself rewarded with a 'connubial' visit from Linda, whom he learns was responsible for stabbing the biker that he was convicted of murdering. When a sober Too Sweet walks back to his cell, Jess's gang tries to kill him but Eugene intervenes and takes a stab to the heart instead. Too Sweet decides to set up a fight with Jess, even though he is in a heavier weight class, to avenge Eugene's death. The film ends with a battle between Too Sweet and Jess; the two battle it out until an exhausted Too Sweet finally wins the fight and gains his freedom (out on parole to train as a fighter with the Lieutenant's brother in law).

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[149] Allyson Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Stewart, "Emancipating the Image," *LA. Rebellion, Creating a New Black Cinema* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 20.

Reviewing *Penitentiary*

While *Penitentiary* was a very profitable film, the reviews from critics were mixed. *The New York Times* described *Penitentiary* as "a small, brutal, and none-too-convincing prison melodrama."[150] Sergio Mims described *Penitentiary* as a "cold, hard realistic look at prison life (with a heavy dose of Rocky thrown in)."[151] *Los Angeles Times'* Grant Lee noted that to "capture a realistic prison milieu, the subtleties and tone, Fanaka interviewed several inmates "including lots of people with whom I grew up" ("Road to 'Penitentiary'). Lee also pointed out that Fanaka showed his script to prisoners of the Federal Correctional Institute at Terminal Island so that they could provide some critique.[152] Richard Christiansen writing for the *Sun Times* stated that *Penitentiary* "seems authentic in atmosphere" and that "Mr. Fanaka spent almost two weeks living in the Terminal Island federal penitentiary… 'I had intended to spend four weeks,' he says, 'but I couldn't take it that long. It was too depressing.'"[153] Joseph McLellen, writing of *The Washington Post* called *Penitentiary* "essentially honest" and "makes a serious and nearly successful attempt to rise above the sex-and-violence genre and make a serious statement about prison life. The effort is commendable, but the best parts are still the scenes of sex and violence."[154] The criticism of *Penitentiary*, much like *Riot*, tends to circle how real it can be judged as being, how convincing, and the production process is itself taken into consideration as a means of assessing the film's authenticity.

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[150] Vincent Canby, "Screen: 'Penitentiary': Jailhouse Blues." *New York Times* 4 Apr. 1980.
[151] Sergio Alejandro Mims, "A New Life: Independent Black Filmmaking During the 1980s." *Black Camera* 5.1 (1990), 3–4.
[152] Grant Lee, "The Road to 'Penitentiary': 'Penitentiary'." *Los Angeles Times,* 28 Jan. 1980, f6.
[153] Richard Christiansen, "New Director's Film Is Unexpected Hit." *The Sun (1837-1987)* 18 May 1980.
[154] Joseph McLellan, "'Penitentiary': Sex and Violence Behind Bars." *The Washington Post,* 22 Nov. 1979, C19.

Penitentiary as Prison Film

Penitentiary is often described as an outlier – a hybrid prison and boxing film, an exception to the political and aesthetic goals of the L.A. Rebellion artists, even as an exceptional success for Jamaa Fanaka, considering the less successful *Penitentiary* II and III. *Penitentiary* is usually labeled as a Blaxploitation film, sometimes as a means of distinguishing it from the other L.A. Rebellion directors. The L.A. Rebellion filmmakers coming out of UCLA are credited with producing a body of work that challenged the conventional aesthetics and representations of black life in Hollywood films. In Kara Keelings's words, "When considered together as part of a movement, the films offer a conceptualization of black existence in the United States that is remarkably complex, varied, urgent and still generative today."[155] The L.A. Rebellion films are often described as sophisticated and realistic, a repudiation of not only Hollywood's limited portrayal of black life and black people but also the exaggerations, stylizations, and stereotypes to be found in Blaxploitation films.

L.A. rebellion and Blaxploitation are not necessarily, however, mutually exclusive labels. Ed Guerrero argues instead that both arose out of the "revolutionary circumstances" of the period.[156] In addition, Jan-Christopher Horak, in his chapter "Tough Enough," positions LA Rebellion filmmakers, particularly Fanaka, as engaging with and responding to work that was labeled as Blaxploitation.

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[155] Kara Keeling, "School of Life," (*Artforum International* 50.2, 2011), 294–297.
[156] Samantha Noelle Sheppard, "L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema," *UCLA: Center for the Study of Women*, (December 1, 2011) 21. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/55m7m9gx

> …while Fanaka mimics, parodies, subverts, and critiques Blaxploitation genre conventions and expectations more closely than any of his Rebellion compatriots, he also constructs an explicitly political text that deconstructs Blaxploitation cinema's male chauvinist and often racist narratives.[157]

Horak positions the predominantly black prison and black on black violence of *Penitentiary* as a visualization of the violence that black men have continually endured since slavery; the film is also a representation of how gang members establish hierarchy. "Fanaka sketches out a crisis in African American masculinity, which through the result of white racism now perpetuates itself almost exclusively through "Black on Black crime."[158]

While work has already been done to connect Fanaka's film to the political investments of the L.A. Rebellion, including his choice to make a prison film that depicts prison as a black space, little has been done to understand how *Penitentiary* might be situated in or contribute to the prison film genre. Sidelined as a hybrid boxing prison film, *Penitentiary*'s approach to prison has been left largely unremarked upon.

Taking the sex and violence that audiences in the 1970s had grown accustomed to and exaggerating it, *Penitentiary* plays with its relationship to the real in ways that *Riot* did not. *Penitentiary* takes itself quite a bit less seriously than *Riot* and the interplay of bloody violence, sexual content, and innuendo, with absurd, nearly surreal comedic interruptions speak to a different strategy for representing prison, particularly black men in prison. I do not use surreal lightly here, nor do I mean to impose upon Jamaa Fanaka a formal connection to surrealism in cinema. But I believe the term fits during moments in

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[157] Jan Christopher-Horak, " Tough Enough: Blaxploitation and the L.A. Rebellion," Editors Allyson Field, Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Stewart, *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 124.
[158] Ibid, 150.

Penitentiary where reality seems altered, even in the midst of a construction that asserts itself as real. The opening sequence with a close-up of an inmate, hair askew, lit cigarette in his ear, an unlit cigarette in his mouth, wide-eyed and fluidly walking through the cell corridor (eventually asking someone for a light), has been read as indicating the negative psychological effects of incarceration.[159] It certainly may relate to that but it is also an introduction to the penitentiary; audiences are being made aware that we have entered an irrational space. This early scene hints at prison's ability to create the irrational while also emphasizing the film itself as a production – a space that is similar to but not actually prison space.

The comedic and surreal moments in *Penitentiary* are not necessarily all harmless. Considering the ubiquity of prison rape jokes and the overall acceptance of sexual assault of men in prison, making light or making a person chuckle during an attempted rape scene can cut both ways. Humor can serve to deny the audience complete access to the entirety of a degrading experience; refusing the viewer a fully voyeuristic immersion into the pain and harm being done. Provoking laughter, however, may also diminish the seriousness of the sexual assault. Jacqueline Stewart has noted the double-edged nature of other sexual scenes in *Penitentiary*, similarly.[160] I suggest that, for better or worse, *Penitentiary* offers us humor and touches of the surreal as a strategy for negotiating the assumption of the ethnographic gaze. If we consider surrealism as a relation between things that assists in rattling "our faith in a realist apprehension of the solidity of reality,"[161] it seems a quite appropriate method to speak back to a genre obsessed with its

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[159] Ibid, 179.
[160] Ibid, 180.
[161] Michael Richardson, *Surrealism and Cinema,* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 62.

own promise of the real and an audience that desires the impossible actuality of prison life on screen. As a prison film, *Penitentiary* does not simply repeat the violence visited upon black men; it also produces an awareness of the distance between real places and cinematic spaces.

Masculinity, Race and Legitimation

As the first book-length treatment of prison film and television, Wilson & O'Sullivan's *Images of Incarceration* states that the term "prison film" should include dramas and documentaries but "our first interest is in prison movies (dramas), although it is legitimate to suggest that we might need to pull documentaries into the analysis at a later stage."[162] This statement is indicative of the general tendency of discussions of prison film and media to continually focus on drama (even if recognizing that documentary may have something to add to the conversation). The willingness to leave out non-fiction prison media from a consideration of prison film is ironic given that Wilson and O'Sullivan argue that the value of the 'classic pure prison movie' can be found in its ability to carry "out several important penal reform functions which have helped to diffuse the sentiments and dispositions needed to signal when penal reform is necessary."[163] The 'pure prison film' referred to here is a film set inside prison and also topically about life in prison. Wilson and O'Sullivan ultimately argue that we need "more prison films, not fewer, if film is to make a positive contribution to public appreciation of the relevant issues." [164] Wilson and O'Sullivan echo the general tendency for studies of

[162] Wilson and O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 61.
[163] Ibid, 88-89.
[164] Ibid, 88-89.

prison film coming out of Criminology, which has most often been concerned with media's ability to promote prison reform. Since the justification for paying attention to prison film from this perspective is rooted in its ability to inform and/or misinform the public, prison film studies tend to direct its attention at popular Hollywood productions that have the potential to reach a wide audience.

Speaking to the fact of mass incarceration in the United States, Wilson and O'Sullivan state:

> This story needs to be told in films which close the gap between dramatic perceptions of prison and the reality. This does not mean that prison films have to be realistic. It does mean that they should not seek to conceal or deny the pains of incarceration or the irrationality of prison as an institution which, whilst claiming to reform its charges, often only acts to confirm them in their patterns of offending behavior.[165]

The presumed goal of prison media in the above statement is to communicate the reality of prison and the pain of those incarcerated. Prison film as a genre is subject to critical skepticism that often finds its value lacking because it is judged to fail in this endeavor. Mason notes (pulling from Nellis and Hale's skepticism of whether the genre was at all worth the time that had been spent making or watching it), [166] "One may well ask whether the prison film has done anything more than simply entertain."[167] Implicit in this statement is the assumption that prison film should have a more important agenda than mere entertainment and that entertainment is a simple uncomplicated endeavor in and of itself, presiding in the lowest rung of the ladder of media production. Returning to the Wilson and O'Sullivan quote above, prison film should make a "positive contribution

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[165] Wilson and O'Sullivan, *Images of Incarceration,* 105.
[166] Nellis and Hale, *The Prison Film,* 44.
[167] Mason **cite page

to public appreciation of the relevant issues." Whether fiction or not, prison media is held responsible for communicating something real about prison, something more than 'simply' entertainment.

Prison film, even before there were films numerous enough to be labeled a genre, took up a burden of authenticity that it seemingly cannot put down. Fictional prison media have both been held responsible for the depiction of real prison spaces and the real pains of incarceration. Prison films answer this call for the real by claiming to expose the inside of the prison, as an authoritative source for the inaccessible. Fiction films can make the added claim of depicting a truth that would never be shown otherwise.

The reviews of *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* that privilege authenticity are part of a cyclical call and response within the discussion of prison film. The claim to offer access to prison spurs calls for more authenticity resulting in more claims to truth and access. This cycle serves to emphasize how different the inside is from the outside, re-asserting how unreachable the inside is (except through media). As Heather Schuster puts it in her dissertation "Framing the (W)hole", "We have to interrogate both the valorization of authenticity, as well as its impossibility"[168] and later, "We have to think past the limits of what is designated by this cultural binary of inside/outside, in which culture is either the problem or the solution." While Schuster's latter point is directed at Adorno, it may well be directed at prison media studies generally.

Judging the predation and violence in *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* as either authentic or inauthentic is not the only task at hand, nor is that the same as asking if said content is poignant or pointless or somewhere in-between (and to whom).

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[168] Heather Schuster, "Framing the (W)hole," 101.

Certainly, *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* all utilized real prison spaces and real incarcerated men to varying degrees to add authenticity and make a claim for gritty realism that served to justify the violence depicted. *Riot, Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* all contributed to making violence amongst incarcerated men on screen normalized, but that is not the end of the discussion.

Riot and *Penitentiary* featured black male leads who abstained from violence unless necessary. Cully's role in *Riot* is one of restraint; he stops Surefoot from harming corrections officers and he tries to encourage the men around him to think strategically. Too Sweet winds up in prison because he defends a woman he just met. Once there, Too Sweet fights to defend himself, to help a friend, and only in the end, for vengeance. Violence is not positioned as the best option or first resort for either character. The version of masculinity that Cully and Too Sweet promulgate is one that champions self-control and strategy amidst the chaos, with the ability to inflict violence if necessary for survival or the defense of others. Homosexuality in practice is depicted in *Riot* as a symptom of the men's lack of self-control and the prison's descent into chaos. Cully's non-violent, silent rejection of Mary is another way in which the version of masculinity that Cully represents is shown as superior to the men around him. Cully has the restraint to neither succumb to sexual urges nor inflict violence on a 'queen.'

Penitentiary's depiction of homosexuality might at first glance be only for laughs but is more complicated than positioning queer characters as comic relief. The very presence of Sweet Pea and the crew of more feminine inmates, framed as obviously queer, serves as a contrast for Jess and Half Dead's predation and Eugene's victimization. Jess and Half Dead are vultures who prey on those they consider weak; they are bullies

and, in Half Dead's case, erratic and irrational. The inclusion of Sweet Pea, even as a minor character, makes room for the presence of same-sex sexual orientation that is not assaultive and is not purely domination.[169]

Riot and *Penitentiary*'s protagonists hold on to a sense of self- control, self-respect, and ethics, but they are framed as exceptional both for their ability to avoid predation through strength and skill and their ability to escape the system that made them vulnerable to it in the first place. *Scared Straight!,* in contrast, has no exceptions and no heroes, only predators, and victims. Men in this framework are guaranteed violence. In a prison run only by predators, neither self-control nor self-respect will help you - only force (which may lengthen your sentence to boot). *Scared Straight!* offers a bleak vision of men, one in which masculinity and violence are intertwined. The horrorscape that *Scared Straight!* depicts is one where homosexual relations are the rule and only a result of force and domination. The penitentiary described in *Scared Straight!* is not a place to escape; it is a place to avoid at all costs. The Lifers of Rahway position themselves and the men around them as a deterrence. Ironically, the Lifers were celebrated for making an effort to serve the public, while the film itself encourages disregard for life inside. *Scared Straight's* nonfiction status legitimized sexual assault as a fact of life within the penitentiary, a foregone conclusion that focused reform efforts on juveniles rather than the men experiencing assault.

My goal in considering these three films next to each other is to position all three as contributing to the formulation of the modern prison on-screen in differing ways. While *Scared Straight!*'s impact on policy and popular culture has been immense, its

[169] Include note here about the inclusion of queer characters in Blaxploitation films generally.

status as a documentary does not mean that its vision is the lone predecessor of the prison reality television that we have today. *Riot* and *Penitentiary* offer contrasting and contributing visions of prison, black masculinity, and queerness. Since fictional prison media has often taken up the task of depicting an authentic vision of prison, the line between documentary and fictional prisons on screen is particularly muddy.

Peter Caster's book, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity in Twentieth Century U.S. Literature and Film* (2008) describes *American History X* (1998)*, The Hurricane* (1999), and *The Farm: Life Inside Angola Prison* (1998) as a merging of entertainment and truth-telling, with all three making claims to truth. "Nonlinear, fragmented, multiperspectival accounts stake claims as really real, a contentious matter given that the fictions and fictionalizations shape the patterns of prison-film narratives, including documentary."[170] The choices that these films make en-route to depicting "really real" prison include *American History X*'s use of "documentary realism,"[171] the use of historically accurate settings (shooting a triple murder scene exactly where they occurred) in *The Hurricane*[172] and the cinema vérité style of *The Farm*. Caster's examples maintain a claim to authenticity through style, source material, and location. Caster convincingly argues that these choices, combined with the dismissal or transmutation of structural causes for racial inequality and imprisonment serve to reinforce the focus of these films: that prison is a place for humanistic personal improvement and redemption for the innocent and the guilty, which is brought about through interracial bonds and identification. [173]

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[170] Caster, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity,* 114.
[171] Caster, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity,* 120.
[172] Caster, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity,* 135.
[173] Caster, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity,* 134.

Caster's argument helps explain how the documentary can be shaped by the fictional:

> The reiterative imaginations of the real have shaped the history these films offer. To read the relationship between history and imagination in one direction, the realistic fiction of *American History X* features Norton touting statistics he culled from the California governor's office, and *The Hurricane*'s dialogue regularly quotes from Carter's prison writing and from actual court testimony. To read the relationship in reverse, a documentary shaped by the fantasies of imprisonment projects actual prison walls as redemptive spaces of male bonding.[174]

Documentary and fictional prison film both "signify their own effort to tell the truth" and contribute to the public memory and history of prison life. They depict the narratives that the American public has become accustomed to seeing in a carceral setting. The three films I discuss in this chapter offer different visions of prison predation, but they share a depiction of prison as useless for the reformation or rehabilitation of the men inside, with the value of the men themselves varying. A pessimistic vision of masculinity and the male homosocial environment produced a pessimistic vision of prison, though based not on a flaw in the system or the idea of prison itself. Prisons in these films are places in which men survive, not thrive. The films that Caster focuses on position prisons as useful – as places of redemption and interracial friendship. I suggest that the 1970s, as the period that we begin to see prisons as spaces of color more frequently, is not only an important predecessor for the films of the 1990s that Caster highlights but also the period to begin looking at how interracial interaction has been narratively constructed and how this demand for the "really real" is negotiated. Both sets of films have been judged as inadequate to the task that critics have repeatedly been asking of them – instigating penal reform.

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[174] Caster, *Prisons, Race and Masculinity,* 170.

Conclusion

Work remains to be done on the films of the 1970s and how this era set the stage for the prison media of the new millennium; my work here begins to address the gap in scholarship that exists. I chose to focus on three films that, when mentioned in prison film histories, are usually described as vulgar, inconsequential and peripheral to the core of the genre. *Riot* and *Penitentiary* both make explicit claims to authenticity, both have athletic black men as lead actors, and both received very mixed reviews. *Riot* and *Penitentiary* are both accused of being unreal by some and celebrated as realistic by others. Their vivid displays of violence, sexual assault, and queer performance often seem connected to how their credibility is judged. Some critics found them to be salacious and pandering to base instincts (purely entertaining), while others found them to be gritty refractions of reality; either judgment maintains a suspicion of the use of prison film for mere entertainment purposes.[175]

This chapter does not offer a comprehensive history of how sexual predation in prison became so normalized as to be an acceptable punch line; rather, my aim in the preceding chapter has been to complicate the nature and effects of the violence that occurred in prison films of the 1970s. *Riot*, identified as the tipping point toward a crueler prison, included vengeful attacks and irrational inmates, but it did not include sexualized violence. Cully's success in *Riot* is directly contrasted with the foregone conclusion of Surefoot's chaotic, uncivilized use of violence. The prison described to young people in *Scared Straight!* was ruled by sexual assault, but in ways that tread lightly around the

[175] Chapter 4 will delve more into what the ethical imperative of prison media product should or could be.

threat of interracial assault and the implicit threat to white masculinity it entailed. Finally, *Penitentiary* offers an exaggerated and surreal vision of prison where predation rules but can be defeated. Where *Riot* pointedly included the racism of corrections officers as part of Cully's experience, *Penitentiary* established black on black violence as the central problem for Too Sweet, nevertheless, it is the prison administration that established the boxing competition as a 'way out,' effectively gamifying that violence and enjoying it as entertainment.

I suspect that film historians' reluctance to include documentary into the analysis of prisons on screen is related to the unusually messy distinction between fiction and factuality within the genre itself. The prison film offers "insider information,"[176] regardless of whether it is fiction or documentary. Ignoring documentary and focusing only on very popular, fictional and theatrical film has allowed the call for more authenticity and more 'really real' prisons to continue unabated. *Scared Straight!* provides a cautionary tale for how documentary can be utilized to extremely negative effects and how a more 'real' prison on screen may not produce the effects that those demanding it want. Also, any discussion of prison film's responsibility to depict what real prison looks like should include an examination of why that responsibility has been disallowed to journalists. Without a consideration of the legal system and prison administrations' ability to limit access to prisons, the audiences' (often depicted unfortunately as singular) taste for blood and exploitation become a convenient and overly simplistic scapegoat for explaining both prison film and its failure to engender change.

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[176] Rafter, *Shots in the Mirror*, 169.

The predation that was new to prisons on-screen during the 1970s is the dramatic undertone of prison reality television today. These nonfiction and fiction films laid the groundwork for the depiction of prisons on-screen as violent places but that is not all they did nor did they do so in a vacuum. The public discourse surrounding prison during the 1970s was paying particular attention to race and to the inadequacy of prison. Bringing in objects that have been considered peripheral to the genre can serve to expand our conception of film's participation in that discourse and complicate our understanding of the genre itself. My aim here is not to reject any consideration of prison film and prison reality together nor any sense of film's responsibility to depict society, but rather to suggest that exclusively centering the analysis of prison media on notions of authenticity and reality served to limit understanding of the genre's complexity and significance.

CHAPTER 2

You Already Know: Professionalizing Corrections through Instructional Film, 1976-1981[177]

Beginning in the mid-1970s Charles Cahill Associates produced a series of films for the training of correctional officers on a variety of topics ranging from daily tasks such as *Cell Searches* (1978) to crisis negotiation in *If You're Taken Hostage* (1981).[178] As the first series of its kind archived in the Bureau of Prison's records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the *Correctional Officer (CO)* series offers insight into how corrections addressed itself as a profession in the wake of severe public criticism just as the policies that begot mass incarceration itself were being formed.[179] Where *Riot*, *Scared Straight!* and *Penitentiary* focused on the danger that the incarcerated posed to each other, the *Correctional Officer* series offers a perspective aimed at officers, without the need to proclaim its authenticity to the general public. This

[177] Appendix A includes descriptions of additional *Correctional Officer* films.
[178] Geoff Alexander, *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History* (London: McFarland & Company Press, 2010), location 1086, Kindle. Charles Cahill Associates was purchased in 1982 and became AIMS Media.
[179] Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison,* 194.

chapter offers a case study of three films from the *CO* series, *Courtroom Demeanor* (1978), *Inmate Body Searches* (1978), and *Con Games Inmates Play* (1981). These films provide examples of how instructional film was mobilized in the service of professionalization and are a means by which the corrections officer was positioned as valuable, necessary and modern. In doing so, the *Correctional Officer* series simultaneously makes anxieties around professional loyalty, sexuality, and race visible.

This chapter considers material from an area of film production that has thus far been left out of the critical examination of prisons on screen. But instructional films for corrections officers are important to the larger project of understanding how media and the prison industrial complex interact. Film has not only been utilized to depict prisons to the 'outside,' it has also been used within prisons. The scholarly discussion of prisons on screen, however, has been so intently focused on the impact of prison media on the public that little attention has been given to other ways that prison and media may be connected. Alison Griffiths' *Carceral Fantasies* has addressed this gap by focusing on how early film entered carceral spaces and operated as an equalizer and a tool of acculturation. Griffiths brings much-needed attention to the experience of incarcerated watchers, asking "what kind of film unfolded in the minds of spectators divorced from the actual public sphere?,"[180] This chapter tackles the aforementioned gap in scholarship from a different angle by considering corrections officers as a unique audience. Focusing on instructional films for corrections officers reminds us that prison is a multivalent space and while it is certainly a site of control and oppression, it is also a workplace.

[180] Allison Griffiths, *Carceral Fantasies,* 145

Foucault's use of the panoptic prison as a model for the creation and perpetuation of the self-disciplining subject has loomed large not only in our understanding of power in general but also in carceral studies specifically.[181] The figurative use of prison has its limits, however; if relied on too heavily as an abstraction it can result in the omission of the specific ways power operates inside a prison, erasing the reality of prison as a professional workplace and officers as watcher/workers. While I take care to situate these films in their specific historical and political moment, this chapter also aims to encourage increased attention to the question of how the job of corrections is depicted and justified to the individuals actually doing it. This chapter brings the corrections officer into focus as a subject of surveillance by the public, by administration, and last but not least by the incarcerated. I ask: what use did the producers of instructional films during the 1970s imagine their films to have?

Prison media scholarship has consistently focused on theatrical film and has repetitively critiqued the authenticity of prison representation, finding it lacking. Given the way in which prison film and corresponding scholarship have valued proximity to actual prisons, the lack of work on non-theatrical prison film forms a conspicuous absence.[182] As far as film studies at-large, however, the lack of scholarly attention to the *Correctional Officer* series and instructional film for corrections, in general, is certainly not surprising. As Elizabeth Ellsworth observed in the 1990s, film scholars have "operated from the long-standing assumption that education films subordinate aesthetic

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[181] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* Translation by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 249.

[182] The first book-length treatment of prison film and television, Images of Incarceration by Willson & O'Sullivan (2004) states that the term "prison film" should include dramas and documentaries but then goes on to focus on dramas, stating that "Our first interest is in prison movies (dramas), although it is legitimate to suggest that we might need to pull documentaries into the analysis at a later stage."

expression and formal innovation to such an extent that they become insignificant as film practice."[183] Nontheatrical film has historically been a bad object, the chaff, pushed to the wayside and excluded as film studies focused on attaining legitimacy.[184] The last decade has seen an increase in scholarly attention to non-theatrical film with Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau's *Films that Work* (2009), Geoff Alexander's *Academic Films for the Classroom* (2010), Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson's anthology *Useful Cinema* (2011), and Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron and Dan Streible's collection *Learning With the Lights Off* (2012). These works have successfully argued for the value of nontheatrical film, and it is thanks to them that I offer a consideration of the *Correctional Officer* series as a multifaceted and important addition to the history of prisons on screen. I focus specifically on the *CO*'s relation to its primary audience, the corrections officer.

The *Correctional Officer* series faced some unique challenges. The *CO* series was produced as a result of a general push to professionalize and standardize training, yet corrections facilities and policies in the United States have never been standardized. For example, the narrator notes in *Dining Room Conduct* (1978), "Since every institution is so different, this program won't review seating procedures. Some are strict, some are relaxed, some systems require the coordination of a number of officers and sometimes you are almost alone." In addition to the institutional variety that prohibited specific policy or procedural standardization, the *CO* series consistently addresses its audience as both experienced and new, assuming it could be viewed by officers at any point in their

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[183] Elizabeth Ellsworth, "I Pledge Allegiance: The Politics of Reading and Using Educational Films," *Curriculum Inquiry* 21, no. 1 (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 2.
[184] Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, "*Introduction" Learning with the Lights Off* ed. Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron and Dan Streible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

career. Given the goal of extremely broad applicability, the question, "What is being standardized?" cannot help but emerge. I ask this question of the series with an eye toward the usefulness of these films, grounded in Wasson and Acland's formulation of "useful cinema" as entangled with the seemingly paradoxical desire to change and yet preserve the institutions of which it is in service.[185] In addition, the direct address of the series itself is aware that its usefulness may be in doubt, that it may be a bad object for its target audience, corrections officers. The *CO* series frames itself, ironically for training film and prison film, not as a condescending institutional directive but as an occasion for contemplating one's own experiences, knowledge and attitude as a corrections officer. The *CO* series consistently offers itself not as an authority but as an opportunity for self-reflection and development, to a point. By tracing where the series ceases to frame itself as useful and modern, these films expose the internal professional anxieties occurring around race and sex for their producers. The films of the *Correctional Officer series* provide insight into how these anxieties were addressed as part and parcel of professionalization during this period.

The following chapter begins by establishing how corrections came under public scrutiny in the early 1970s. I then transition to an overview of the *Correctional Officer* series. *Courtroom Demeanor* (1978), *Inmate Body Searches* (1978) and *Con Games Inmates Play* (1981) are then presented as case studies of the *CO*'s approach to professionalization. This is followed by a consideration of the audience for the *Correctional Officer* series and the series' attempt to navigate the contradictory demands put upon it and its status as a bad object.

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[185] Haidee Wasson and Charles R. Acland, "Introduction, Utility and Cinema" *Useful Cinema,* ed. Haidee Wasson and Charles R. Acland (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), Kindle Location 4.

Public Scrutiny

This chapter takes a cue from Thomas Elsaesser's methodological guidance in *Films that Work.* When examining industrial film, scholars should ask who commissioned it, for what occasion, and for what purpose.[186] The 1970s was a period of increased public discourse and attention to prisons in general[187] but the Attica Rebellion explicitly precipitated the public scrutiny of corrections as a profession. In September of 1971, just a few weeks after the killing of George Jackson in San Quentin State prison, prisoners took control of the Attica Correctional Facility in Attica New York and took 42 staff members hostage. After four days of negotiations between the state of New York and the incarcerated men inside Attica, Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered the state police to forcibly take control of the prison. The six minutes that the New York State troopers took to overwhelm the prisoners of Attica resulted in 39 lives lost. As the Attica report relates, according to autopsies the next day the hostages who died in the takeover were killed by gunshot (from troopers) not knife cuts from inmates and all but 3 of the inmates killed were killed by gunshot. In other words, the armed state troopers directly caused the death of inmates and hostages (including correctional officers).

The cause of the Attica rebellion was a faulty gate mechanism, if one were to focus on what technically allowed the incarcerated to take over the prison.[188] The rebellion is more accurately understood as a culmination of tensions caused by racial

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[186] Thomas Elsaesser, "Archives and Archaeologies" *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media,* ed. Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 23.
[187] Bernstein, *America is the Prison,* 20.
[188] Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, *The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica,* (1972), Moving Images 129.BOP.27, 2VHS transfers, National Archives.

disparity, overcrowding, political activism, abuse and the Department of Corrections' failure to heed pleas for change from both inmates and corrections officers, all of which assisted in turning Attica into a "tinderbox."[189]The national news coverage of the horrendous death toll at Attica resulted in external and internal pressure on state and federal agencies to address or at least acknowledge the fact that corrections officers were a causative factor in creating an environment conducive to frustration, anger, and violence. The Attica Report, released in print and televised in 1972, attacks the motivations, hierarchy and even the label of "correctional" officer.

> Guards are called 'correctional officers' but their work is the routine of confinement. … Corrections officers have in the main chosen this work because of its job security, not because they want to rehabilitate criminals.[190]

The report found that two-thirds of the officers at Attica had not had adequate training and highlighted the fact that there were no black officers at Attica at the time of the rebellion despite the majority of the incarcerated population being black. [191] In addition, the report harshly critiqued Commissioner Russel Oswald's decision to bring the media into Attica with him when he negotiated. A WGRTV-Buffalo camera crew went into Attica and checked on the hostages. When state troopers were eventually sent in, one trooper had a television camera and describes what he sees as he shoots (this footage is part of the televised report itself). Oswald's decision to bring media in with him went against the recommendations of the American Corrections Association at the time. While the footage that broadcast media took provided a means of understanding the situation

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[189] Heather Ann Thompson, "Part 1: The Tinderbox" *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy,* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2017), Kindle Location 326.
[190] Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons*, The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica,* (1972), Moving Images 129.BOP.27, 2VHS transfers.
[191] Ibid.

(and verified the health and well being of the hostages before the troopers took over), the fact that the ACA already had a policy against bringing in media and Oswald's break with this policy is notable in that it emphasizes the rebellion as an event the media participated in, possibly even influenced negatively, amidst an already established wariness of media coverage and participation. The Attica Report labeled the media as a participant in the escalation of Attica but the media was also a means by which the state was held accountable and critiqued.

The initial responses to the Attica Report occurred in New York, but the federal government also took notice. A national training academy was established, The National Institute of Corrections (1974), which is still an agency within the Federal Bureau of Prisons that provides training to federal, state, and local corrections agencies. During his keynote at the National Conference on Corrections, Chief Justice Burger suggested that a national training academy would bring about "long-delayed improvements in the professionalism of the corrections field"[192] and President Nixon called on attendees to "blaze the trail of prison reform."[193] Standardized training, such as that provided by the NIC, was highlighted as a means to professionalization and diversifying the ranks of officers was roundly recommended as a means of addressing racial tension. Federal funding was directed at the recruitment of minority officers. Several policy notes and operations memorandums from the 1970s called attention to various intra-agency film

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[192] The United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, "History" http://nicic.gov/history and https://info.nicic.gov/virt/sites/info.nicic.gov.virt/files/NIC-About-Us-Flier.pdf (accessed December 3, 2017).

[193] Richard Nixon, "Remarks to the National Conference on Corrections, Williamsburg, Virginia.," Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. December 6, 1971. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3245 (accessed December 3, 2017).

resources and state that the Bureaus' employee training effort lacked cohesion and inner consistency.[194].

As violence in prisons during the 1970s increased, so did the negative portrayals of corrections officers in general, who in turn became defensive, perceiving themselves as under attack both inside and outside prison.[195] The "smug hack" stereotype, depicting officers as "caricatures of brutality, incompetence, low intelligence and indifferent to human suffering" made officers particularly critical and wary of their portrayal on film and television.[196] The defensive posture of corrections, as a profession, is an important part of the context for the *Correctional Officer* series. Not only were these films supposed to provide standardization in non-standardized contexts, but they were also supposed to instruct a group that considered themselves already under attack, in need of defense.

The *Correctional Officer* Series

The film holdings of the Bureau of Prisons, prior to the *Correctional Officer* series, is comprised of one-off productions or films that are not aimed specifically at corrections officers. The *CO* films are notable as the first cohesive series, thematically and aesthetically, that has been preserved. There are over 40 films in the entire *CO* series still in circulation, usually in VHS or Umatic transfers, most often found sparingly in American college libraries. Generally distributed by AIMS Instructional Media, Inc., a

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[194] Federal Bureau of Prisons, "Annual Employee Development Plan- Fiscal Year 1971" Operations Memorandum, National Archives and Records Administration, (March 3, 1970), 3410.122
Ibid, "Changes in 8mm Movie Equipment," National Archives and Records Administration, (December 4, 1970), 3410.176.
[195] John Irwin, *Prisons in Turmoil* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980) 133.
[196] Ray Surette, *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice* (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2015) 158.

small subset of these films was distributed in Canada by the Canadian Learning co. and in Australia by Education Media Australia. This chapter focuses on three specific films from the series but also draws from 12 of the 18 films (1976 -1981) from the *CO* series housed by NARA on 16mm film.

The format for the films of the *CO* series is as follows: An instrumental intro, often including a warbling harmonica and a simple title screen to begin. Following the title screen is exposition by an always unseen narrator who begins to speak as a montage of penitentiary scenes goes by. The film then presents several scenarios or examples, often punctuated by white text intertitles that announce key principles and are usually repeated towards the end. The end credits roll while the bluesy harmonica or guitar gently fades in and then out. The camera is usually static and the majority are medium shots, though some films also have quite a bit of close up shots.[197]

The credits, style, narrator and introductory soundtrack for each film provide a sense of cohesiveness throughout the series. These films are shot in operating, prison facilities in California and they utilize current officers and currently incarcerated individuals to act out scenarios.[198] Sometimes the incarcerated men and women (predominantly men) who assist in enacting scenarios by being searched, conversing with officers, etc. are thanked in the end credits (en mass, never by name), and sometimes they are not. The credits often read, "filmed with the cooperation of" and then the

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[197] The country blues harmonica plodding through the opening credits is an immediate nod to prison history, linking the California correctional facilities used in production to southern institutions like Parchman Farm. This bit of nostalgic bookending serves to connect the modern correctional officer to a longer history of jailers and perhaps serves as a way to solidify corrections' claim to being a long-standing, actual profession by connecting to its own history (with no regard for how that history is tied to slavery or racism, particularly in the South).

[198] I was unable to find material (legal and otherwise) at NARA documenting the making of this series.

institution.[199] All twelve films do not have the same credits, but they do share many of the same facilities as settings. Several consultants contributed to multiple films but not all of the films credit a director. James Skidmore appears as a writer and director on several. The credited consultants were active professionals in corrections.[200] For example, Otis Thurman, who was credited in three films had a thirty-three-year long career in California Corrections, including being the warden of the state prison in Lancaster before retiring in 1996. [201] Bud Allen is only credited for one film (*Con Games Inmates Play* 1981), but he is a notable stand out. Labeled as a "Correctional Consultant," Bud Allen was also the co-author of the book *Games Criminals Play: How You Can Profit by Knowing Them*, which was once required reading for all new hires within the Federal Bureau of Prisons.[202] The *Correctional Officer* series was shaped by several experts across the nation but California looms large as a source of expertise and as a shooting location.[203]

The *CO* series consistently asserts itself as applicable to a variety of contexts because it is devoid of specific, institutional and state regulation particulars. For

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[199] Specifically, the institutions that are credited are the California Institute for Men Chino, California Institute for Women Chino and Federal Correctional Institution Terminal Island, California State Prison San Quentin, Correctional Training Facility Soledad, LA. County Sheriff's Department, California Men's Colony San Luis Obispo, California Rehabilitation Center Corona, and the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department.

[200] Walter Lewis also from the California Department of Corrections is credited in eight films. Thomas Walker of the Federal Bureau of Prisons is credited in seven films. Jerry R. Hawley of the Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training is also credited in seven films. James Menard from the Illinois Department of Corrections is credited in five films.

[201] Nevada Policy Research Institute, "Transparent California," http://transparentcalifornia.com/pensions/2015/calpers/otis-thurman/, (accessed December 3, 2017). Thurman retired in 1996.

[202] Robert M. Worley, Vidisha Barua Worley & Henda Hsu, "Can I Trust My Co-worker? Examining Correctional Officers' Perceptions of Staff–Inmates Inappropriate Relationships within a Southern Penitentiary System," *Deviant Behavior*, 2017, 1-15.

[203] Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Golden Gulag* (2007) and *John Pfaff's Locked In* (2017) are both resources for considering Californian policy and practices' considerable impact on the course of mass incarceration in the United States since the 1970s.

example, in *Cell Searches* (1978) the narrator states, "There are differences across institutions but for every one you have to: Be Systematic, Be Thorough, Be Curious." To return to the example in the introduction, the narrator of *Dining Room Conduct* (1978) states, "Since every institution is so different, this program won't review seating procedures… But in every case, it's your attitude and your alertness that determines how effective you are."[204] [205] In the service of broad applicability, the films of the *Correctional Officer* series avoid didactic instruction. Instead, the *CO* series offers a consideration of professional attitude and appearance. This is not to say that the series is evacuated of concrete examples and routines, but rather that the purpose of displaying a routine is often framed as an example of the correct approach to the task as opposed to being one that should be exactly replicated. The following section takes up three films that provide examples as to how the *CO* series addresses its audience and displays the ideal officer's approach and attitude.

Courtroom Demeanor (1978)[206]

Courtroom Demeanor is just under 12 minutes long and begins with a long shot of an almost empty prison hallway, windows to the left and cells to the right. A white male officer is shown walking down a hallway. Suddenly screams can be heard off-

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[204] No film that I viewed explains how to maintain alertness despite repeatedly demanding it.
[205] Dining Room Conduct, directed by James Skidmore (Glendale, California: Charles Cahill), 1978, 129-COP-4, 16mm, National Archives.
[206] Courtroom Demeanor, directed by James Skidmore, (Glendale, California: AIMS media), 1978, 129-COP-3, 16mm.
Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker of the Federal Correctional Institution Lompoc California, Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis of Departmental Training- California Department of Corrections, Jerry R. Hawley of the Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Peter J. Pitchess – Sheriff, Sheriff John Carpenter, and Capt. John DaFoe Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department and James Menard of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

screen. The officer runs toward the source, a group of three white men beating a fourth who is on the ground. The officer arrives as the men begin to run away. He shouts "Freeze!," and some of them do.

The attack scenario provides the example situation about which an officer may have to testify. The first half of the film is invested in making sure the officer knows how to take proper notes and review those notes before they get to trial. The narrator advises the audience to return to the scene and visualize the incident. The first rule of testifying, according to the narrator, the first rule of testifying is to (emphasized with a large text intertitle) "Prepare Yourself" [207] followed by "Enter Every Detail" into pre-trial notes and "Attend a Pre-trial Conference". After the issue of note-taking is addressed, the next topic is the officer's feelings,

> One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to try and hide any guilty feelings about your own involvement in the incident. If you have any feelings or doubts about your actions, the pre-trial hearing is the best place to discuss them.

This is followed by "Be Objective" and, while an officer in a dark brown suit is sworn in, the narrator warns the audience,

> When you finally do enter that courtroom, if you wear a flashy suit or tie, or worse, a dirty or wrinkled uniform, or if you discuss your case with others or show any emotion about the case, to the court it would mean you do not understand the importance of the occasion and that of course, would reduce the credibility of everything you say.

Rather than simply state the ideal demeanor for an officer, the narrator points to the expectations of outsiders, "As you are well aware, the judge and the jury have definite expectations of an officer of the law. Like it or not, they expect you to be dignified, self-

[207] Intertitles in the *CO* series are displayed on screen sometimes against a black or single-color background, sometimes against a prison or scenario-specific scene.

restrained, and objective." *Courtroom Demeanor* defines the ideal courtroom demeanor as not only objective but emotionless. When confronted with inflammatory or attacking questions while testifying, *Courtroom Demeanor* advises, "there is never a reason to lose your temper or argue." *Courtroom Demeanor*'s content and very inclusion in the *CO* series situates public presentation and performance as part of the job and a potential site of anxiety.

Ironically, given the public critiques of abuse and harassment by officers that were happening at this time, the only courtroom example is one of violence between prisoners, with a vague mention of other officers' behavior being called into question. Credibility is attained via correct data gathering, prepping with an attorney, dressing appropriately and attaining a state of unemotional detachment. "From beginning to end, your objective is to be objective." The stress here is on the need to be credible and to present oneself as a professional to the outside world; the weight given this aspect of courtroom appearance is itself indicative of an awareness of public scrutiny. The emphasis on objectivity, the problematizing of emotion, and concluding by deferring to the individual's own standards, are all aspects of this film that thread through the other *Correctional Officer* films at NARA.

Inmate Body Searches Part 1 – Clothed (1978)[208]

[208] *Inmate Body Searches, Part 1 – Clothed,* directed by James Skidmore (Glendale, California: AIMS), 1978, 129-COP-7, 16mm. Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker of the Federal Correctional Institutions of Lompoc California, Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis of Departmental Training in the California Department of Corrections, Jerry R. Hawley of the Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training, Peter J. Pitchess Sheriff of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Sheriff John Carpenter and Captain John DaFoe of the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department, and James Menard of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Inmate Body Searches, Part 1 – Clothed (1978) runs 12 minutes long and begins with a series of interior scenes with different officers performing pat-downs on individuals in front of them. Many of these are medium shots, though some are long; each scene deliberately gives the audience a view of both the officer and the incarcerated individual's bodies together in the frame. *Inmate Body Searches, Part 1- Clothed* begins with:

> If you are a new officer, you better learn the basics because you are going to do a lot of body searches in your career, maybe thousands. If you're an experienced officer, who's already done a thousand searches, this is a chance to remember again what is important because you know, better than anyone, how easy it is to deviate from good practices and how dangerous that can be.

Before going into the details of how to properly conduct a search, the film now begins to use superimposed text on scenes as headings: to "Prevent Weapons", "Prevent Trafficking", "Protect Inmates from Themselves", "Prevent Theft and Waste", "Prevent Health Hazards". The narrator goes on to state that ultimately "Searches are often made less with the thought of finding anything than with the idea of preventing inmates from believing they can violate the rules." This line is accompanied by a close up of an inmate's face while his mouth is being searched.

The next few minutes feature officers demonstrating the "squeeze method" of searching the clothed body, with close-ups of officers' hands-on inmates' bodies. The film takes special care to emphasize a thorough groin search by freezing for several seconds on a groin close-up. The narrator intones:

> If you are an experienced officer you know the point, there is no excuse ever for avoiding a thorough search of the groin area but it is worth remembering that inmates understand the need for it, they accept it and they will take advantage of you if you don't do it.

The film concludes by stating that while institutions differ and officers have their particular styles, the rules remain the same: “Be Thorough”, “Take Your Time and Concentrate”, “Be Objective.” "Your purpose is prevention, not punishment…. And preventing the inmates from ever believing they could get something by you."

Inmate Body Searches brings to light anxieties through the actions it attempts to reject, as well as those that it directly addresses. The repetition of prevention, not punishment, makes clear that body searches have in fact been used as a form of punishment. The use of the freeze-frame to emphasize the necessity of a thorough groin search provides a surprisingly direct address of the 'problem' of this particular kind of contact in a same-sex homosocial environment for male corrections officers. Much of the work on the homosocial relations of the same-sex prison has focused solely on sexual assault, specifically sexual assault amongst inmates. The association between prison and male sexual violence is often taken for granted -to the point where the one stands in for the other (as can be seen in the prevalence of 'drop the soap' comedic moments in popular culture.[209] However, according to Regina Kunzel’s work in *Criminal Intimacy,* this close association is a relatively recent phenomenon that began in the late 1960s and 1970s.[210] The freeze-frame of the white officer literally man-handling a clothed groin is an attempt to create a professionalized approach to the problem of contact between men who are officers and men who are incarcerated in an increasingly sexualized, potentially violent space, while simultaneously avoiding any allusion to racial tension in the same space.

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[209] Helen Eigenberg, “If You Drop the Soap in the Shower You Are on Your Own: Images of male rape in selected prison movies,” *Sexuality and Culture,* 7, Part 4 (2003), 56-89.
[210] Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 150.

Inmate Body Searches bluntly addresses the reluctance of officers for whom the professional standard of thoroughness includes a type of forced intimacy with inmates in an environment where sexual identity is dangerously flexible, defiant of hetero/homo dichotomies as indicated through the association of prison with "situational homosexuality." *Inmate Body Searches* brings attention to the fact that discomfort with same-sex intimate contact in a prison was an acknowledged area of concern at this time for officers. As Eve Sedgwick notes, "For a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always –already-crossed line from being 'interested in men.'"[211]

The fact that the narrator goes on and feels compelled to say that "inmates understand the need for it" is indicative of a desire to frame this interaction as uncomfortable but consensual. The practice of ignoring ones' own discomfort and the physical boundaries of the incarcerated is justified and categorized as necessary in the pursuit of thoroughness. Finally, this thoroughness that the professional officer must maintain is a defense against an inmate looking for points of vulnerability: "They will take advantage of you if you don't do it." This gross generalization positions the officer's professional conduct as a defense against inmates, all of whom are characterized as capable of capitalizing on an officer's vulnerability.

Inmate Body Searches featured a variety of combinations of people but the only interpersonal dynamic that it addressed directly as a potential problem was men searching men. *Inmate Body Searches* may well have been addressing same-sex anxiety that was, in this period in particular, newly inflected with a predatory edge. The freeze-frame

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[211] Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English literature and male homosocial desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 89.

forcibly orients the audience and assumes that the impulse is to look away. The attempt to force the audience into an intimate (albeit via screen-to-face) confrontation contrasts strikingly with other parts of the series that simply provoke reflection. *Inmate Body Searches* draws attention to the haptic nature of the officer's job and the difficulty that imposing touch on someone else might pose as well as the threat of ambiguity around non-assaultive intimate touch. Much on the literature on prison as a homosocial environment tends to focus on the incarcerated, the people who experience the prison as a total institution.[212] But *Inmate Body Searches* reminds us that officers are also part of the picture.

The narrator in *Inmate Body Searches* addresses himself to new and experienced officers, who are told that this film is a "chance to remember again what's important." *Con Games Inmates Play* will also consider what kinds of interactions threatened the standard of thorough objectivity promoted by the *Correctional Officer* series.

Con Games Inmates Play (1981)[213]

Con Games Inmates Play (22 minutes long) has a misleading title. The focus is not exclusively on how incarcerated individuals attempt to con officers but rather more how officers need to act to avoid being conned, with the presumption that they will be if they do not proactively prevent it. *Con Games Inmates Play* establishes itself from the outset as a guide for officers to avoid being manipulated. By positioning the officer as

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[212] Ben Crewe, "Not Looking Hard Enough: Masculinity, Emotion, and Prison Research," *Qualitative Inquiry,* Vol 20, (4) (2014), 397.

[213] *Con Games Inmates Play,* produced by AIMS Media, 1981, 129-COP-2, 16mm.
Produced in consultation with Otis Thurman and Walter Lewis of the California Department of Corrections, Thomas Walker of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Jerry R. Hawley of the Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training and Bud Allen, Correctional Consultant.

already potentially vulnerable to manipulation, the film can put the focus on the officer's actions without ever implying that an officer could be the initiator of corruption within a prison. Ultimately the incarcerated are portrayed as sophisticated, predatory observers of human behavior.

Con Games begins with an extreme close up of white bars. As the camera backs away, the bars become recognizable as a prison door. Squarely centered in the middle of those doors is a black corrections officer in dark clothing, a shirt, and tie with a badge and belt visible. He walks towards the camera directly under an overhead light that draws attention to the vertical centerline. The narrator begins:

> Recently a correctional officer in the Michigan federal prison was dismissed from his job. The charge? Violation of institutional rules…In each of these situations the officer was well trained and intelligent[…] Each officer allowed inmates to take advantage of him, to play games with him.

The narrator continues:

> It shouldn't have happened, but it did. Why? Most inmates abide by the rules of the institution but some are opportunists[...] And if they can use you to help them break the rules, they'll use you. Just as you watch inmates, they watch you, all the time.

This last line is uttered by the narrator while the film shows a close-up of a white, red-headed inmate, crouched over, looking around somewhat surreptitiously. The narrator continues, "But some are watching more closely than others. They are looking for that one weakness, that one character flaw to use against you. If they find it they will try to manipulate you, it's that simple." This last sentence is uttered over a near comical depiction of an inmate whose body is mostly shadowed as he looks down through a grate at an officer working at a desk. The scene is formulated to position the audience as

omniscient. Viewers see the man sneaking a look down at the officer, but the officer is naïve to the presumed danger.

The preceding section does the work of establishing the vulnerable and innocent position of the corrections officer in relation to scheming, watchful inmates who are looking for openings to exploit. By switching between medium shots and close ups, including big close ups that show the direction of the gaze, the camera work in these suggests that the information that corrections officers need is always there for the viewing. Of all the films in the *Correctional Officer* series, *Con Games Inmates Play* most directly addresses anxieties about the changing prison and inmate population. The narrator in the very beginning cites a "violation of institutional rules" as a real-life cause of an officer being fired which serves to emphasize the importance of knowing the rules, yet the film itself is prohibited from citing institutionally-specific rules given its aim at broad applicability. What follows, then, are attitude guidelines that are meant to steer the officer away from potentially problematic interactions.

The film continues: "So the question is, when an inmate looks at you, what kind of a person does he see? What is there about the following officers that would indicate to an inmate that they might be manipulated?" This sets the stage for what will be a series of vignettes where officers and inmates interact in a variety of settings. The film is split into thirds. First, there is a series of situations each ending with some kind of behavior that is later characterized as being against the rules or likely to lead to further manipulation. The seven situations are first shown uninterrupted, with an officer making the wrong decision. Each scenario is then replayed with narration to point out where the officer went wrong. Finally (for all but one) an alternate ending of the scenario is provided, showing the

officer navigating the situation properly. I have provided a synopsis of five of the seven scenarios below. The last two scenarios are repetitions of the themes presented in the first five.

Scenario 1

The first scenario features a white female officer who sits at a desk and asks a male Latinx inmate to deliver some mail. The inmate offers to take an additional envelope marked confidential and after a slight hesitation, the officer lets him take the extra envelope. In the second version of the scenario, the inmate is shown in close up, intently watching the officer. This scene is shot very similarly to the scene accompanying the introduction to the film – the inmate and officer are both fully in the frame and the audience is privy to the gaze and implied intention of the inmate whilst the officer sits, none the wiser. When the officer lets him take the confidential envelope, there is a slight smile on his face. Finally, during the amended run, the narrator states, "When they look at you, do they see you in control of yourself and your job?" During the final version of the scenario the officer firmly refuses the offer.

Scenario 2

The second vignette is situated outdoors where several inmates are digging a ditch. A blond, short, white, male officer and a tall, black, male inmate become the focus of the frame. The inmate is refusing to dig a ditch, saying, “this doesn’t really fit my qualifications.” During this confrontation, the audience is oriented not at a sly or sneaky inmate (the man in this scenario is very direct and straightforward) but rather at the

officer's face. The officer looks down and around the inmate, never making direct eye contact as he repeats, "Why don't you just dig the ditch, you know?"

In the revised version of this scenario, we see the officer address the inmate (looking directly at him this time) and state that he has to work, though he can put in a job change request in the evening. "If you are seen as assertive, in control of the situation at all times, there is no reason to try and test you." The inmate agrees to work for the day and he is shown digging the ditch.

Scenario 3

The third scenario also begins outside and is between three men, a Latinx officer, and two Latinx inmates. The inmates arrive late to their work detail and offer a flimsy excuse. The officer responds, "Alright man, I'll tell you what, forget about it and let's start work over here…" This scene purposefully orients the audience but not only at the exchange between the officer and inmate but also at a third party. The last portion of this scene is a medium shot of a middle-aged black inmate watching the exchange between the officer and the inmates, clearly looking annoyed.

This scenario is the only one where we never see the officer respond "correctly." Instead, the officer is blackmailed by the inmates to whom he has shown favor. In an ironic turn, the inmates try to blackmail the officer into setting up a party by showing him that they have compiled a list of his rule infractions - the favors that he has done for them. The narrator intones, "Now you can be forced to help them break the law [...] If you're in control, no one can take advantage of you and the inmates will know it." The inmates leave and the officer sits by himself, looking morose, and then picks up a phone

to ask his supervisor for a meeting. This last part of the scenario is placed at the conclusion of the entire film.

Scenario 4

The fourth scenario is between two young white men, Officer Deely and inmate Kelly, shown sitting across from each other at a desk. Kelly tries to thank Officer Deely for getting him his job at the library by giving him a skinny cigar. Kelly's face is shown in close up, looking directly into the camera. Officer Deely refuses the offer at first but then accepts. A tight close up of Kelly fills the screen as he implores, "It's between you and me and it's the only way I've got to say thanks." Officer Deely relents, "Aw what the hell, it's not hurting anybody. It's just between you and me then right?" Kelly then gets up to leave but, on his way out, asks the officer for a favor. Could he mail an envelope for him? The officer agrees and the camera again turns to Kelly's face while he says, "Thanks a lot, I appreciate it," focusing on an expression that may have had some appreciation in it but also contains something a bit slier than the earnest words imply.

When we return to this scenario again, the narrator states, "If you're susceptible to flattery and gifts, maybe you'll have trouble saying no to a request from an inmate. Sometimes the giving and receiving of small favors can be turned into demands for large favors." During the third replay of this scenario, Officer Deely refuses the cigar and refuses to mail the envelope, instead, confiscating it, with a stern, "Nah, I don't think so Kelly, I'm going to hang on to it. Why don't you head on back to work."

Scenario 5

The fifth scenario is within a common area inside the prison. The first person shown is a silent, tall black male inmate with a goatee and glasses, sweeping the floor with a broom. The camera then follows Guy, a black officer, who walks past this inmate to talk to Harry, a white officer he is relieving from duty. Guy is clearly upset at the trash that is being left for him to pick up. Harry brushes him off and walks away. The interaction between Guy and Harry is shown via a shot over Harry's shoulder. Harry's facial expression and reaction to Guy are not the focus of this scene. Instead, the audience's gaze is oriented at Guy's reaction to Harry and the face of the inmate listening in behind Guy. Guy and the inmate (and the pile of trash) are now alone in the room. The inmate turns to the officer and says, "Say, brotherman, that guy giving you a rough time too, huh?" Guy responds, "Every time I relieve this guy I always have the same problem." The inmate goes on, "Hey, man, hey – I been working for him all day and, like, it's a hassle man, he's hard to work with. So I know where you coming from." The officer, now framed in a close-up shot, says, "You know most of these honkeys around here are the same way. They give you a rough time, they ask you for a promotion all the time – a black officer could do that job." The shot switches to the inmate, carefully listening and nodding, " Yeah, hey, I noticed that man. Seems like they trying to do that to all of us." Guy, "Oh yeah, seems like that's a general problem around here. We gonna have to do something about that." The scene ends there with the inmate silently nodding in agreement. This particular scenario is notable in that there is no rule being broken and no favors being asked for or given.

When we re-run this scenario, the narrator states, “If there is a disagreement among members of the staff, maybe you can be convinced to side with the inmates.” As

we see the interaction between the officer and the inmate replayed, the voiceover continues, "And if your feelings for certain inmates are stronger than for the staff, maybe you'll be asked by these inmates to break the rules." In the final revised scenario, the narrator asks, "How do inmates see you with other officers? If they see you and the rest of the correctional staff working together they'll know there is no chance of playing you against another officer to get you on their side." Then the disgruntled officer, instead of conversing with the inmate, just says, "Nah everything is alright, we can take care of the problem… don't worry about it."

Con Games Inmates Play concludes stating:

> The purpose of this program is not to scare you or make you afraid of inmates but to remind you of some common-sense techniques to protect yourself from the con game and this program is certainly not intended to tell you to be less humane toward inmates. As you know, there is no substitute for your own good judgment. If you don't exercise command and control then someone, someday, may try to control you. If you don't see yourself as a leader, then for sure, you'll be lead.

Con Games Inmates Play directs its audience's attention to the ideal attitude and approach to corrections to protect them from manipulation. Close-ups are pointedly used to not only reveal the truth of a given situation, providing insight into nefarious intentions, but to imply that bad intentions can indeed be seen, if one is observant and vigilant enough. The opening narration for *Con Games* states that officers were fired because "each officer allowed inmates to take advantage of them" and the face as a revelatory device implies that the officer could have avoided being victimized if only they looked a bit closer, just as *Con Games* forces its audience to. So *Con Games'* focus on non-verbal revelation ironically implies that officers could take a page from the hyper-vigilant, always watching inmate. Midway through the film, once the first version of each

scenario has been shown, the narrator states, “It’s often been said that inmates know the rules as well if not better than the correctional staff. … So if the inmates take advantage of a situation it’s because someone allows them to do it.” Much like *Inmate Body Searches,* the assumption that the incarcerated person knows the rules is utilized to make the officer more comfortable with what the film is stating is necessary. The officer must be watchful, alert and consistently firm.

While the film itself intersperses all of these vignettes with each other, when viewed as one whole scenario, it becomes clear that black and Latinx officers are being pointedly warned against "playing favorites" and having empathetic bonds with inmates. White officers are shown either not being authoritative enough or being too naïve. Loyalty to the profession and fellow officers demands a distancing from inmates; *Con Games* positions identity as an obstacle to this particular professional standard for black and Latinx officers. The third scenario even implies that the lack of this distance can lead to cross-racial tension between black and Latinx inmates. Racial tension is alluded to and still neatly contained amongst those incarcerated within individual interactions.[214]

In an era when corrections as a field was undergoing forced diversification, *Con Games* makes clear that its producers were anxious about the loyalty of officers of color. Harry, the white officer in the fifth scenario, is irrelevant to the situation’s outcome – the fact that he left work undone, did not respond well when questioned about it and created a situation where his fellow officer was resentful was never the focus of the scenario.

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[214] For further discussion of comparative racialization see Lisa Cacho’s book *Social Death* (NYU Press, 2012). Cacho notes, “Because different racial groups are variously marked as criminal and un-incorporable, conflict and competition between two marginalized groups are often represented as extraneous to white/non-white binaries, but these narratives actually reinforce racialized value hierarchies and binaries – criminal/not criminal, illegal / not illegal, terrorist/ not terrorist” (13).

Guy's expression of resentment is instead the focus of the film's criticism and Harry's responsibility for it is immaterial. Whiteness is unremarked upon and unmarked, producing, to borrow from Donna Haraway, a "conquering gaze from nowhere" with the power to see and remain unseen.[215] Racism is not acknowledged as a problem but race is and race is firmly positioned as the responsibility of officers of color. While the acknowledgment of the possibility for cross-carceral status alliance itself derives from the recognition of prison as a raced space, *Con Games* only addresses race as a matter of intent. Race is portrayed as a dangerous tool that can be intentionally utilized by an individual.[216] This focus on intent made facially factual, positions the prison itself as racially neutral, a position that Naomi Murakawa and Katherine Beckett describe as the "penology of racial innocence."[217]

While the incarcerated are certainly painted with a broad, predatory stroke, they are also the models of ever-ready watchfulness. *Con Games* demands alert attentiveness from all corrections officers and also positions all officers as constant subjects of nefarious attention. This bidirectional stream of surveillance serves to tamp down the initial threat of administrative surveillance that *Con Games* touched on by beginning the film through the mention of an officer's dismissal. The fact that the fifth scenario does not actually end with any rule violation makes it clear that *Con Games* and its makers found the potential for racial alliance threatening enough – no blackmail, contraband, or

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[215] Donna Haraway, "The Persistence of Vision," *The Visual Culture Reader* edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 677.

[216] *Con Games,* unlike some of the education films produced in the 1960s discussed by Marsha Orgeron or the post-war race films produced in the wake of Board v. Board of Education discussed by Anna McCarthy, has little formal interest in addressing racial tensions or facilitating group discussions but it may very well have inspired discussion, perhaps despite the silence of the narrator on the topic.

[217] Naomi Murakawa and Katherine Beckett, "The Penology of Racial Innocence: The Erasure of Racism in the Study and Practice of Punishment*," Law & Society Review*, Vol 44, Number ¾, (2010), 695.

special favors needed to drive home the point of why the officer should not be relating to an inmate in the way shown. The fifth scenario serves to position officers of color as subject to an increased level of surveillance by the film and its producers. The gaze in the carceral setting of *Con Games* is neither unidirectional nor evenly weighted. The nuances of *Con Games* makes visible what may be lost when we rely on what Kevin Haggerty refers to as "the neat distinction between the watchers and the watched" and avoids casting the officers, traditionally understood as the Observers in the panoptic model of incarceration, as an uncomplicated monolith.[218]

Con Games ends with a disavowal of any responsibility for the potentially negative effects of encouraging an officer to view inmates as always already predatory. The qualification that the film's intention is not to produce inhumane behavior is indicative of an awareness that constant suspicion could indeed be dehumanizing. Of course, if this particular film was truly about navigating both the manipulation of officers and retaining empathy towards those incarcerated, there would be at least one scenario where the officer following up discovers that an inmate is, in fact, not playing a game, not running a con.

Correcting Corrections?

The *Correctional Officer* films are careful to make clear that they are not attempting to school correctional officers but rather remind them of what they surely already (should) know. The individual officer is constantly being acknowledged as important, their experience as valid, and their discernment as crucial. The narrator in

[218] Kevin Haggerty, "Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon," *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond,* edited by David Lyon (Portland, OR: Willan, 2006), 29.

Cell Searches (1978) states, “Hopefully this film won’t show you anything new” and in *Con Games* notes, “There is no substitute for your own good judgment. ”

The narrator of the *Correctional Officer* series is not only careful to defer to experience but is also consistently urging officers to utilize the films for self-reflection and personal development. *Courtroom Demeanor* concludes by emphasizing the need for officer objectivity, "not just cause it's expected of you as an officer of the law but hopefully because you expect it of yourself." *Inmate Body Searches Part 1* suggests, “This is a chance to remember again what’s important.” Questions such as, “Do you know what you are supposed to know?” in *Security in a Correctional Facility*, and, “ask yourself, ‘What is supervision?’” in *Supervision of Inmates*, frame the *CO* series as an opportunity to gain self-knowledge.

Considering the fact that corrections as a whole was under external pressure to professionalize during this period, the *Correctional Officer* series seems to recognize the possibility of a doubting, if not hostile, audience. The consistent deference to veteran officers and their on-the-job instincts and experience is a means by which the *Correctional Officer* series acknowledges its own position as a potential bad object, especially for experienced corrections officers. This approach to the audience situates what could be a forced or mandatory exhibition as an opportunity to hail officers as valued, modern, and loose subjects. As Sam Binkley describes it, loosening meant becoming “a mobile, flexible, and self-responsible self,”[219] a reorganized self, free from collective traditions and conventions, capable of rolling with the punches and

[219] Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose,* 6.

unpredictability of postmodernity.[220] The series frames itself as an opportunity for self-knowledge and in turn, depicts the corrections officer as someone who should be interested in the journey towards that knowledge. [221] Rather than didactic direction, rote procedure or administrative condescension, these films consistently promote individual self-knowledge and choice. This reflective stance drops away, however, when the anxieties, around race, sexuality, empathy and loyalty bubble to the surface as threats to the professionalization of corrections.[222] It should give pause that commiserating with an incarcerated individual is definitively discouraged for officers of color, yet, in *Security in a Correctional Facility* (1976), the narrator leaves this question hanging: "'Never to kill', some say that's changing now. What do you think?"

The need for reflection on the nature and purpose of corrections and the correct professional approach is not located in any reference to contemporary criticism of the profession but rather in society's conflicting discourses. At no point does the series acknowledge reports of abuse, increased scrutiny or the fallout from Attica as a reason for the series. The *CO* series instead points to the existential crisis of corrections as a profession. Stated here, in *Supervision of Inmates* (1976), "Correctional facilities aren't all alike, some emphasize keeping inmates from society, some try to prepare a man to reenter society, some try both. Unfortunately, while society is making up its mind, someone has to deal with the inmates while they're here."

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[220] Binkley, *Getting Loose,* 8.
[221] The instability of identity and social life was reframed in the 1970s as an opportunity to participate in a narrative realization and growth.
[222] *Inmate Body Searches –Part 2,* directed by James Skidmore (Glendale, California: AIMS), 1978, 129-COP-7, 16mm (reel2). *Security in a Correctional Facility*, produced by Charles Cahill and Associates, 1976, 129-COP-14, 16mm.
Supervision of Inmates, produced by Charles Cahill and Associates, 1976, 129-COP-16, 16mm.

The film's acknowledgment of American society's indecisiveness concerning the purpose of incarceration presents the series' inability to address specific policy and procedure as an issue exterior to the profession itself. It is the conundrum of America's unresolved questions about the purpose and goal of incarceration that creates the lack of standardization; an unavoidable reality that the film series accepts. The *CO* series positions itself as being separate from societal criticism; it respects and is on the side of the officer. Yet the space for reflection is not unlimited. The necessity of incarceration is left unquestioned. The *Correctional Officer* series, like other 'useful films,' was produced as a result of a demand for improvement. But was also invested in the preservation of the very institution it was tasked with changing.[223]

Conclusion

Theatrical prison film has a tendency to focus on the process by which inmates are stripped of identity, the processing of individuals into incarcerated inmates. Paul Mason has proposed that the machinery of prison, prison as machine, is fundamental to the prison film genre.[224] The *Correctional Officer* series reminds us that prisons are also places of employment. Officers are not stripped of their identity, but their identity is still positioned as a potential disruption to the carceral machine. The emphasis on self-reflection and self-knowledge in the *CO* series conveniently places responsibility (and any potential blame) for disruption squarely on the shoulders of the officer rather than the administration or the prison industrial complex at large.

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[223] Haidee Wasson and Charles R. Acland, "Introduction, Utility and Cinema" *Useful Cinema,* ed. Haidee Wasson and Charles R. Acland (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), Kindle 4.
[224] Paul Mason, "The Screen Machine: Cinematic representations of prison," *Criminal Visions Media Representations of Crime and Justice,* edited by Paul Mason (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 291.

The early films of the *Correctional Officer* series offer a glimpse into how corrections utilized film to speak to itself as a profession. The *CO* series takes on the difficult task of instructing without offending, in a non-standardized environment whose goal is unsettled. As a result, the series documents not only expectations ("how it wished that people would behave"[225]) but also moments of anxiety (how it fears officers will behave) in unexpected ways. It is important to recognize these films as participants in a larger negotiation of not only how a corrections officer should act but also how they should appear to the public, to themselves, and to those incarcerated.

The *Correctional Officer* series provides a means of considering how racial and sexual tension was imagined as problematic to the job of doing corrections. The *Correctional Officer* films are evidence that sexual and racial tension were considered significant and difficult topics for the profession. Unburdened by the need to continually demonstrate their authenticity, these instructional films aimed to assert their value in ways quite different from films whose aim was to entertain or inform the public. Instructional films offer a view of prison that veers away from fictional films' valorization of authenticity. Rather than claiming to expose the real prison, the *Correctional Officer* asserts and affirms the officer's possession of the real; the real experiences and real intuition of officers are celebrated and this series was also tasked with directing its audience's attention to the uncomfortable and challenging.

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[225] Patrick Vonderau, "Vernacular Archiving: An Interview with Rick Prelinger" *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media,* ed. Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 52.

CHAPTER 3

Prison reality television: *Lockup* invites us in and prison finds a home on cable

The early 2000s saw the emergence of what has been described as a new approach to prison, perhaps even the birth of an unscripted sub-genre: prison reality television. MSNBC's *Lockup*, the first and longest running of these productions, promised to take viewers 'inside' to 'unlock the gates' and provide access to prison life. *Lockup* has made prison on-screen bingeable; indeed, it has been programmed in blocks to encourage binge-watching. *Lockup's* success has created an unprecedented archive of incarceration, both with regard to content and quantity, and it has inspired a plethora of other prison reality programming. Few scholars have attempted to reckon with the visual archive of prison that *Lockup* has produced over its 25 seasons, (certainly, more have focused on *Orange Is the New Black).* This chapter contextualizes *Lockup* to provide insight into how prison (and county jails) on-screen succeeded in such an unprecedented manner in the new millennium. By positioning *Scared Straight!*, *Grey Area, Riot*, *Penitentiary* and *The Correctional Officer* series as important antecedents to *Lockup*, I bring together the legal limitations for media access to prison, the interests of industry, the notion of predatory black masculinity, and the correctional officer (the individual and the

profession), and I see these as precursors to *Lockup* as a complex and sometimes contradictory production, both a process and a product.

My first section will provide an overview of *Lockup*. The second section will provide insight into how *Lockup* was produced and how the professional image of corrections may be considered part of this account. My third section reflects upon the appeal of *Lockup,* particularly as it relates to the MSNBC as a brand. The fourth, fifth and sixth sections consider *Lockup*'s position as a participant and product of discourses concerning surveillance, lifestyle, and neoliberalism. Finally, I offer some tentative speculation about the impact of *Lockup*. Reflecting on the effect of *Lockup* must, I believe, be a flexible if not provisional endeavor as the series only just finished its final season in early 2017 and will continue to live on in reruns across a variety of platforms. The tendency (for much) of prison media scholarship to describe a production as either complicit or subversive with respect to the conception of prison and crime control in the United States is necessarily avoided here not only due to the complexity of the production but also the carceral reality of our current period. Prison is once again a topic of discussion, often in relation to opioid abuse and economic feasibility, but also as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. Early reviews of *Lockup* neatly aligned the series with the simultaneous extreme and increasing rates of incarceration in the United States. While the United States achieved and still holds its position as the world's leading jailer of its own people, the tenure of *Lockup* has also seen a slight decrease in imprisonment rates. *Lockup's* lengthy tenure in production has included the peak of incarceration as

well as the gradual decrease that has occurred since.[226] Since the peak of mass incarceration rates in 2008, 36 states have reduced their imprisonment rates.[227] Crime rates have also continued to decline, with violent and property crime reaching levels not seen since the late 1960s.[228] My point here is simply to say there is no one-to-one correlation between *Lockup's* existence and America's rates of incarceration. I have no desire to advocate for *Lockup* as a product but I am interested in *Lockup* as a complex negotiation of expectations, limitations, and interests than has heretofore been discussed.

***Lockup*: An Overview**

Before each episode of *Lockup,* audiences are warned: "Due to mature subject matter viewer discretion is advised." But the narrator for the show begins with an invitation: "There are two million people behind bars in America, we open the gates. Lockup." *Lockup* began as a series of specials focused on one prison per episode, each with its particular problems and circumstances. These shows often begin with a brief history of the institution, for what it is notorious, and what 'kind' of offenders it houses. The order may be different, but these shows almost always depict the intake and reception process and what the order of the day is. Then the episode moves on to particular issues, usually including the strategies, tools, and technologies for dealing with violence. Moving images and still shots accompany the narrator's description, and these

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[226] Adam Gelb and Jacob Denney "National Prison Rate Continues to Decline Amid Sentencing, Re-Entry Reforms" *Pew Charitable Trusts,* January 16, 2018, http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2018/01/16/national-prison-rate-continues-to-decline-amid-sentencing-re-entry-reforms

[227] Of course, given the current anti-immigrant and general nativism that has and will result in the swelling of detainment facilities, these trends may only reflect part of the ongoing reality of unfreedom in the United States.

[228] Crime rates have repeatedly been shown to not correspond to rates of incarceration. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2018/01/16/national-prison-rate-continues-to-decline-amid-sentencing-re-entry-reforms

are also interspersed with interior and exterior shots of the prison architecture itself. The series has a definitive focus on maximum security prisons that house the most violent offenders (and the narrator at the beginning of the show labels the individuals in the facility as such). *Lockup*'s narrator states in a variety of ways that prison is a "society within society."[229] Correctional officers and the incarcerated are interviewed but the information procured from each differs substantially. Officers and inmates both provide insight into life inside, but those incarcerated also relate personal information about themselves while officers' lives and personal motivations are not included.

The *Lockup* series originated in 2005 but has been split into several sub-series. The *Lockup-Extended Stay* program began in 2007 as a way to demarcate a number of episodes devoted to a particular prison, for example, the four episodes labeled *Lockup: San Quentin Extended Stay*. *Lockup Raw* features previously unaired footage as well as interviews with the production crew of *Lockup* itself. *Lockup World Tour* purports to go 'behind the bars' internationally and investigates what prison life is like in other countries.

The quickest reaction to *Lockup's* popularity and success (which is, of course, the reason why it has been able to generate so much content) came from the popular press., Writing for *The Atlantic*, James Parker contemplated the appeal of prison television in an article entitled, "Prison Porn." Parker locates pleasure in viewing the "vastly bummed out texture of prison life" but also identifies one of the draws of *Lockup Extended Stay* as its educational nature since the audience can learn about a specific prison in more depth over several episodes.[230] The reviews of *Lockup* tend to revolve around the tension between its exploitation and the potential for it to engender either viewer education or

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[229] *Lockup* Utah
[230] James Parker, "Prison Porn," *The Atlantic,* March 2010.

empathy. Parker states, “Sensational? Sort of exploitative? Intermittently debasing? Check, check, and check again. But *Lockup* keeps going, into unexpected zones of sympathy and catharsis." Parker ends his commentary with one last note of enjoyment: “Perennially enthralling, too, are the prisoners with whom it appears that nothing can be done -- the literally incorrigible, or those who have been bashed into a pure state of defiance, beyond the last straw, beyond everything.”[231] (I will be following up on this particular pleasure later in the chapter.)

An article by Matt Kelley for Change.org follows similar lines. Kelly also recognizes exploitation but also the series’ ability to educate. “For an inquisitive audience, prison-themed TV shows can spark debate and even bring change. Some viewers will look at MSNBC's *Lockup* and wonder: ‘Why do we lock someone up for 10 years for stealing a car?’[232] A decidedly more negative perspective was offered by Mansfield Frazier in a piece for *The Daily Beast*:

> Prison and jail administrators are pimping out prisoners to production companies who make what they euphemistically call documentaries by filming the most deranged inmates they can find and putting them on the air to satisfy the prurient, jaded, and schadenfreude-filled desires of a desensitized public.[233]

The viewing and commentary on *Lockup* are not confined to the United States. Writing for *The Guardian,* Michael Holden refers to *Lockup* as the “daddy” of the American prison documentary and while *Lockup* may be the “most thoughtful” of the bunch, Holden describes the genre at large as “voiceovers and violence.” He asks, “What

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[231] Ibid.
[232] Matt Kelley, “Prison Reality TV: When You Can’t Avert Your Eyes” *Change.org,* March 3, 2010.
[233] Mansfield Frazier, “The Saddest Reality Stars of All: Prisoners” *The Daily Beast,* May 19, 2013. https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-saddest-reality-stars-of-all-prisoners

then, is the point of it all? Clearly this is not a showpiece of a successful system."[234] Holden leaves these questions hanging, for the most part, again asking: "What is America telling us by producing all this, and why are we watching so much of it?" While Holden's review reminds us that *Lockup's* circulation extends beyond America's borders, the questions he leaves hanging hint that there is no simple answer to the questions of what audiences' abroad may be making of the series.

My own preliminary questions about *Lockup* included: How did this program come to be? What limitations were already pre-existing (on this and other prison documentation)? Why does this material seem to have such popular appeal? What larger discourses might this programming be participating in (in addition to incarceration and taking as a given its exploitative nature)? How might paying attention to corrections as a profession provide insight (and shift focus away from those already exploited)? As I began to delve into these questions, I began to ask another question; how might a better understanding of *Lockup* be useful – to understanding why we have the prisons on-screen that we do and if we take this material as a result of and productive of neoliberalism in a variety of ways, can we understand the processes of neoliberalism better through it?

Aurora Wallace in "Better Here than There: Prison Narratives in Reality Television" argues that "the spectacle of punishment via the medium of reality television works… to reaffirm uncritical notions of rehabilitation and narratives of empowerment consistent with neoliberal thinking" simultaneously setting up a contrast between prisons

[234] Michael Holden "US Prison TV: toughest on the block" *The Guardian* August 2, 2011.

at home and prison abroad that positions American prisons as superior and civilized.[235] While Wallace's chapter is subtitled "Prison Narratives in Reality Television," its focus is a particular program, *Locked Up Abroad*. *Locked Up Abroad* (2005-), also known as *Banged Up Abroad,* is produced by U.K. based Raw TV, airs on the National Geographic Channel and purports to tell the stories of British and American "survivors'" experiences in foreign prisons. It is not part of the *Lockup* franchise. Prison travel television has become its own subgenre and deserves scholarly attention but Wallace's focus on *Locked Up Abroad* may have undermined her ability to make a larger argument about this kind of programming more generally. *Locked Up Abroad* does indeed establish prisons 'out there' as dirty, over-crowded and scary and the 'survivor's' experience is often framed as eventually rehabilitative and inspiring of gratitude for America, even the American carceral system. *Locked Up Abroad* is not however the totality of prison reality television. On the very same channel, *Lockdown* (2006 -2011) reruns depict American prisons in a way that few would describe as emphasizing their civilized nature. Flipping to MSNBC you may also catch an episode of another prison travel show, *Lockup-World Tour,* which does not, in fact, only ever cover prisons in ways that depict America's system as superior. Episodes on Scandinavian, Eastern European and Israeli prisons are focused instead on how much more pleasant prisons elsewhere can be. Wallace's points about *Locked Up Abroad* are well taken, they just do not all neatly apply to all of prison reality programming.

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[235] Aurora Wallace, "Better Here than There: Prison Narratives in Reality Television," in *Punishment In Popular Culture* ed. Charles J. Obletree Jr and Austin Sarat, (New York: New York University Press, 2015) 78.

Wallace's argument that *Locked Up Abroad* is consistent with neoliberal logics of personal responsibility is buttressed by Laurie Oullette's description of reality television itself as a genre through which we are being trained to become "self-disciplining, self-sufficient, responsible and risk-averting individuals."[236] Consistently showing rehabilitation and transformation, through individual accountability and agency, as an inevitable outcome of prison (which *Locked Up Abroad* does), the prison abroad becomes a space of individual responsibility for self-improvement.[237] *Locked Up Abroad* certainly fits neatly into an understanding of reality television as productive of a particular kind of citizenship. After all, in the stories that *Locked Up Abroad* tells, citizens go abroad, are jailed, self-reformed, and then return to citizenship at home, better and wiser as a result of their own decision to make use of their time and appreciate their privilege (as either Americans or Brits). This is not, however, the story that is most often told on *Lockup.* Repeat offenders, consistent drug offenses, histories of crime and violence that extend over a lifetime do not support the concept of prison as always and ultimately a place of rehabilitation and transformation for the better. Does *Lockup*, focused on stories of violence and survival inside of prisons in this country, offer a different example of the "vernacular diffusion of neoliberal common sense"?[238]

My goal in this chapter is to frame *Lockup* as an ongoing, messy negotiation, the terms of which have important historical roots in the 1970s. I draw upon my previous

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[236] Laurie Ouellette, "Take Responsibility for Yourself: Judge Judy and the Neoliberal Citizen, in *Reality TV: Remaking TV Culture* ed. Laurie Ouellette and Susan Murray (New York: New York University Pres, 2004), 231.

[237] This is similar to the narrative that Caleb Smith argues has been crucial to the project of imprisonment in the United States from very early on.

[238] Anna McCarthy, "Reality Television: A Neoliberal Theater of Suffering" *Social Text* 93, Vol. 25, No 4 Winter 2007.

chapters to demonstrate how a historically situated consideration of prison on screen and a shift in focus and further the goal of understanding prison media and its possibilities.

The Making of *Lockup*

Lockup was produced by 44 Blue Productions and aired on MSNBC between 2000 and 2017. The *Lockup* series came out of a set of shows that were part of the *MSNBC Investigates* series. During the first season of *Lockup*, there are "revisits" to two prisons that MSNBC had previously filmed, with the stated goal of investigating to see if conditions had improved and how. *Lockup* explicitly states that it "exposes conditions at some of the most notorious correctional facilities in the country."[239] *Lockup* can now better be described as a franchise, with the original series turning into five titles, *Lockup Raw, Lockup Extended Stay*, *Lockup World Tour, Lockup Special Investigation*, and *Life After Lockup* that combine to create 'seasons' over *Lockup*'s 16-year tenure at MSNBC.

Scared Straight! established the potential success not only of non-fiction prison programming and but also production arrangements between prison administrators, and media producers in light of the Supreme Court's decisions. The production of *Lockup*, therefore, is not a stable set of practices but rather a negotiation that happens between 44 Blue Productions and prison systems, administrators, and officers on a state by state, prison by prison basis.

In a 2002 media access survey conducted by *Corrections Compendium*, all of the 45 responding state correctional systems stated that they had some kind of written policy

[239] "Lockup - Info (Facebook)." MSNBC. Web. October 24, 2011.

regarding media access and 78 percent of these had some kind of formal office devoted to public information.[240] 25 systems allowed audio/visual equipment use. Consent forms signed by inmates are required in 37 systems. Twelve systems specifically prohibit inmates from accepting or soliciting money from the media. These are examples of how the precedent of judicial restraint has allowed for a diversity of polices regarding media access across the U.S.

Ideally, information about the specific arrangements between producers and prison administrators would be found in contracts between 44 Blue Productions and state corrections administrations. But the information that I was able to find about contracts was usually through local news organizations reporting that a nearby prison was going to be featured on *Lockup*.[241] While these sources are limited, they provide enough information to answer some questions and raise others. The production crew is quick to assure any interviewer that no one incarcerated is paid to be on *Lockup.*[242] But the question of if and what amount of money is exchanged between the prison and 44 Blue Productions is much more difficult to answer with specifics. There were some examples of exchanges of money between 44 Blue Productions and Departments of Corrections for which I was able to find documentation for. Both Alabama and Florida correctional systems have had contracts with 44 Blue Productions that include compensation. The Alabama and Florida contracts were both for the purpose of filming for the *Lockup*

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[240] While dated, this is the most recent, comprehensive list of policies available.

[241] Theoretically, one should be able to find and view these contracts. During my research, I found a list of Florida DOC contracts, which included one with 44 Blue Productions listed on it. Contract #C2688 for $170,000 listed "Footage" as the item being paid for. I was not able to get more information about this contract though. A similar effort (and an FOI request) was made into an episode about Stateville Correctional Center in Illinois. While I eventually left this line of inquiry, I want to acknowledge that while Prison is often referred to as a singular entity, and generalized into a single institution, in actuality prisons are localized entities. Prisons have their own specific media histories.

[242] http://www.msnbc.com/lockup/producer-susan-carney-answers-your-questions-0

Extended Stay title, even though their contract sums are very different. 44 Blue Productions reimbursed the state of Alabama with $7,500[243] and the state of Florida with $110,000.[244] (Was there a change in budget resources between these two shows (Alabama airing in 2008 and Florida 2012) or is this just a number that varies depending on the salaries of correctional officers and the system that you are dealing with?) News releases and local articles covered a *Lockup* filming of Santa Rosa Correctional Institution in particular because the filming was temporarily halted. The governor, Rick Scott, felt that Ed Buss, the recently hired Florida DOC Secretary had overstepped his authority in negotiating the contract with 44 Blue in the first place.

Buss, who had worked with 44 Blue Productions when he was the prison Commissioner in Indiana initially released his own announcement about the filming in August 2011, stating:

> I have no qualms about them coming into our prisons. I'm proud of our staff and how well our facilities are run, and I hope this will help Floridians understand the challenges we face with our inmate population, as well as the benefits prisons provide to their communities through our programs and re-entry efforts[245]

About a week after this was announced, filming came to a halt as Rick Scott exerted state control over an 'entertainment-related contract' that he decided was not within Buss' authority to negotiate since it did not involve the day-to-day running of the prison system.[246] Later that same month it was reported that the governor's office approved the

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[243] Adam Prestridge, "ADOC Pleased With Holman Documentary," *Corrections News: The Alabama Department of Corrections*, (March 2008) 4.
[244] Dara Kam, "Scott approves TV contract after corrections chief resigns" *The Palm Beach Post.* August 26, 2011. Web, 13 Nov. 2011
[245] States News Service. "MSNBC "Lockup" Crew Filming Santa Rosa CI." Florida Department of Corrections. August 11, 2011. Press Release. Web. 13. Nov. 2011.
[246] Dara Kam, "Governor Rick Scott Cancels MSNBC Show" *The Palm Beach Post.* August 26, 2011. Web. 13 Nov. 2011

contract and Buss had tendered his resignation.[247] Often the 'State' is not distinguished from prison administrators or even corrections officers and this brief debacle in Florida serves to remind us that the 'State' has a variety of interested parties working on its behalf and not all of them have the same exact interests. This short diversion down the rabbit hole of Floridian politics also makes clear that the assumption that the prison itself rather than the state it dwells in profits from the taping of *Lockup* may require some adjustment.

Profit may figure into the motivation of prison systems or states to allow *Lockup* into their prisons, but I suggest that this is a secondary goal and concern, with the primary focus being to influence the public discussion about incarceration and the cultivation of a particular image for corrections itself. The *Correctional Officer* series and its contextualization in the second chapter positions the late 1970s as the foundation of modern-day corrections' efforts to train its members to protect its public image. In a post-Attica environment, corrections found itself in a defensive position that it responded to through professionalization and unionization. The participation that *Lockup* has had from such a large variety of prisons and prison staff is a result of the idea that corrections needs to advocate for itself and can and should take control of its self-image.

This is not to say that all prisons have or will welcome cameras inside their walls with open arms. The correctional journals that I researched for this project portray, prior to 2005, a concern with media coverage of prisons. These concerns revolve around avoiding making prisoners into "media stars," avoiding bad publicity around conditions that violate human rights, and contrastingly is suspicious of the media's ability to spin prisoners'

[247] Steve Bousquet and Katie Sanders, "Edwin Buss abruptly resigns as Florida prisons chief" Bradenton Herald, August 25, 2011. Web 2 August 2018. https://www.bradenton.com/news/article34520463.html

accommodations to make felons look 'pampered'.[248]

Lockup and shows like it gave prisons the opportunity to present corrections in a particular light. 44 Blue gained access to prisons by making administrations comfortable with their approach (showing them previous shows) and letting them review footage. An article about Spring Creek Correctional Center in Alaska praises what it calls 44 Blue Productions' "unbiased approach."[249] According to several articles,[250] 44 Blue gave the prison administration the "opportunity to review the shows before they even aired for some editorial points that we wished to make" and promised AKDOC that they would not "reveal anything that would hurt the AKDOC's image."[251] 44 Blue Productions allowed prisons to actively control their public image and in return, they had access to a very cheap set, complete with unpaid actors. Given the current policies and precedents in regard to media access to prisons, *Lockup* also has little choice to not offer this arrangement since prisons and state governments have no obligation to allow anyone with a camera (corporately sponsored or otherwise) into their facilities.

I turned to professional journals to further understand how *Lockup* and prison television generally was perceived from within the profession. I found, surprisingly, nothing about *Lockup*,[252] but I also found that preceding the *Lockup*'s debut, media, and specifically portrayals of corrections officers, are a topic for concern in these journals.

A 1997 article by Eric S. Jefferis and Robert J. Kaminski in *Policing: An*

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[248] Jeff Gerritt, "Finally Giving Serious Attention to Corrections: Prison Professionals Can Help" *Corrections Today,* (June 2005), 72-77.
[249] Jim Montalto, "'Lockup focuses on Alaska, " *Corrections.com* (September 18, 2006)1-3.
[250] Adam Prestridge, "ADOC Pleased With Holman Documentary," *Corrections News,* The Alabama Department of Corrections, (March 2008), 4.
[251] Jim Montalto, "Lockup Focuses on Alaska," 2.
[252] This research was completed in 2013. The online accessible resources (available from 1994 on) that I looked at were *The Corrections Professional, Corrections Today, Corrections Compendium, Corrections Management Quarterly,* and *Federal Probation*.

International Journal of Police Strategies & Management, examines the effect of videotaped arrests on public perception of the use of force by police officers. The article notes that few studies to date have examined the impact of these encounters on perceptions of police. While this article is not about corrections, I mention it as a way of bringing to mind that there may be concurrent concerns with perceptions of police and that this period, the late 1990s, is when we see studies and commentary begin to appear about this concern. Also, this article brings to mind the Rodney King beating in 1991 and the fact that the practice of capturing officers in the act of arrest (by private, individual citizens) is a relatively new phenomenon.

Four articles in *Corrections Today* in 1998 are concerned with the media. Their titles are generally self-explanatory: "*Taking a Balanced Approach to Media Access,"* "*Media Access: Where Should You Draw The Line?," "Openness Is The Best Policy" and "An Interview with Tom Fontana."* The first three articles clearly speak to concerns over how to handle media access to prison both in terms of the legislation and prison regulations and attitude- none of them advocate completely blocking journalists' access nor allowing media complete access either. The last article is an interview with the producer of *Homicide* and *Oz*. The interviewer specifically asks Fontana about violence in *Oz*, the research he did for the show, and what he thought the goal of the show was. The interviewer also states "Correctional officers and administrators often find themselves saddled with unflattering stereotypes. Did you run into any of these stereotypes in researching your show?" This question sums up a large concern that articles in 1999, 2001, and 2005 are focused on: the continued negative image of corrections officers as a profession and the need to work with and use media to portray

them more accurately and positively. In regard to reality television, I found only two descriptive articles in professional journals: "Danger Island wants ex-convicts on camera" (*Corrections Professional* 2001) and “Nevada Prison May Be Center of Reality Series” (*Comey* 2005).

The first article describes the premise of “Danger Island:”

> A new reality television show wants people with criminal records. The CBS show is called Danger Island, and its premise is this: A dozen ex-convicts will be placed on a remote island and given tasks to complete while being hunted by professional law-enforcement officers, big-game and bounty hunters. Think America's Most Wanted meets Manhunt, a CBS official said.[253]

(This show was never produced, I can only presume that CBS decided it would be better to stick with *Survivor*.) The later article is about a show that would have focused on a prison industries program at Southern Desert Correctional Center where incarcerated individuals restore and rebuild cars for private citizens. The producers are unnamed, but Court TV is mentioned as a possible host.[254] To my knowledge, this show did not come to fruition either.

Finally, 44 Blue Production and MSNBC themselves have provided some information about the filming process. The film and interview crew puts in long days and when embedded, the crew films for five or six months at a time. Before they arrive at a prison their production office supplies them with a packet that includes information about the prison, news articles about the incarcerated, research on local crime trends, current cases and relevant state and local laws.[255] When they enter the prison they have an officer

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[253] “Danger Island Wants Ex-Convicts on Camera,” *Corrections Professional* (September 07, 2001).
[254] Philip Comey, “Nevada Prison May Be Center of Reality Series,” *Corrections Compendium* (September/October 2005), 37.
[255] MSNBC Staff, “Lockup producer Susan Carney answers your questions (Part1)” *MSNBC* website, May 30, 2014. http://www.msnbc.com/lockup/producer-susan-carney-answers-your-questions-0

assigned to them for their security and they are themselves watched on surveillance.

Asked about how the crew chooses whom to interview, producer Susan Carney supplied:

> There are various ways we come to interview an inmate for "Lockup." Sometimes they approach us with a story we feel would be relatable for the show. Other times, the stories fall in our laps when an incident occurs in the facility (a fight, a contraband find, etc…) and we follow that story and meet the inmates involved. Also, we may be told about a certain individual by staff or inmates and we ask him or her to participate. Of course, there are those people we meet who we'd like to interview for "Lockup" but for their own reasons, they decline. As far as the stories making air, we usually film more stories than can fit into the "Lockup: Extended Stay" series so we often air those stories in the "Lockup: Raw" shows.[256]

The information supplied about the making of *Lockup* does not provide much insight into the production staff's interactions with staff, but this quote does inform us that they may help to guide the *Lockup* staff toward particular incarcerated individuals. Rasha Drachkovitch, the co-founder of 44 Blue Productions, was asked in a separate interview why prisons agree to let them film, Drachkovitch replied,

> In many cases, they want to show off what they do. It's a hard job and seldom seen. The first thing we do is get the ground rules laid down — we have to sign a waiver that [for example] if we are held hostage, we can't sue the state. In many cases, we get fitted for flak jackets, so if there is a stabbing, we have protection. We go through the whole hostage emergency plan. We end up just really adhering to the rules of each facility, and it's really serious.[257]

Drachkovich's interview is quite a contrast with Carney's, he boasts that *Lockup* has collected the "most definitive look at corrections ever recorded" and celebrates 44 Blue's leadership in this genre, promising, "we've been approached to create content in the same genre that we've had such success pioneering, we look forward to telling more stories of

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[256] MSNBC Staff, "Lockup producer Susan Carney answers your questions (Part2)" *MSNBC* website, June 4, 2014.

[257] Kimberly Nordyke, "'Lockup' EP Shares Tales From 16 Years of Interviewing Inmates, Scariest Moments" *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 29, 2016. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/lockup-ep-shares-tales-16-906857

life behind bars. Whether it be linear, international, VR or digital – exciting things to come."[258] Drachkovich's excitement for the future contrasts with what Carney describes as the next step in her career – "where I take what I've learned from doing "Lockup" and expand on that to include more solution oriented projects when it comes to incarceration in this country." When asked what the "scariest part" of spending time in prison was, Carney replied that she didn't find prisons scary but rather, "at times it can be emotionally overwhelming for me and for the rest of the crew because we do hear and witness a lot of pain, sadness and despair."[259]

As the earlier quote by Ed Buss illustrates, *Lockup* was considered a means by which corrections in general and specific prison systems could bring public attention to bear on problems that needed to be addressed (such as deteriorating facilities) while maintaining an argument for the necessity of prison. The information coming from the corrections perspective, before *Lockup* is produced, is wary of media's ability to replicate and disseminate negative stereotypes about corrections offices. The reactions to *Lockup*, however, radiated satisfaction with the amount of control that corrections was able to exert over its own image and well they should since *Lockup* takes care to show corrections officers as generally capable and forbearing.

While part of this chapter offers additional consideration of the representation of prisoners in *Lockup*, I purposefully continue to draw attention to the role of corrections to move the focus at least partially away from the already over-exploited incarcerated and to

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[258] Kimberly Nordyke, "'Lockup' EP Shares Tales From 16 Years of Interviewing Inmates, Scariest Moments" *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 29, 2016. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/lockup-ep-shares-tales-16-906857

[259] MSNBC Staff, "Lockup producer Susan Carney answers your questions (Part 1)" MSNBC website, May 30, 2014.

the individuals and profession whose participation in the prison industrial complex is crucial for its continuation. These non-incarcerated officers and staff have their own concerns and interests, at times separate from the State. If we consider why we have the prison representation that we have, we cannot leave corrections officers out but we also cannot take an ahistorical approach that ignores the legal precedents that have given prison administrators such localized power over what can and cannot be recorded in 'their' prison. Since the Supreme Court has washed its hands of the matter several decades ago, the fight for more media access to prisons is ongoing and it is local.[260]

Lockup & MSNBC

Lockup's success has been both a boon and a conundrum for MSNBC. As a cable channel that has definitively identified itself as a 'progressive' and left-leaning answer to the conservative talking heads of Fox News, MSNBC's overall brand identity is not one in which political calls for law and order and increased punitive measures sit well. So how was *Lockup* so successful on this particular platform and how did MSNBC manage its impact on its brand identity?

An article in *The Washington Post* by Jack Curry in 2011 describes *Lockup* as "the crazy rich uncle of MSNBC, the relative whose gifts you accept, but whom you keep stowed away in the attic."[261] Curry correctly describes *Lockup* as a " ratings bonanza, a prime-time juggernaut," even though it received no promotion on MSNBC itself. Scott Hooker a VP for MSNBC explains this fact in the same article, "Lockup' just doesn't need help. It has proven it's something that can succeed on its own. People know it is

[260] Joel Campbell, "Journalist Should Demand Prison Access." *Quill* 95.4 (2007): 34. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 11 Apr. 2012.
[261] Jack Curry, "MSNBC's 'Lockup': Documentary or Reality TV?" *The Washington Post,* July 8, 2011.

there."[262] *Lockup*'s success, however, has also at times been seen not just as a boon but also as a challenge to the channel's overall branding and its ability to compete as a serious news outlet. Phil Griffin, the president of MSNBC, described MSNBC's reliance on large blocks of *Lockup* programming (to secure solid weekend ratings) as "tricky."[263] In 2013, Griffin decided to start cutting back *Lockup* because "he felt it undercut the network's brand identity."[264]

MSNBC's Chris Hayes (host of *All In With Chris Hayes*) responded to a viewer during a Facebook Q&A session two years later who asked why MSNBC insisted on running *Lockup* reruns, instead of running news coverage over the weekend. Hayes replied that *Lockup* was quite often the highest-rated show on the network on Fridays. He also suggested that some viewers of MSNBC may assume that all viewers have the same tastes and that, "It may be the case that no one you know watches or likes *Lockup*. But believe me, there are LOTS of people who do."[265] We can infer from the Hayes quote that some MSNBC viewers considered *Lockup* an anomaly for the channel and perhaps anomalous to their very world view.

I argue that *Scared Straight!* is a particularly helpful precedent for understanding how *Lockup* came to be so successful and that rather than view *Lockup* as a deviation from MSNBC's liberal inclinations or its news ambitions, that the combination of *Lockup*

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[262] Ibid.
[263] Bill Carter, "CNN Leads in Cable News as MSNBC Loses Ground" *The New York Times,* March 22, 2011.
[264] Rebecca Dana, "Slyer Than Fox: The wild inside story of how MSNBC became the voice of the left" *The New Republic* March 25, 2013.
[265]https://www.facebook.com/allinwithchris/posts/554906041341092?comment_id=555137491317947&reply_comment_id=555138997984463&total_comments=10&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D
and /or https://www.mediaite.com/tv/msnbcs-hayes-defends-lockup-reruns-sometimes-its-highest-rated-show-on-network/

and MSNBC's brand worked together to make it the success that it was. The broadcasters for *Scared Straight!,* speaking before the Congressional Subcommittee on Human Resources, argued for *Scared Straight!'s* importance as a public service, not entertainment or amusement. *Scared Straight!* was also positioned, by its own narrative, as an important, educational moment in television. The fact that the program discussed violence, sodomy, and rape and used vulgar language was framed as not only a necessary part of its dedication to authentic documentation but educational. *Scared Straight!* established prison television as a public service. *Lockup* and programs like it benefit from this association.

Cecil and Leitner argue in their article "Unlocking the Gates: and Examination of MSNBC Investigates-Lockup," that *Lockup* encourages a law and order approach to criminal justice and fails to present the unadulterated reality of prison life and the prison system.[266] They state that the over-emphasis on violent offenders serving particularly long sentences in *Lockup* is a "replication of fictionalized accounts"[267] and that *Lockup* "clearly supports current crime control policies by failing to address the general prison population."[268] Cecil and Leitner position violence and the imperative to entertain as contrary to the ability of a television program to truly inform and inspire change. They describe the 'problem' of *Lockup* and programs like it as an unwillingness or inability to get at the "unadulterated truth" of prison. This call for access to the reality of prison is one that I am actively suspicious of, not because I want to champion *Lockup* as the epitome of prison television's possibilities but rather it seems to put a naïve faith in the

[266] Dawn K. Cecil and Jennifer L. Leitner, "Unlocking the Gates: An Examination of MSNBC Investigates-Lockup" *The Howard Journal,* 48.2, May 2009. Print.
[267] Cecil and Leitner, "Unlocking the Gates," 193.
[268] Cecil and Leitner, "Unlocking the Gates," 196.

existence of a pure, yet mediated, reality 'out there.' Considering media, particularly documentary, as an always mediated, edited, and curated presentation of the world, the demand for something 'more real' could continue infinitely. Cecil and Leitner's criticism of the over-emphasis on violent offenders also coincides with a general call for decarceration that has been made by activists who point to the sentencing of low-level nonviolent offenders an unreasonable approach to social issues such as drug use. John Pfaff points to a problem with the exclusive focus on non-violent offenders in *Locked In* (2017) noting that "over half of all state inmates are in prison for violent crimes, and the incarceration of people who have been convicted of violent offenses explains almost two-thirds of the growth in prison populations since 1990."[269] In other words, if we are to really attempt to decrease incarceration rates significantly, we cannot ignore those convicted of violent crimes. So, Cecil and Leitner's criticism of the depiction of those incarcerated as only violent offenders is, of course, valid but if we are considering prison reality television as a means of depicting prison as close to the statistical reality as it can be, those that have done violence can also not be erased from the picture. A real or authentic depiction of prison, if such a thing can exist, cannot be only focused on violence, to do so risks a kind of escalating realness whereby popular entertainment finds authenticity in the negative, the unruly and the unusual subject, and yet expunging violent offenders from the representation of prison runs the risk of avoiding the uncomfortable and politically unpopular reality that decarceration will not happen without addressing violent offenders as well.

I do not entirely disagree with Cecil and Leitner, *Lockup* can be seen to reinforce

[269] John Pfaff, *Locked In,* 11.

certain ‘law and order’ logics but it is not the only political stance or ideology that *Lockup* may appeal to and confirm. *Lockup*'s offer to take the public 'inside' has a legitimacy boost due to its location on a news-related network. The fact that MSNBC is assumed to provide a liberal perspective assists in emphasizing *Lockup*’s potential as educational yet also, perhaps, can trouble the notion that *Lockup* can only bolster law and order punitive approaches to criminal justice. *Lockup* may confirm the necessity of prisons to keep violent criminals in captivity for some and for others it may educate about the failures of mass incarceration. One way to explain *Lockup*’s rating success is its potential for wide appeal. *Lockup*’s positioning may have become more difficult (‘tricky’) for the network to manage over time as the repetition in the series[270] (not in location but issues explored and format) chipped away at its aura of informative public service. As *Lockup* was perceived as losing its justification as service and becoming more base entertainment, its presence on the MSNBC lineup became more difficult to justify and more problematic for the channel’s brand as time went on.[271] While I can only speculate as to what audiences may have taken away from *Lockup*, *Lockup* can be both exploitative and educational, the two are not mutually exclusive. So while MSNBC did profit from *Lockup’*s exploitation of prisoners’ images, stories, and pain, audiences may also have learned what it looks like when a prison is described as ‘overcrowded’ and what that means in regards to daily life. *Lockup* audiences certainly learned how deteriorating buildings can create unsafe conditions and if *Lockup* did nothing else, it trampled the narrative of the prison-as-country club. Considering the wide appeal and

[270] Duplication as well, as the success of *Lockup,* resulted in a wave of other prison reality television shows.
[271] MSNBC also left itself open for criticism by not covering events such as the largest prison strike by incarcerated individuals in U.S. history (2016) while simultaneously profiting from the documentation of incarceration.

popularity of *Lockup,* I also want to offer connections between *Lockup* and popular discourse that are not neatly enfolded into the topic of mass incarceration itself.

Surveillance

The threat of terrorism and combating terrorism are common topics in our dramas, crime investigation shows and certainly in films in the post 9/11 United States. This increase in awareness and wariness toward terrorism has increased government surveillance. The Patriot Act (2001) is the "political embrace of surveillance during a time of crises."[272] Secret searches, wiretaps, access to financial records and internet communication all of these are now more easily made possible through The Patriot Act. In addition, as Kevin Haggerty and Amber Gazso put it in "Seeing Beyond the Ruins; Surveillance as a Response to Terrorist Threat" non-policing institutions are now involved in the collection of information and position the public, the individual citizen, as subjects of "surveillant assemblage."[273] There was and continues to be an increasing amount of attention being paid to the ways that our everyday use of the internet is being monitored for commercial purposes by companies like Google and Facebook.

These constant potential threats to privacy provide a background of anxiety around the need for and the abuse of technologies of surveillance within the United States. During the same period, the United States' treatment of prisoners abroad came under attack and provoked international outrage. The abuses at Abu Ghraib came to light in 2004 and the inhumane treatment of Iraqi prisoners by the U.S. military in 2010.

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[272] Amber Gazso and Kevin Haggerty, "Seeing Beyond the Ruins; Surveillance as a Response to Terrorist Threat," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 30, Number 2, Spring 2005) 175.
[273] Gazso and Haggerty, "Seeing Beyond the Ruins," 172.

Not only were the abuses perpetrated in Abu Ghraib and Iraq the subject of international condemnation, but the *60 Minutes II* report that broke the news featured an interview with one man who participated in the abuse and whose civilian job was as a correctional officer at a prison in Virginia.[274] The establishment of the Camp X-Ray detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba raised similar concerns when a *New York Times* article in 2004 reported that The International Committee of the Red Cross had inspected the camp and accused the military of torture similar to what had occurred in Abu Ghraib.[275] The news that the United States was engaged in the abuse of prisoners abroad was authenticated through visual media. Photographs of the abuse, some of which were taken by the officers themselves, were circulated on a variety of platforms. These images, for a time at least, called into question American imprisonment practices and raised the question (once again) of who was 'watching the watchers.' Just as Attica was important for understanding prison media in the 1970s, the position of the United States as the number one incarcerator of its own people and as a nation whose treatment of non-citizens was exposed as dehumanizing and immoral is important context for prison media in the 2000s

The social and media environment in which *Lockup* was broadcast and indeed thrived in was one in which surveillance, in particular, the surveillance of guards in 'detainment' centers was a topic of discussion. Perhaps *Lockup* acted not only to exploit prisoners but also to satisfy an appetite for seeing inside carceral facilities that was

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[274] Rebecca Leung, "Abuse At Abu Ghraib," Breaking News Headlines: Business, Entertainment & World News - *CBS News*, Feb 11, 2004.
[275] Neil A. Lewis, “The Struggle for Iraq: Inspectors; Red Cross Found Abuses at Abu Ghraib Last Year,” New York Times, May 11. 2004. https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/11/world/the-struggle-for-iraq-inspectors-red-cross-found-abuses-at-abu-ghraib-last-year.html

heightened by this specific context. The presumption that a program can only be scopophilic or awareness-raising drastically underestimates the complexity and contradictions that reality television is capable of producing.

Mimi White and Tarleton Gillespie have both written on the complexity of reality television and its epistemological ambivalence. White's discussion of *Cheaters* points to the ways that reality shows manage and present viewers with ideological contradictions that are left unresolved, as she states "the program and all of its participants routinely occupy unstable, contradictory and otherwise incommensurate positions" and the show "strategically destabilizes, challenges, and even dismantles the very realities it simultaneously exposes."[276] White and Gillespie examine shows that utilize surveillance technology to capture 'real' crimes (either moral or legal). I propose that *Lockup* is similarly complex and contradictory.

Lockup utilizes clips from closed-circuit television to verify violence and crime occurring inside the 'other world' of prison. The prison as a space that requires an explanation, from a distance, is the justification for *Lockup*'s existence, establishing a seemingly concrete binary between the inside and outside. Surveillance and containment technology are depicted as essential to the safety and proper operating of prison. For example, in *Lockup San Quentin* (2005) the deteriorating facilities and overcrowding are continually referred to as the cause of violence. As the narrator states, "by contrast, contemporary prisons control inmates' movement safely and remotely with the use of electronic doors."

[276] Mimi White, "Investigating Cheaters," *The Communication Review*, (9, 2006),234 - 238.

Lockup is built around two main concerns – what is everyday life like in prison and what are the problems in this particular place? To provide dramatic moments, *Lockup* inevitably turns its attention to the failure of institutional control at some point. The need for technologies of control and containment is repeatedly, visually argued for through proofs of violence, Polaroid shots and closed-circuit television clips provided by the institution. These proofs serve a dual purpose, they emphasize the necessity of technologies of control, both prison itself and inside prison and they emphasize prison as a dangerous and dramatic place.

Lockup proposes that technology and structures are the means for making prisons (and therefor rest of the world) safer yet there would be no suspense, drama, or lurking threat were these methods to work completely. Juxtaposed here are technologies of surveillance and control versus technologies of resistance. As regularly as these shows depict command centers and structural strategies, they also regularly show collections of contraband weapons, fashioned from toothbrushes and bits of everyday prison life. Methods of communication that circumvent lockdown, means of defense and attack, passing contraband and (the idea of) having sex; all of these are also part of the regular content of these shows. This juxtaposition suggests that prison reality TV offers an ideologically complex window onto current conceptions of surveillance and power. The incarcerated is 'other', stripped of citizenship, yet also representative of sheer human will and resistance in the face of institutional domination. The effectiveness of prisons to contain their occupants is never an absolute on *Lockup* and the very existence of contraband hints at the instability of the very premise that *Lockup* is founded on: a sharp division between 'inside' and outside.

Fiona Allon describes the smart home as promising "customized interactivity freedom and choice," a "technological sanctuary."[277] As a vision of the future, the smart home embodies what we seek to make better; the life we would like to live in the future as facilitated by technology. The prison can be juxtaposed with the utopic vision of the smart home, an endpoint or cautionary tale where technologically embedded surveillance and control have been utilized not to optimize life but to control, dehumanize, and strip individuality and citizenship.

The prison may be considered a kind of smart home where the flow of information is one way. That is to say that prisoners are subject to the surveillance of the structure and technology around them and are not allowed (legally) to have access to technology that would connect them to the world outside. Where Fiona Allon describes the smart home as a space where technology is made safe, the technologically advanced prison is meant to control and 'safeguard' bodies. As a vision of the future, the smart home embodies what we seek to make better – the life we would like to live in the future as facilitated by technology. The prison can be juxtaposed with the utopic vision of the smart home, a dystopic or cautionary tale where technologically embedded surveillance and control have been utilized not to optimize life but to control, dehumanize, strip individuality and citizenship. The fact that even in this environment, sheer human stubbornness, or (as Parker described earlier) men who "have been bashed into a pure state of defiance, beyond the last straw, beyond everything" are shown to persist is both an argument for the need to control these particular bodes and a celebration of human

[277] Fiona Allon, "An ontology of everyday control: space, media flows and 'smart' living in the absolute present," in *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age* Edited by Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy (London: Routledge, 2004), 260.

willpower.[278] This celebration of human will and ingenuity is, if not contradicted, then at least complicated by the pernicious specter of sexual assault that positions other prisoners as a terrifying and very present threat to bodily sovereignty and hetero masculinity. As discussed in Chapter 1, rape as a trope in prison media became more common during the 1970s, as the prison was also increasingly depicted as a black space. David Savran contextualizes this in "Taking it Like a Man: white masculinity, masochism, and contemporary American culture," stating that the equation of prison with rape and specifically to "black-on-white prison rape becomes the most extreme manifestation of how white men [think they] have been disadvantaged by the social and racial formations in American society since the 1960s."[279] According to the predominant assumptions about prisons and stereotypes of black men, when we combine black men with prison ideologically we wind up with the assumption of the black male prisoner as potentially a predatory rapist.[280] While prison reality shows cannot show prison rape, it is a threat that underlies the show, provides tension and an air of potential violence. [281] While *Lockup* does not focus exclusively on black prisoners, the threat of black masculinity is continually pertinent. The formulation of *Lockup* speaks to anxieties around surveillance and embedded technology at large, at the expense of those

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[278] James Parker, "Prison Porn," *The Atlantic* (March 2010).
[279] David Savran contextualizes this in "Taking it Like a Man: white masculinity, masochism, and contemporary American culture," 132.
[280] An assumption made most literally by a judge who refused to send a white, "young, middle-class male" to Riker's Island on the premise that he "would almost certainly be sexually assaulted by the jail's "predominantly African American and Latino inmate population" in 1981(Sargent131**).**
[281] I should mention here that there are shows that feature women's prisons and that these shows operate on some very different principles. For the purpose of this project, I am focusing on men's prisons (which make up the vast majority of the actual prison population) but it should be mentioned that shows on women's prisons often seem to focus on the relationships, sexual and otherwise, formed between women and seem to key into tropes that relate to 'the fallen woman.' The institutionalization of women certainly has its own history and notions of pathologizing women that seem pertinent to any examination of these shows. As does the place of white femininity, stereotypes of black women and in general how middle-class white femininity is reified as the ideal and normalized version of femininity.

incarcerated, whose freedom is not threatened since it has already been stripped but *Lockup* is not simply a display of entire defeat or overwhelming control. The very same resistance to control that *Lockup* celebrates is limited in its radical, symbolic potential by the pre-existing specter of racialized predation.

Prison Lifestyle

If the combination of celebrating control and celebrating its defiance troubles the presumption that prisons are effective while still arguing for their necessity, explorations of prison lifestyle further contradict the foundational division between inside and outside by delving into the everyday life of the incarcerated. As Mike Featherstone states, the term lifestyle connotes " individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness."[282] Giddens remarks on this as well by stating that lifestyle implies choice, "making it part of the broader 'detraditionalization' of life today: in place of 'handed down,' fixed identity positions based on tradition, lifestyle places emphasis on choice, change and reflexivity."[283] As prison is not exactly a place of choice or flexibility, is it still possible to describe *Lockup* as lifestyle television? Furthermore, is doing so productive?

Lifestyle, as Bourdieu conceived it, was produced by a collection of daily, cultural practices that formed the habitus. Lifestyle communicates class as well as a sense of self, a means of distinguishing who one is within a matrix of social power. Lifestyle has, from a sociological point of view, been understood as activity concerned with

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[282] Mike Featherstone states the term lifestyle connotes " individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness" (55).

[283] Giddens "making it part of the broader 'detraditionalization' of life today: in place of 'handed down,' fixed identity positions based on tradition, lifestyle places emphasis on choice, change and reflexivity" (5).

consumerist self-fashioning that compensates for the loss of stable tradition in modernity. Maureen Ryan, however, has argued that limiting lifestyle to this definition can overdetermine neoliberalism's agency and overly simplify lifestyle, a complex cultural form.[284] Ryan argues that "lifestyle practices and texts constitute the terrain" between dominant structures and individual agency."[285]

Lifestyle television, when the format was originally introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, was associated with the instruction on domestic activities that moved (as evidenced by Martha Stewart's model of success) to a more aspirational form. Niche cable networks in the 1990s, such as HGTV, diversified the offerings of lifestyle television, moving away from aspirational, domesticated offerings, towards stratagems for doing more with fewer resources rather than lavish consumption.[286]

Prison life, as depicted in *Lockup* and its ilk, provides a nearly absurd 180-degree turn from the aspirational homemaking of Martha Stewart, made possible through inordinate amounts of time and capital. *Lockup* instead offers viewers insight into the methods by which incarcerated men style themselves and their spaces with very little capital (though sometimes large amounts of time) within a highly restricted and unenviable environment. Prison reality television is markedly different from a vast array of lifestyle programming on television, in large part because the relationship between the viewer and a show such as *Lockup* is incredibly far from aspirational. The environment also lacks the aesthetics of 'ordinariness' that Ryan argues has been one of the keys to the spread of lifestyle as a cultural form. Prison reality television may seem miscategorized

[284] Maureen Ryan, "A Better Everyday: Lifestyle Media in American Culture" (Ph.D. Diss: Northwestern University, 2014) 15 & 265.
[285] Ryan, "A Better Everyday," 16.
[286] Ryan, " A Better Everyday,"154.

with lifestyle television focused on cooking, gardening and decorating but lifestyle media is genre bending and blending. The matriarch of lifestyle television, Martha Stewart, managed to foment a recuperation of her image and brand name through reports on her "zeal for lifestyle tasks, even in the Big House."[287] The 'lifestyle tasks,' or lifestylings, that are depicted in *Lockup* encourage a consideration of the ways that the depiction of everyday life in an extraordinary circumstance and space can, in one moment, blur and in the next solidify, the boundary between inside and out. *Lockup* finds some common ground amongst what Frances Bonner refers to as "anthropological lifestyle shows such as the BBC's *Ray Mears' Bushcraft*" and *Tribe*.[288] Prison is depicted as anything but normal; rather it is a space that requires explanation

Prison, as a "heterotopia of deviance" is a "sort of place that lies outside of all places and yet is actually localizable."[289] Prison reality television emphasizes prisons as separate societies, outside the world but also specific and locatable in the world. If we were to only pay heed to the direct address and claims of *Lockup* to take the audience "inside," then the exploration of prison life is more of an ethnographic venture than a stylizing of life in a recognizable way.

As a means by which social difference has been theorized, ethnography has played an important role in substantiating racial valuations with scientific 'proof' of inherent, essential inferiority. As Deborah Poole states, ethnography's entanglement with

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[287] David B. Goldstein, "Recipes for Living: Martha Stewart and the new American subject" D. Bell & J. Hollows (Eds.), *Ordinary Lifestyles: Popular media, consumption and taste* (Maidenhead, UK; New York: Open University Press (2005), 57.
[288] Frances Bonner, "Whose lifestyle is it anyway?" In D. Bell & J. Hollows (Eds.), *Ordinary lifestyles: Popular media, consumption and taste* Maidenhead, UK; New York: Open University Press. (2005), 13.
[289] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." *Rethinking Architecture.* ed. Leach, Neil. (Routledge, 1997), 352.

racialism is rooted in their historically shared goal of revealing a truth, an "abstract order of meaning " underneath the surface.[290] Early ethnography was utilized to support white supremacy by presenting essential differences between races (and of course substantiating with biological proof the existence of 'race')- backed by the authority of science. As a means by which particular bodies might be contained, cataloged and observed, the goals of ethnography, particularly early ethnography and prisons are complimentary.

Eugenicists and criminologists both utilized photography as a means of supporting their hierarchical understandings of humanity. Shawn Michelle Smith in her analysis of the visual archives that W.E.B Du Bois's photographic collections and installations were in conversation with, notes that Louis Agassiz commissioned a series of daguerreotypes of enslaved men and women to support theories of polygenesis as early as 1850.[291] While eugenicists have moved away from visual (and on to genetic!) attempts at substantiation of essentialized inferiority, the entanglement of ethnography, visuality, and institutional containment have supported the persistence of race, the assumed necessity of the prison industrial complex and the position of black bodies as objects of study.

I argue that if we examine material like *Lockup* as only enacting an ethnographic gaze, we are accepting the premise that prisons are indeed other-worldly, and that prison reality television is only interested in and can only perpetuate the exploitation of the incarcerated. What I suggest instead is that working through *Lockup*'s depiction of prison

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[290] Deborah Poole, "An Excess of Description: Ethnography, Race, and Visual Technologies," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34.1 (2005): 160.
[291] Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) 46.

life brings to the fore the ways that *Lockup* undermines its own separatist logic and brings the correctional officer back into focus.

Lockup utilizes a variety of means to authenticate itself as an expert guide to prison culture and prison space. Explanatory diagrams of prison structures mix with a realist aesthetic (sometimes verging on a cinema vérité) that utilizes closed-circuit television footage and is also overlaid at times with voiceover by an unseen male 'expert.' These formatting and stylistic choices recall educational and documentary film practices. Prisoners explain how they combine commissary items to create new dishes and escape the monotony and unpleasantness of the food in the mess hall. Methods for passing notes, taking drugs, making alcohol, exercising and tattooing are all shared. These self-stylings and methods for making do with (much) less are not positioned as negative nuisances by the show, nor as completely alien or othering, rather these explorations of prison life are celebrated as creative ways of meeting human needs. The ordinary need to move, to eat something tasty or at least interesting, and to express oneself. I do not mean here, to recuperate *Lockup* but rather to point out that the violence, gangs, and segregation that are used to frame prison as a world with 'different rules' is combined with moments where the desires of those in prison are rather ordinary, even if they are fulfilled through unordinary means.

Corrections officers guide the viewer through the prison, explaining how different shanks are made, the various methods of drug smuggling and ingenious ways to hide all manner of contraband. Corrections officers provide an explanation for the objects and methods that the incarcerated cannot or may not want to. Officers are never explained as a possible means by which contraband may enter the prison, but rather as the heroic

'keepers' doing their best to keep prisoners safe, from themselves. Prison life stylings and workarounds are the means by which the state, represented through buildings and technology, fails, repeatedly, to contain not citizens but bare life. In *Lockup,* failures of containment are the fault of the incarcerated, technology, and infrastructure, not corrections officers. In this regard, the incarcerated men of *Lockup* can in one moment be depicted as debased and violent and in another, resourceful and creative, resisting institutional containment and de-individualization, despite not being anywhere near full participants in consumer culture (except as products through *Lockup* itself). Between the state and the bare life of the incarcerated stands the corrections officer. Correctional officers and the dangers they face, their expertise as they walk the viewer through intake processing or explain a particular issue– serves to localize prison and identify it not only as a place of containment but a place of labor. Again the logic that posits that prisons are a separate society 'out there' is destabilized and instead refigures prison as a dangerous, stressful and locatable workplace.

Corrections officers are figured as middlemen in *Lockup*, the prison is not their home nor is it another world, rather it is their job. *Lockup* explicitly states that it "exposes conditions at some of the most notorious correctional facilities in the country."[292] Corrections officers are positioned as the blameless custodians of these conditions. The state, unseen and unspoken for, takes the blame for staff shortages, crumbling buildings, and overcrowded conditions while officers struggle in their role – framed as the safekeeping of prisoners from themselves. Violence is always depicted as an issue amongst the incarcerated, not the incarcerated and officers. Correctional officers are the

[292] "Lockup - Info (Facebook)." MSNBC. Web. October 24, 2011.

guides to prison life but not positioned as agents of the state or even always in positions of full control; correctional officers cope.

While the critique of *Lockup* tends to focus on the exploitation of prisoners, the depiction of corrections, I would argue, is just as important of a subject if we are to consider how the job of corrections is argued for in prison discourse over time. After all, mass incarceration requires staffing. *Lockup* evacuates the correctional officer of responsibility for the conditions they work in and instead valorizes their willingness to work amongst 'dangerous criminals.' In the concluding section, I argue that *Lockup* positions the corrections officer as a model participant in a new form of governmentality.

Lockup & Neoliberalism

Much of the criticism of prison media has centered on its ability to exploit and its presumed inability to inspire societal change. This critique and responsibility put upon prison media are a direct result of the fact that prison media is the main mechanism by which a large portion of the public learns about incarceration. Prison media carries an onus, whether documentary or fiction, to educate the public or to at least consider its impact on prison discourse. The focus on authentic prison experience and documentation, as opposed to the exploitative, often cuts corrections officers out of the frame, so that their role in prison reality television is left unexamined. I discussed earlier that the positive reaction some officers had to working with 44 Blue Productions was due to the power that they had been given to shape and protect their public image. My analysis of the *Correctional Officer* film series roots this self-awareness and concern in the post-Attica period in which public and state attention and blame were brought to bear on the

profession itself. The legal precedents that have given local and state Department Of Corrections the ability to control their media access policies have created a situation where any film crew entering a prison is automatically entering into a negotiation with the administration which will, in turn, shape their final product. My aim in citing these points from chapter one and three here is to draw attention to corrections as a profession with interests that do not always directly align with those of the state. If we consider *Lockup* as a product of neoliberalism and as productive of neoliberalism, I want to point out that neither production is simple and that perhaps, by paying attention to the corrections officer and the industrial, professional, racial and televisual history of an object like *Lockup*, we may find ourselves able to gain a more complex understanding of media, production, and neoliberalism itself.

Mass incarceration itself has been definitively tied to neoliberalism. Beginning in the early 1970s, the loss of low-skill wage work through deindustrialization and global competition resulted in income stagnation and job loss that hit communities of color particularly hard.[293] Residential segregation, federal housing policies, and economic restructuring combined to create centers of urban poverty that would become the target of 'law and order' political rhetoric, even though they were, in fact, a minority of the nation's poor. The Black American poor in particular, having recently 'achieved' civil equality, could be blamed for the poverty they had structurally been put in, with equal opportunity rhetoric being used to imply that poverty was a question of individual responsibility. As Soss et. al. puts it, "as reformers mobilized to promote neoliberal and paternalist policy

[293] Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording and Sanford Schram, *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 60.

agendas, the race-coded urban underclass served as Exhibit A in their arguments for new governing arrangements."[294] Loic Wacquant in *Prisons of Poverty* elucidates how the invisible hand of the free market has become backed by the iron fist of the penal system as neoliberal governments turn to incarceration as a means of controlling the poor. Wacquant positions the prison as not a peripheral consequence of the neoliberal state but rather an integral part of it.[295] It follows that the representation of prisons should be considered not only as scopophilic sideshows but rather as an important means of understanding the formation of the neoliberal state. As Toby Miller states, "the media both incarnate social change as aspects of neoliberal policy and commodification *and* report on it."[296] Considering prison media however is not just a matter of neoliberal logics enacted through state power, programming such as *Lockup* is also a result of changes to the television industry itself.

Jennifer Holt's work in *Empires of Entertainment* has helped outline how the current media landscape has been shaped by neoliberal philosophy made policy during the 1980s. The 1980s also saw the first contracts signed for private correctional services between the Corrections Corporation of America and federal, state, and county-level governments. In the 1980s the public monies spent on prisons became of a topic of popular political rhetoric. As prison administration found itself having to justify costs and deny accusations of 'softness' the need for an improved media image became not only part of the agenda for corrections officers but prison administrations as a whole. With the turn to privatization, state prisons were faced with the prospect of competing with private

[294] Joe Soss*, Disciplining the Poor*, 63.
[295] Loic Wacquant, *Prisons of Poverty,* 175.
[296] Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship*, 178.

companies that promised lower costs.

Important to Holt's analysis is that this move toward the large conglomerate media empires that we have now was not a smooth or instantaneous transformation. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 "was not an isolated, singular shining moment for convergence and deregulation as it was often characterized" but rather the result of 15 years of effort to dismantle regulatory structures combined with "the ascendance of neoliberal ideological values in economic and political spheres."[297] Both the media industry and the state correctional systems were left to their own devices in an environment that, guided by Chicago school principles, produced huge conglomerates in the media industry and privatization of the prison industry. Both conglomeration and privatization were a result of a push towards efficiency and this move towards achieving efficiency, left largely unhindered by the judiciary or legislative bodies, has forced/or freed both industries to find the cheapest means of meeting the bottom line. State prisons have had to keep competitive as well as become more involved in protecting and projecting a positive public image. The television industry has found, through reality television, some of the most cheaply produced content available. Reality television production companies can produce shows with non-actors as the protagonists and non-union workers as “story staff,” offering television networks not only limited costs but somewhat limited risks. Prison Reality TV has no prize, no sets to build or houses to rent, it can even make use of the prison’s own closed-circuit television tape for part of its content. *Lockup* seems to be a triumph in efficiency on the part of 44 Blue productions and a useful tool to prisons themselves as they seek to shape their public image. I draw

[297] Jennifer Holt, *Empires of Entertainment,* 165.

attention to Holt's work for two reasons, the first is to position reality television within an industrial landscape now dominated by media empires and secondly is to emphasize neoliberalism as in-process rather than a permanent, achieved state.

Lockup presents several challenges to assumptions about neoliberalism's operation. The narrative around mass incarceration in the United States often describes the incarcerated as hidden or made invisible. According to this narrative, Nixon's War on Crime[298] became Reagan's all-out War on Drugs and sentencing minimums were increased, eventually earning the United States infamy as the World's Largest Jailer, incarcerating more of its own citizenry than any other nation (still). The policy and cultural moves that drastically increased the incarceration rate, particularly of black men, were framed by Henry Giroux as one of the means by which biopolitical power has been used to distinguish between bodies deemed valuable and others deemed disposable.[299] Giroux adds to Giorgio Agamben's conception of biopolitics (who added to Foucault's) as not only possible through state-sanctioned violence to bare life but also through some life being privileged over others, which "regulates entire populations to spaces of invisibility and disposability."[300] One question that *Lockup* and programs like it raise is if mass incarceration is one means of taking expendable bodies and making them socially invisible, how do we explain what is now a rather robust visual archive of those very same bodies?

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[298] For a brief summation of Nixon's strategy for equating drug addiction with violent crime see https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/03/the-war-on-drugs-how-president-nixon-tied-addiction-to-crime/254319/

[299] Henry Giroux, Stormy *Weather: Katrina and the Politics of Disposability* (Taylor & Francis, 2006).

[300] Henry Giroux, "Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class and the Biopolitics of Disposability" *College Literature* (West Chester University, *2006*) 181.

Another question raised by *Lockup* is specific to the ways that television and neoliberalism have been linked. Laurie Oullette argues that in the current stage of reality TV the broader ideologies expressed serve a neoliberal agenda. Utilizing *Judge Judy* as an example, Oullette states that these programs do not simply subvert democratic ideals but rather produce "templates for citizenship that complement the privatization of public life, the collapse of the welfare state and most important, the discourse of individual choice and responsibility."[301] *Lockup* poses a challenge to this characterization of reality television. First, those who are incarcerated in prison media are not offered up as models of citizenship. Secondly, prison is a very material and literal translation of state power and Oullette's description of neoliberalism does not appear to have much room for the continued existence of state institutions and state power.

John Riofrio in "Spectacles of Incarceration: Ideological Violence in Prison Documentaries" argues that the seeming paradox of *Lockup*'s existence (within the conditions that neoliberalism has created) is not a true paradox at all, given the economic and political advantages for making certain bodies visible. *Lockup*, Riofrio argues, frames criminal status (which one already always is, to be in prison on television is to be always already assumed a criminal) as a result of individual choice.[302] These shows avoid consideration of the causes and results of systemic racism and poverty while at the same time allowing for voyeurism at a safe distance. Similarly to Cecil and Leitner, Riofrio suggests that *Lockup* dehumanizes prisoners (through displays of violence as well as narrative choices) in ways that bolster the "common-sense notion of a law and order

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[301] Laurie Oullette, 232.
[302] John Riofrio, "Spectacles of Incarceration: Ideological Violence in Prison Documentaries" *Symploke,* Vol 20, University of Nebraska Press, 150.

society" but rather than suggesting that a more true depiction of incarceration would rectify this situation, Riofrio finds the show's depiction of everyday 'real' prison life problematic too. "By largely obscuring or downplaying issues of race, sexism, and homophobia while rationalizing the brutality of prison punishment, prison shows function to actively normalize both incarceration and it's subsequent, attending violence." Furthermore, making certain groups visible in a highly selective fashion is no paradox but rather provides for the reinforcement of neoliberal logics. Riofrio positions the audience as one homogenous body who perceive themselves as contrasting positively with those they see on screen.

> By having made the wrong choices, inmates reaffirm that our freedom is a product of both a common-sense legal system and our own mindful and superior adherence to the law and order demands of our functioning social sphere. Spectacles of incarceration do the job of ensuring that our freedom stands in stark relief; they bring to the fore the Black and Brown bodies in order to emphasize their immobilized and incarcerated bodies so that we can better grasp the liberatory conditions of our own freedom. Put another way, these programs literally "liberate" us by emphasizing the unfreedom of others.[303]

The general framework of *Lockup* does indeed encourage the conception of prisoners as "others," separate from the law-abiding public but that does not then translate into acceptance of this narrative as the only possible receptive practice. In fact, I will argue later that the success of *Lockup* is predicated on a certain ambiguity and flexibility in regards to what the show is 'for.'

Riofrio argues that prison reality television operates according to neoliberal logics because those who are incarcerated are narratively framed as having made 'bad choices' and so the viewer is validated (and warned) that their efforts to self-regulate have been

[303]Ibid, 150.

successful in contrast with the incarcerated who have failed. 44 Blue Productions has certainly chosen to not to leave the prison and investigate the structural causes of poverty and incarceration, but this consideration ignores the prison life that is shown and the corrections officer. I argue that the corrections officer is positioned in *Lockup* as the person much of the audience should most readily identify with. Neither a complete outsider nor true insider, the corrections officer is a citizen and technically free, but works in an environment that is severely regulated and considered risky. They are severely outnumbered and must be consistently alert. The correctional officer is the model citizen in a world with increasing numbers of non –citizens and a state prioritizing maximum monetary efficiency. As a model of responsible citizenship, the correctional officer fits into a slightly different model of neoliberalism than those usually associated with reality television.

In the United States, the laissez-faire neoliberal approach in the 1970s and 1980s was invested in weakening the welfare state and regulations constraining the market. This has, however, according to Soss et. al., shifted to the embrace of the state as "an instrument for creating market opportunities, absorbing market costs and imposing market discipline (W. Brown 2006). The state has not been weakened; rather it has been restructured to facilitate public-private collaborations.

> Policing and corrections have become more prominent tools of social control, and criminal logics of violation and penalty have been imported into welfare programs. Together, these developments have given rise to a "double regulation of the poor." The "left hand" of the welfare state and the "right hand" of the carceral state now work together as integrated elements of a single system.[304]

[304] Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording and Sanford S. Schram, *Disciplining the Poor,* 6.

The state is not fading into the ether, to be replaced by fiefdoms of private enterprise. The (newer) neoliberal paternalism utilizes public-private collaborations to serve markets and govern the poor. This project of governmentality according to Soss et al. is not only aimed at transforming the options available to the poor and encouraging their own self-regulation, it is also meant to foster "new mentalities of rule."[305] Neoliberal paternalism is, in part then "an effort to discipline governing authorities so that they can be relied on to carry out the work of disciplining the poor."[306]

Lockup is itself a product of a public-private venture, a result of contracts between 44 Blue Productions and state and/or prison administrators. It often highlights the danger created by insufficient facilities and staffing, pointing the rhetorical finger at the state itself for creating a dangerous situation for prisoners and staff. The rhetorical purpose of *Lockup* may be framed as a fundraiser (a plea for state support), or an argument for privatization,[307] or an indictment of mass incarceration itself but no matter the varied possible audience interpretations of what *Lockup* says about incarceration at large what remains unquestioned is the need for corrections as a job. *Lockup* is a product of neoliberal paternalism, it makes visible the competing interests that are wrangled together to progress this form of governmentality and, I argue, that it positions the corrections officer as crucial to the continued stability of society. The corrections officer manages and perseveres despite the lack of state support and public attention or even public apprehension. The corrections officer is the ideal participant and bridge between public and private powers, the human being that makes do with what crumbs the state offers and

[305] Ibid, 9.
[306] Ibid, 9.
[307] Privatization has increased over the last 16 years in the United States and is itself an important arena of public-private partnership.

utilizes private enterprise as best they can; critical but not undermining. The officer is compromise embodied and, I suggest, is the unquestioned point of empathy for *Lockup*. *Lockup*'s importance then is both as an argument for not only the continuation of incarceration but for the respectability and necessity of corrections as a profession. As important as the dehumanization of incarcerated men and women is, so too is the valorization of corrections officers, the 'keepers' that make incarceration possible. Furthermore, corrections officers, as they are depicted in *Lockup* are models of the mentality of rule that makes the progression of neoliberal paternalism possible. The corrections officer is self-aware, not only of the importance of their image but the compromised position they are in. They 'soldier on' not because of loyalty or faith in the state or the unquestioned digestion of the justice meted out to those who failed to self-regulate according to a general neoliberal logic but because there is a kind of honor in making do with the options available; because the work is necessary.

Conclusion

Lockup aired over 230 episodes in its tenure at MSNBC and its presence on television will probably persist for several years to come. While no longer run in blocks on cable, Netflix and Amazon are both currently points of access to stream *Lockup* on-demand. The legacy of *Lockup* includes both its own archive and the wave of prison reality programming that followed in its wake. Without the success of *Lockup*, there would almost certainly be less prison reality television and overall less prison documentation available to the public during the peak of mass incarceration. While the wave appears to have crested, *Lockup* and its ilk have carved out a space and audience for

prison content that lives on in various forms. National Geographic's *Lockdown*, for example, has found a new home in the crime and investigation diginet platform, The Justice Network. Newer programming such as *60 Days In* and *Behind Bars: Rookie Year* offer new spins on the old fascination with entry into the 'different world' of prison.

W. J. T. Mitchell argues that the images taken in Abu Ghraib prison and the texts, recordings, and remembrances associated with them comprise "the exemplary archive of our time."[308] He suggests that this archive will come to represent the 'war on terror' and the point of defeat for the American military because it refutes the alibi of liberation used to justify our continued military presence.[309] Perhaps prison archives are particularly threatening (the photography in Abu Ghraib was a crime itself) not to the present, since as Mitchell notes, the picture taking of Abu Ghraib did not engender a huge public outcry in the US but to the future, as visual evidence of the hypocrisy that America consistently ignored. Similarly, *Lockup* will stand as witness to the fact of mass incarceration and the willingness of state and local administrators to bring public attention to their facilities.

While it is not the result of a whistleblower nor a social justice movement per se, it is still, however highly edited, a record of the prison industrial complex that did not exist before. Like the Abu Ghraib Archive, *Lockup* exists in digital form, circling the globe through torrent downloads and sharing sites. Unlike the Abu Ghraib Archive, the making of the prison 'reality' archive involves the negotiation of public and private interests, state and professional goals, some of which contradict each other. *Lockup* is a result of the messy progress of neoliberalism which entails not only the citizenry's

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[308] W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Abu Ghraib Archive," In *What is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter,* ed. by Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith, (Williamston, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008) 168.
[309] W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Abu Ghraib Archive," 175.

investment in self-regulation and self-sufficiency but participation in the messy project of facilitating that 'progress' at the expense of or upon others and in positions that are not ideal. Anna McCarthy argues in her article "Reality Television: A Neoliberal Theater of Suffering," that neoliberal citizenship "is an experience marked by the untidiness of irresolvable pain," and suffering, in this context, is "an instructive public affect" "exposing the inequality and disenfranchisement that reside within the democratic experience."[310] The pain and suffering exposed in reality television are for McCarthy not only exploitative but also potentially instructive as to the ultimate lose-lose proposition that neoliberalism offers. Perhaps one of the most insidious aspects of *Lockup* might be that it positions the profession of corrections as outside the suffering of incarceration and yet the flashes of pained frustration and discomfort that do appear along with the overall framing of officers as rational, detached professionalized entities hint at the impossibility of that position.

A less ambiguous aspect of *Lockup*'s approach to incarceration is the lack of alternatives it proffers. The same problems are repeatedly explored but alternatives to incarceration itself are never mentioned. Experts include corrections officers, incarcerated men and the production crew itself, who acknowledge the imperfection of the status quo without offering any solutions or an inkling that others may have applicable, non-carceral approaches. If at some point the United States loses its crown as the number one incarcerator in the world, perhaps *Lockup* will stand as proof to the overwhelming belief in the necessity of incarceration itself and the monumental amount of pain that this unimaginative assumption has caused. While we cannot predict what this

[310] Anna McCarthy, "Reality Television: A Neoliberal Theater of Suffering" *Social Text* 25(4 93):17-42 · December 2007, 37-38.

archive will mean in the future, as Derrida (quoted by Mitchell) stated: " The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come." Perhaps acknowledging its history, complexity and how it came to be will give us a head start.

CHAPTER 4

(Mad) *Love After Lockup*: The containment of care?

While *Lockup* and its ilk have created an unprecedented archive of prison interiority in the United States, it is by no means the end of the story or the totality of prison television. Some of the most recent reality prison media productions for television have shifted away from the experience of the incarcerated and those that work inside prisons. These programs instead focus on experiences that, while connected to the carceral are not strictly defined as 'inside' and play with the familiar inside / outside carceral dichotomy. This chapter focuses on the first season of We TV's *Love After Lockup*, which became the fastest-growing new cable series in 2018. The increasingly popular show follows a handful of couples, comprised of one incarcerated person and one not. *Love After Lockup* focuses on the anticipatory planning and eventual reality of each couple's reunification 'outside.' I utilize critical disability studies in this chapter to consider the ways *Love After Lockup* exposes the debilitating nature of the post-carceral

condition and simultaneously pathologizes care for the incarcerated while inside prison and after release.

This chapter positions *Love After Lockup* as a unique contribution to the prison reality televisual archive. Unlike the producers of *Scared Straight!* in Chapter 1 or *Lockup* in Chapter 3, *Love After Lockup* is not premised upon exposing the interiority of prison. As a result, the producers do not have to negotiate issues of institutional access and are not subject to institutional approval or censorship.[311] *Love After Lockup* does not focus on prison as a fetishized space and yet is still structured by the fact of incarceration. *Love After Lockup* makes the reach and impact of the carceral system outside of physical corrections facilities visible and in doing so, showcases the reach of the carceral system as well as connections between the incarcerated and the free. Foucault refers to the "carceral network" in its direct and disseminated forms as a normalizing power, in other words, prison is an institutional example of the disciplinary power that governs us all. While recognizing that the larger network does indeed give our society a "carceral texture," [312] my focus here is on the extension of that direct form and the ways the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC)[313] can also directly shape the lives of those outside its most obvious, physical manifestations. *Love After Lockup* makes it very clear that individuals with no prior record or direct entanglement with the PIC are impacted through bonds of attachment with the incarcerated. Additionally, because *Love After Lockup* concerns itself with the period of time following release from prison, the fact that the formerly incarcerated are still under the purview of the carceral system is acutely apparent. The

[311] There are sporadic encounters with corrections or police officers on *Love After Lockup* where the officers' faces are blurred.
[312] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 304.
[313] Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) 55.

visibility of the reach and impact of the carceral into the lives of individuals who have never been incarcerated as well as the formerly incarcerated undermines the defined and supposedly legible, border between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ and is important to the project of challenging the rationality of prisons themselves. Shifting attention away from prisons as isolated institutions and the incarcerated as only existing in prison as such, draws attention to the damage and some of the hypocrisy of the PIC’s machinations.

Love After Lockup is not comprised of calls to action nor sanguine, fairy tales of romance. True to its designation as reality television, it is a messy, suspicious and at times uncomfortably candid take on the love and lives of individuals willing to be on camera. Amidst the tumult and drama, however, are moments where the show brings attention to the structural barriers and difficulties that confront the currently and formerly incarcerated and those trying to assist and marry them. These moments of exposure and at times outright criticism are considered here amidst *Love After Lockup*'s general suspicion toward the authenticity of all relationships between the free and the incarcerated. I pay particular attention to how the sanity, mental competency and emotional maturity of the people 'outside' are repeatedly questioned.

I argue that *Love After Lockup* offers an opportunity to consider how socially viable the goal of caring for the incarcerated is in the current moment. The show neither promises nor delivers in-depth views of life 'inside' and in doing so, it avoids questions of authenticity regarding prison life. It does, however, actively engage in questioning the authenticity of love between the incarcerated and those who are not and the sanity of those who would claim such love. *Love After Lockup* provides an opportunity to utilize critical disability studies’ work to politicize the questioning and definition of sanity as

applied to how individuals should interact with carceral systems and the formerly incarcerated.

Disability studies is helpful to this consideration of *Love After Lockup* in its criticism of the pathologization of non-normative body-minds and confinement. The following discussion of Frederick Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* (1967) serves as an entryway into the ways in which disability and prisons are historically intertwined and a pointed example of the institutional resistance that can occur in reaction to filmic exposure. *Titicut Follies* is utilized to set the stage for the analysis of *Love After Lockup.* After providing an overview of the series, I explicate how particular scenes demonstrate the reach of the PIC past institutional walls. I then consider *Love After Lockup* as a means of understanding how care and reason are juxtaposed, and the potentiality of the political project of care.

Titicut Follies

Frederick Wiseman's first documentary, *Titicut Follies* (1967) is another predecessor of the prison media of today. The legal battles surrounding the censoring of *Titicut Follies* is an example of the mire that media-makers may face when forced to reckon with questions of privacy and consent and when they find themselves openly at odds with a defensive state institution. *Titicut Follies* is a clear example of the difficult nature of ethically filming unfree, institutionalized subjects. *Titicut Follies* demands contextualization with the histories of disability, diagnosis, and captivity and how they have been intertwined with the carceral system as it has developed in the United States. I utilize *Tititcut Follies* here as an important object for prison media studies; one that

makes clear the array of issues surrounding consent, exploitation, and ethics that confront the media maker attempting to depict those held in confinement.

Wiseman, using his now renowned observational style of direct cinema, presented a stringent critique of the treatment of those confined at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Bridgewater, a prison hospital. *Titicut Follies* confronts the audience with life at Bridgewater, relying solely on footage taken inside the facility and the voices of those who worked there and were confined there. No narration is provided to guide the viewer through the institution nor the degrading treatment of the men we see.

Like the makers of *Scared Straight!*, *Lockup* and its ilk, Wiseman had to procure permission from the state before filming his documentary. It took a year for Wiseman to get approval from Superintendent Gaughan to start filming in Bridgewater in 1966.[314] The three-person crew of Fredrick Wiseman, David Eames, and John Marshall began by filming at the rehearsal of "The Titicut Follies" staff and inmate variety show (they filmed 4 of the "Follies" and Timothy Asch assisted with a second camera at times).[315]

Titicut Follies opens and closes with scenes from the "Follies." In between these scenes of the variety show, Wiseman takes the viewer through a day in the institution, mirroring the course of life for those inside, "from admission and initial processing to "liberation" through death."[316] Dan Armstrong describes the lives of the incarcerated depicted in *Titicut Follies* as "a realm of absolute transgression and guilt and unrelenting

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[314] Carolyn Anderson and Tomas Benson, "Direct Cinema and the Myth of Informed Consent: The Case of *Titcut Follies," Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television*, edited by Larry Gross, et al. (Oxford University Press, 1991) 68.
[315] Ibid, 70.
[316] Dan Armstrong, "Wiseman's Realm of Transgression: "Titicut Follies," the Symbolic Father, and the Spectacle of Confinement" *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Autumn, 1989), 23.

punishment."[317] Daily rituals of feeding, bathing, and exercise are intercut with the institutional event of the strip search, birthday celebration, death, and burial. *Titicut Follies* is bleak, described by Roger Ebert as "one of the most despairing documentaries I have ever seen."[318] No voice of god provides direction, assurance, or justification as we watch guards pester Jim, naked in his cell, Vladimir complain about his treatment, or the force-feeding of an elderly man by a doctor whose cigarette threatens to ash into the feeding funnel, intercut with the burial of the same man.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts gave Wiseman access to Bridgewater and then, post-production, took him to court to prevent the exhibition of *Titicut Follies*. Massachusetts argued that *Titicut Follies* was an invasion of privacy for the incarcerated patients and that Wiseman had violated an oral agreement with the state regarding editorial control.[319] Elliot Richardson, the state's attorney for Massachusetts tried to get an injunction to stop *Titicut Follies'* debut at The New York Film Festival in 1967 but failed. Richardson was successful in court in Massachusetts however, where the judge ordered all copies of the film to be destroyed. Wiseman appealed this decision to the Massachusetts Supreme Court and it was modified, with the film being banned from exhibition for the general public except for screenings for educational purposes for professionals and students interested in custodial care.[320] This screening restriction for *Titicut Follies* was overturned in 1991, the judge noting that the privacy concerns that motivated the initial ban were no longer an issue given the death of many of the patients

[317] Dan Armstrong, "Wiseman's Realm of Transgression," 23.
[318] https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/titicut-follies-1968
[319] Carolyn Anderson and Thomas W. Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas: Frederick Wiseman's Titicut Follies* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 4.
[320] Carolyn Anderson and Thomas W. Benson, "Direct Cinema and the Myth of Informed Consent: The Case of *Titcut Follies,ˆ'* 78.

that had been filmed. As a result of this new decision, *Titicut Follies* was aired on PBS in 1992. Zipporah Films eventually released a DVD version of *Titicut Follies* in 2007.[321] In 2017 *Titicut Follies: The Ballet* debuted in New York.[322]

As a result of the largely successful efforts by Massachusetts to censor *Titicut Follies,* it holds a unique position in U.S. film and legal history; the only film whose exhibition has been legally constrained for reasons other than obscenity or concern for national security.[323] *Titicut Follies* and its legal battles stand as an inditement of institutional 'care' by the state of Massachusetts and an example of the lengths the state will try (and succeed) to go to legally combat uncomplimentary images. *Titicut Follies* also brings to the fore the ethical conundrum of depicting persons whose ability or legal capacity for consent is considered questionable. While the state raised the issue of privacy in an attempt to limit its own exposure to public criticism, this does not negate the questions of privacy and consent that arise in *Titicut Follies.*[324]

Commonwealth v. Wiseman put into the legal record and made public questions of ethics and consent that were not unique to *Titicut Follies* but were rarely defended and aired in public.[325] *Titicut Follies'* focus on men who were considered mentally ill and/or incompetent certainly brings into focus questions around what "informed" consent consists of for subjects. Anderson and Benson note that the production and censuring of *Titicut Follies* "reveals a substantial gap between the idea of informed consent and the

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[321] http://www.zipporah.com/films/22
[322] Brian Seibert, "Review: 'Titicut Follies' Tries to Deliver a Shock to Ballet's System" *The New York Times,* May 2, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/02/arts/dance/review-titicut-follies-tries-to-deliver-a-shock-to-ballet.html
[323] Anderson and Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas,* 4.
[324] Anderson and Benson, "Direct Cinema and the Myth of Informed Consent^' 79.
[325] Ibid. *59*

practice of direct cinema."[326] Wiseman's process of garnering consent while filming was thus: before the footage was shot of the Follies, the technical procedures of filming were explained and the filmmakers stated that anyone who did not want to be shot should indicate this.[327] As Wiseman and his crew observed life in Bridgewater, there were very few objections made to his filming and what objections were made came from employees objecting on behalf of inmate-patients. Wiseman claimed that no incarcerated individual ever said they did not want to be filmed and any that indicated a gestural unwillingness was honored.[328]

The very content that was most damning to Bridgwater's label as a hospital, as a facility that provided 'care' of some kind was also the very content that was deemed most in violation of a right to privacy. Judge Kalus in his decision in *Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Wiseman* called *Titicut Follies* a "nightmare of ghoulish obscenity,"[329] rather than Bridgewater itself. Wiseman's decision to confront the audience with scenes like the taunting of naked Jim made very clear the dehumanizing way that men were being treated (what Bill Nichols refers to as Wisemans' disavowal of tact[330]). The lack of concern regarding the complexity of consent for individuals in Bridgewater also positions these scenes and what they might generate for the audience over the rights of the individuals themselves. Inmate-patients were certainly vulnerable to coercion as were staff who were directed to cooperate with Wiseman. Considering the differing vulnerability of these parties and the differing levels of protection they may have needed,

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[326] Ibid, 86.
[327] Ibid, 70.
[328] Ibid, 72.
[329] Anderson and Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas*, 40.
[330] Bill Nichols, "Fred Wiseman's Documentaries: Theory and Structure." *Film Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1978), 16.

required recognition of their positioning in the power dynamics of the carceral system and their specific institution. Wiseman's process assumed competence to consent unless specifically informed otherwise and assumed silence was consent. Issues regarding Wiseman's communication with various levels of the institutional hierarchy of Bridgewater serve to emphasize the troubled nature of obtaining consent from an institution at large.

Bridgewater stands as an example of the institutional intermingling of prison and hospital, each utilized to hold people captive; one instance of a longer, larger history of disability and incarceration's entwinement in the United States. The poorhouses, jails and general hospitals of early America housed an undifferentiated group of the poor, the sick, the disabled, the widowed and orphaned tied to their circumstance by the bonds of poverty.[331] Confinement became differentiated and increased under the influence of reformers such as Dorthea Dix, who sought to "liberate the 'mad' from the oppressive conditions of chains and squalor, and to provide them with therapies—while still confined."[332] In the first half of the 1800s, specialized confinement was considered a means of education and rehabilitation by progressive reformers, such as the Quakers who founded Eastern State Penitentiary. The work in *Disability Incarcerated*, specifically the chapter "Reconsidering Confinement" by Chris Chapman, Allison C. Carey, and Liat Ben-Moshe outlines and critiques the various political rationalities that normalized relations of power in such a way as to make the confinement of various bodies not only

[331] Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey eds. *Disability Incarcerated*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 4.
[332] Ibid, 5.

unremarkable but useful. The prison hospital of Bridgewater is an instance where institutional hybridity echoes the undifferentiated confinement of the past.

The entwinement of mental illness and captivity in the United States is also inseparable from the institution of slavery and the racial logics utilized to support it. Jonathan Metzl notes that in the 1850s psychiatrists in America believed that slaves that ran from captivity did so as a result of a "drapetomania" and slaves that disrespected property were afflicted with another mental illness called "dysaethesia aethiopis."[333] Metzl, in *The Protest Psychosis*, considers how racial anxiety was written into the diagnostic language of schizophrenia, detailing how schizophrenia went from a psychiatric condition associated with white women and generally harmless to society (1920-1950) to one associated with black men, rage, and violence. This shift, not coincidentally occurred during the civil rights era.[334]

One of the most common contemporary ways that prison and disability are combined in contemporary public discourse is to decry the 'warehousing' of disabled people in prison. PBS aired a *Frontline* documentary in 2005 entitled, "The New Asylums" directed by Miri Navasky and Karen O'Connor.[335] As Liat Ben-Moshe discusses in "Why Prisons Are Not the New Asylums" this documentary and the accompanying online information provided by Frontline draw a direct causal line between deinstitutionalization, homelessness, and incarceration. The thrust of the 'new asylum thesis' as Ben-Moshe refers to it, is that the irresponsible closure of psychiatric hospitals nationally beginning in the 1950s led to that same population's homelessness

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[333] Jonathan M. Metzl, *Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), ix.
[334] Metzl, *Protest Psychosis,* xiv.
[335] "The New Asylums" https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/asylums/etc/synopsis.html

and eventual incarceration. Even though the majority of deinstitutionalization and homelessness trends in the United States do not neatly line up,[336] the narrative that "The New Asylum" offers is a stubborn and nearly 'common sense' means of shifting blame for homelessness away from Reaganomics and the lack of affordable housing. The focus in the 'new asylum thesis' is on individuals being placed in the 'wrong' institution and incarceration as the result of untreated illness. This line of reasoning positions as scapegoats the policymakers and the anti-psychiatry movement and ignores the criminalization of behaviors (that previously had not involved legal intervention) as well as the expansion of the pharmaceutical and psychiatric industry. Michael Rembis in his chapter "The New Asylums: Madness and Mass Incarceration in the Neoliberal Era" combines a consideration of these phenomena, that Foucault described as the "normalization of the power-knowledge of normalization"[337] with the experiences of mad people themselves who have demanded human dignity and human rights.[338] The inclusion of the critique of the medical model of madness sometimes referred to as the consumer/survivor/ex-patient or C/S/X movement, and the demand for dignity from individuals and organizations like Mind Freedom International (MFI) are key to undermining the 'common sense' with which mass incarceration and the legal/juridical oppression of mad people is built upon.

This chapter takes up the 'madness' of care, utilizing an understanding of madness that relies on a social or relational understanding of what it means to live a

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[336] Liat Ben-Moshe, "Why Prisons Are Not 'The New Asylums.'" Punishment & Society 19, no. 3 (July 2017): 272–89. DOI:10.1177/1462474517704852. P 276

[337] Michael Rembis, "The New Asylums: Madness and Mass Incarceration in the Neoliberal Era," in *Disability Incarcerated* eds by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 144.

[338] Rembis, "The New Asylums," 153-154.

"mad" existence. This understanding of madness does not deny the reality of what we often refer to as "mental illness" but instead critically considers who and how one gets defined as mad and the socially constructed nature of that label, recognizing that its meanings and value continue to change.[339] I do not impose the identity of mad onto any of the subjects of *Love After Lockup*, nor accuse *Love After Lockup* of doing so, rather my aim here is to trace the tendrils of madness, how the rationality of those that are not explicitly described/prescribed or confined are made suspect on screen. The preceding overview of the rhetoric around warehousing and rationales for captivity serves to highlight the material history of 'madness' as a delegitimating label.

The treatment of the men in Bridgewater as depicted in *Titicut Follies* is a stark reminder of the stakes for disabled people, the incarcerated, and for our entire society when confinement as care is rationalized as the only and best option, either for public safety or for treatment. *Titicut Follies* is also an example, of the vulnerability of institutions to exposure and the state's willingness to avoid negative attention. *Love After Lockup* is not mired in the same issues of consent and privacy as *Titicut Follies* but it participates in the ongoing contemporary discourse around prisons, one that finds them flawed but necessary. The flaws of the carceral network are counterbalanced with individuals' flaws, such that *Love After Lockup* provides a critique of the lack of support for re-entry and at the same time undercuts acts of interpersonal care and connection.

Love After Lockup

[339] Ibid, 143.

Love After Lockup premiered on We TV in early 2018 to little fanfare but as the seven-episode season progressed, its ratings only ever increased, making it the fastest-growing new cable series in 2018. The critical attention that *Love After Lockup* has received often starts there, with the ratings success of this show being seen as somewhat remarkable, a "word of mouth hit."[340] Where other reality television shows usually experience peak ratings very early on and then drop off, *Love After Lockup* experienced the opposite. *Love After Lockup is* produced by Sharp Entertainment, makers of TLC's *90 Day Fiancé*, Lifetime's *Marrying Millions* and the Travel Channel's *Man V. Food* but conceptually originated internally from We TV during a "pitchfest."[341] The success of the first season lead to the order of a second season in 2019, initially set to be 14 episodes (season 2 began airing December 2018) and then extended another 10 episodes, the first of which aired in August 2019.[342] This chapter addresses season one of this ongoing show. We TV has also capitalized on the success of the series by producing a spin-off, *Life After Lockup* which follows couples from the originating series that are still together. *Life After Lockup'*s first season aired in between the two blocks of season 2 *Love After Lockup* in the summer of 2019).[343] Complicating the family tree further, We TV just announced that *Life After Lockup* will have its own spin-off in the web series *Love After Lockup: Life Goes On.* If the success of *Love After Lockup* is any indication, there is an increasing appetite for hybrid relationship/engagement/carceral reality television.

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[340] Kate Arthur, "Love After Lockup Has Become a Viral Hit" *Buzzfeed.News*, January 23, 2019. https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/kateaurthur/love-after-lockup-we-tv

[341] Kate Arthur, " We TV Renews 'Love After Lockup' and 'Life After Lockup,' *Variety*, November 20, 2019, https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/love-after-lockup-life-after-lockup-renewed-1203409945/

[342] The second half of the second season features an almost entirely new cast of couples.

[343] While *Love After Lockup* and *Life After Lockup* are different shows the episodes in the two shows have thus far been numbered sequentially by WeTV, emphasizing *Life After Lockup* as a continuation of the couples' stories on *Love After Lockup*.

The two-minute, introductory montage of the first episode of *Love After Lockup*, "From Felon to Fiancé," orients the audience towards the free individual, starting with the text, "They found love online…with a convict." A scene of friends reacting with surprise cuts to a woman stating, "Wow this guy takes a really hot mug shot" followed by text that announces, "Never been together… outside prison walls." The text then outlines the show's trajectory, "Once released they plan to marry" is intercut with scenes of joyful reunification, wedding dresses, skeptical friends and an infuriated parent. Finally, "Is it true love or just another con"? Marked age differences, exchanges of money, sobbing, and skepticism from friends create a montage of suspicion around the authenticity of the relationships the show is about before the audience ever meets the couples themselves. This specific montage is not repeated throughout the series but the suspicion is consistent. The title frame is simply the title of the show, in white text with a pair of handcuffs, one partially open cuff used to make the 'o' into a heart for "Love" and the other half the 'o' in "Lockup," set against a dark blue-toned concrete floor, below a barred window which appears to be letting light into the area of the text. The vast majority of *Love After Lockup* is filmed outside of prison (there are some scenes in prison visiting rooms and some cell or facetime footage) but this title frame doubles down on the carceral and the implication is that the experience and maybe even the kind of love, associated with or born of incarceration is different.

The first episode of Season 1 of *Love After Lockup*, "From Felon to Fiancé," introduces the audience to each couple that will be followed in season one. Many, though not all, of the couples have found each other online through platforms specifically designed to match individuals serving time with someone 'outside' and therefore do not

have a preexisting relationship before incarceration. Each couple is introduced through a pair of pictures against that same blue concrete background from the title frame. The picture itself and the textual information given for each person differs depending on status. The free person has a plain white background, a job title and age under their photograph and the incarcerated person has a headshot in front of horizontal lines (mimicking a mug shot) in an orange shirt with their conviction and sentence under their picture. Each episode intercuts between different couples and this frame is used to announce the switch to a new couple, so the audience sees this frame repeatedly and it consistently reinforces the conviction and time spent in prison as the defining feature of the incarcerated person, for the entire show, even after they have been released. The pairs of people that we are introduced to in season 1 are as follows (in order of appearance): "Lizzie, 39, DUI & Bribery – 8 years & Scott, 49, Truck Driver," "Garrett, 24, Burglary & Grand Theft - 7 years & Johnna, 26, Office Manager," "Lamar, 40, Robbery with a Deadly Weapon - 18 years & Andrea, 37, Real Estate Agent," "Alla, 27, Heroin Distribution - 5 years & James, 35, IT Director," "Dominic, 30, Aggravated Assault – 6 years & Mary, 28, Real Estate Agent," and "Tony, 32, Possession of a Firearm – 3 years & Angela, 45, Mental Health Therapist"

Lizzie & Scott, Garrett & Johnna, Lamar & Andrea and Alla & James are all introduced in some fashion in the first episode. Lizzie & Scott are the first couple we are introduced to and they provide a stark contrast with each other. Scott is a mild-mannered, scruffy white man with long grey hair and consistent neck stubble. Lizzie is ten years his junior, a black woman shown in her photographs displaying a confident, svelte figure. Race, interracial couples and ethnicity are not explicit topics in *Love After Lockup*. Lamar

& Andrea are the only black couple. We find out that James is Puerto Rican only as a result of a conversation with Alla's parents about what his family knows about Alla and everyone else on the show appears to be white. The release of the incarcerated partners is staggered throughout the season. For example, Garrett gets released in the first episode, Alla and Lamar get released in the second, Lizzie was set to be released in episode three, and Scott and his son drive to the correctional facility to pick her up but they find out, day-of that Lizzie is not getting released. Dominic and Mary is the only couple who was (for a short time) already together before incarceration and Dominic is also the only person in a Canadian prison. Dominic is released to a halfway house in episode four. Angela goes to pick up Tony in the same episode but Tony, much like Lizzie, never appears.

The season builds but in different ways for different couples. Each couple is on a different timeline, there is no one episode where everyone is released, no one episode where everyone gets married. The show tracks time by noting intermittently the number of days to release or the number of days out of prison. Tony and Lizzie do not get released at all in season 1, in fact, Lizzie faces additional charges that could add 8-12 years to her sentence. Andrea and Lamar and Dominic and Mary are the only couples to get married, in the last episode of the season. Garret and Johnna get to the alter but do not get married and the last words of the season, spoken by Johnna are, "I never thought I'd say this, but dating Garrett while he was in prison was so much easier than dating Garrett while he's been home."

The Reach of Prison

The following are examples of scenes where *Love After Lockup* exposes the reach and impact of incarceration extending past the walls of the institution. Unlike the *Lockup* and its ilk, *Love After Lockup* is not 'exposing' life inside but because its' premise is that being engaged to and caring for an incarcerated person is different, it does show some of the ways that the PIC impacts the life of the free person and the couple as a whole. Communication, the process of release, and parole restrictions are key instances where *Love After Lockup* makes the reach of the carceral system into the lives of the free individual (the un-incarcerated and the post-incarcerated) visible and undermines the inside/outside dichotomy that prison media so often relies upon.

Phone calls are an important way that couples communicate on-screen in *Love After Lockup.* Phone calls are the first instance where couples are at least audibly on screen together, prior to release. They are certainly not the only way that these couples communicate, they often mention exchanging letters (a cheaper and more accessible option) after meeting online, but filming their calls is one way for the show to get the imprisoned partner introduced to the show before the presumed release date. Each free person receives a call from the incarcerated person on screen, even Johnna and Garrett before he is released in the first episode. The audible institutional identifiers are not completely edited out, distinct robotic voices notify the receiver that they are getting a call from a correctional facility that may be monitored and recorded. Their calls are also time-limited. Lizzie and Scotts' first call on-screen times out after 15 minutes, Lizzie lets Scott know that she's gotten a warning that her time is up. When James is shown speaking to Alla for the first time, his phone screen identifies the caller as Taycheedah.[344]

[344] Taycheedah Correctional Institution is a women's prison in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

These phone calls are a means by which *Love After Lockup* can have each member of the couple audibly together, but the scenes are visually dominated by the unincarcerated member of the couple. The camera follows James, for example, as he answers a phone call from Alla, following him around the house utilizing observational style camera work. This fly-on-the-wall approach is intercut with clips of James, well-lit and seated in a darkened room, describing how he met Alla. The mixing of the observational and talking head, documentary interview style camera work serves to position James as the initial expert on Alla and his relationship with her.

A flat, mechanical voice interrupts James and Alla's call to let them know that it may be monitored and recorded and James asks, "how excited are you to never hear that robot voice again?" As constrained as the calls may be, they also are not taken for granted. Johnna in episode one, discussing how excited she is about Garrett coming home and speaking directly to the camera, talks about being lonely and sometimes not being able to talk to Garrett or confirm that he is okay for several days because of lockdown. The repeated, institutionally identified, and time-restricted phone calls on-screen identify communication as a difficult aspect of prison-associated life but the lack of discussion around the cost of these calls leaves a major expense of incarceration undiscussed and skirts an important way in which the incarcerated are price-gauged and made dependent on exterior sources of income.[345] Not explaining the institutionally created reasons why the incarcerated need financial support to communicate is another way that *Love After*

[345] In 2015 the FCC stepped in and placed an 11 cent per minute cap on calls made by prisoners in state and federal prisons and restricted add-on fees. In 2017 the FCC, under the direction of a new director, Ajit Pai, backed away from imposing caps on intrastate calls (approximately 80% of the calls). For more detail see: Ann E. Marimow, “FCC Made a case for limiting cost of prison phone calls. Not anymore.” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2017.

Lockup positions the free as probable victims to exploitation and the incarcerated as probable schemers.

The frustration of the un-incarcerated partner caused by the lack of open communication with their partner is compounded by the lack of communication from the institution itself, particularly around the event of a release. The transition from imprisonment to freedom often occurs on the side of the road. These moments often involve leaping into each other's arms and tears of joy, but they are also points of high anxiety and frustration. They are also moments where the producers of *Love After Lockup* need to navigate how they are going to film around, near or despite the institution.

Scott and his son Adam drive a full day to pick up Lizzie on her release date. Their interactions in the car are shot from the perspective of the dashboard, for the most part, intercut with interview scenes of Scott, outside as well as few shots from behind Adam and Scott, giving a full view of the road in front of them. When they drive up to the correctional institution the perspective suddenly shifts to a long shot, where the car is shown at the gate but the audio is still clear from inside the car and comes through crisply. The perspective in this shot is some distance behind the car, possibly situated across the street, probably off of the institution's property This long shot is alternated with the dashcam footage to show the interaction between Scott and the officer, the officer's face is blurred in both. The face of the officer who speaks to Scott is a white haze as he clearly tells them that Lizzie is not on his list for release today and he cannot tell Scott any more information. The next scene is Scott pulling over so that he can throw up next to a tree, overwhelmed with frustration and anxiety, uncertain if he has been used. It is Scott that notes that sometimes people in prison will tell someone they have

been corresponding with and using for financial support, a 'trick,' the wrong release date. Lizzie manages to call him while they are driving back home and she tells him that she doesn't know what happened. Scott wonders out loud, on the phone, if he is a trick and Lizzie gets very upset, asking how she could do that, (and listing important documents that Scott has of hers, like her birth certificate). Scott and Lizzie's trust issues are emphasized from the beginning of the show. In the very first episode, Lizzie admits that she did have tricks and that Scott started as a trick and Scott notes that he knew that Lizzie had talked to men as tricks. The failed release scene with Scott and his son emphasizes the frustrating lack of communication from the carceral institution and the seeming disregard given to loved ones' time and life arrangements. Angela and Tony have a very similar situation where Angela goes to a greyhound station to pick up Tony on what she has been anticipating as his release date and she is left wondering what happened when he does not show up.

When Mary and her parents drive to pick up Domenic on his release date there is an air of anticipatory excitement in the car but that changes, starting with a clip of Mary in a medium shot interview setting, stating "I hate prison guards because they treat non-prisoners like myself like (bleep)." This is followed by an un-dated scene where Mary was not allowed to see Dominic in prison because, in Mary's words, "they think that there was drugs on my jacket." When we return to the present-day car (filmed again with a dashboard camera) with Mary and her parents, Mary explains that some “grumpy” guards told them they had to wait in the car and they would drop of Dominic. The anxiety in the car is palpable as everyone sits, unsure of what is going to happen or when. This anxiety is finally lifted when a black SUV pulls up and Dominic steps out but after a few group

hugs, Dominic is clearly anxious, explaining that he has a limited amount of time to get to the halfway house and “be under a whole new set of rules for six months.”

For the incarcerated partners that get released, conditions of parole are a concern and a limiting factor in their relationships. Dominic is the most obvious of these. When Mary brings Dom to a men's clothing store to look at tuxes, three days after his release, he tells her he isn't supposed to be there. His day is supposed to be planned out and approved ahead of time. He then has to do a check-in with his officer on a landline. "Being on parole is kind of like walking on eggshells because the slightest thing could send you back."

An unexpected moment of drama interrupts the first episode beginning with Johnna exclaiming, "Crap, I forgot I need to bring Garrett's paperwork." She proceeds to search her house, accompanied by a suspenseful techno soundtrack, "I'm really freaking out cause this could ruin our whole life." The producer off-screen asks Johanna what she's looking for and she explains, while crying and still searching, that she's looking for a file that contains Garrett's probation documents and a certificate that affirms he completed a drug program "that they are trying to make him redo." As suddenly as it starts, this dramatic sequence is concluded by Johnna finding said file under some heels in her closet. This short fit of anxiety hints at something that will become clear as the season continues; partners are very much a part of the experience of being on parole and both parties are impacted by that reality. Partners' lives are impacted by parole restrictions and they also have a certain amount of power because of parole. They hold important documents, they provide financial resources and they are often the addresses that is registered with parole officers.

In addition, the producer's voice suddenly intruding on this scene serves to heighten the sense of emergency, to imply that perhaps even the camera crew is unsure what will happen. A similar situation occurs when James suddenly discovers that Alla is sick (from an overdose) in his bathroom in episode six. The camera follows James through his house, up to the bathroom door. Alla cannot be seen but is heard making retching sounds and calling James' name. James is shown going into the bathroom. The camera lingers on the bathroom door and the audience is suddenly an audio voyeur, listening through the door. The camera swings shakily to the left for a moment to show two production crew members, one holding a mic boom, both looking worried. Heavy-handedly emphasizing the voyeurism of the moment, the shot is now a close up of the bathroom's doorknob. Yet again, intercut with this scene is footage of James, in interview mode, explaining the situation (in the timeline of the show, he is the last person, including the audience, to realize that Alla has relapsed). The scene and the episode end with another shot of unidentified production crew members, one of whom says, 'cut the cameras' on camera. These scenes where the crew is heard or seen on screen during a moment of stress give *Love After Lockup* a live and urgent kind of energy. Ironically the fact that these moments are not edited out, as they certainly could be, serves to emphasize the role of the production crew as observers and may obscure the highly edited nature of *Love After Lockup.*

For Lamar and Andrea, the conditions of Lamar's parole prevent him from leaving Los Angeles County and as a result, Andrea has to go to California (she lives in Utah) to meet him for his release. Lamar, speaking directly about parole to the camera, "The parole thing is killing my relationship and it's killing my life." He had originally

believed he would be able to eventually move to Utah but his parole is much stricter, for much longer than he had realized. Lamar has a frank discussion with his brother, Dulow, about breaking parole to see Andrea and meet her kids in Utah. He seems resigned to go back to prison for another year to 16 months until Dulow convinces him that even though he feels he is letting Andrea down, he needs to figure out another way to make it work.

While parole restrictions are addressed explicitly in conversations, the danger of parole violation provides an undercurrent of anxiety for all the couples that have a released partner. Two days after Lamar's release, Lamar and Andrea get into a heated argument in a parking lot. They yell (about prioritizing kids, attention, exes) and Andrea tries to walk away from Lamar, but he physically blocks her. Andrea explains, in a now-familiar intercut where she speaks directly to the camera (clearly shot on another location at a later time) that someone called the cops and if the cops intervene, Lamar is going back to jail but she's not sure he's even aware of the danger he is in, at that moment. This episode (four) ends with Lamar and Andrea still arguing in the parking lot. Lamar and Andrea reconcile later, but Lamar's parole is a continued issue for them and the producers of *Love After Lockup* take care to include a few shots of the police officer waiting in that parking lot scene, the threat of re-incarceration looming.[346]

Reason

[346] Eli Hager, "At Least 61,000 Nationwide Are in Prison for Minor Parole Violations, But the number is probably far higher, Marshall project survey shows," *The Marshall Project,* March 4, 2017. https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/04/23/at-least-61-000-nationwide-are-in-prison-for-minor-parole-violations

Friends and family who worry about their loved ones getting hurt or taken advantage of serve as the 'voice of reason' on *Love After Lockup.* There is not a single free person who does not have at least one friend or family member on screen questioning whether being in a relationship with someone who is or has been incarcerated is a good idea, often repeatedly. Johnna's father tells her, "You live a lot of your life in a dream world…I don't want you to get hurt." Andrea has a whole gaggle of fellow Mormon women who are taken aback when she tells them that she plans to marry someone that is getting out of prison. Her friend A.J., speaking directly to the camera states, "We just found out that Andrea's fiancé is not a Mormon and he's in prison which I – I don't even know which one's worse. And… I thought she was a little bit smarter than that." Mary's friend point-blank tells her, "I feel like you're being a (bleep) idiot" and, "I think you're making a mistake." Scott's friend Shar is very concerned after hearing how much money Scott has sent Lizzie and tells him, "you are just going to wind up with your feelings hurt, watch." After Lizzie gets charged with possession in prison (for drugs that were probably bought using money Scott sent her), Shar says, "Maybe you should try having some kind of relationship without your financials being involved…This is crazy. This is crazy." Angela's friend asks her if she is going to be Tony's "sugar mamma" and she replies, "Hell, I already am!" She explains in the interview that is intercut with this conversation that Tony usually needs about $200 a month for things like shoes, socks, and underwear. Angela explains, "I just like to know that his needs are met." Her friend, now speaking directly to the camera outside of the bar where he and Angela were talking states, "I definitely think Tony's using Angela." James' friend Chris tells James, in front of Alla, to 'tread lightly.' Chris tries to tell James that he should be worried that Alla has

relapsed and James tells him he's "being kind of a (beep)." Chris responds, "I'm looking out for you." The only incarcerated person who has a family member that is shown 'looking out' for their loved one is Alla's mother, who has questions about how they met and why James is with someone he found in prison. Lamar's family has only positive things to say about Andrea.

The repetition of friend after friend doubting the free person's judgment has the effect of imbuing *Love After Lockup* with an air of suspicion and incredulity. In addition to the doubt and incredulity of friends and family, the show also takes care to capture the surprise on stranger's faces when they find out the person in front of them is marrying someone that was in prison or was incarcerated themselves. For example, when Dominic is telling Mary in the tuxedo shop that he needs to go talk to his parole officer, we see a close up of the salesperson reacting, a silent, facial expression of surprise and anxiety that confirms all the verbally stated doubts. How could a rational person go ahead with this? Some of the incredulousness of friends is aimed at the speed of an impending marriage but overall, the object of suspicion, justified in the name of defending their vulnerable, exploitable friend, is the incarcerated/formerly incarcerated person. Friends and family continually position the free person as vulnerable and offer a 'voice of reason' to protect the well-being of their loved ones from pain and exploitation.

Love After Lockup announces its suspicion very directly in the introduction of the show, asking "Is it true love or just another con?" Doing so establishes this question as part of the show's premise. The repetition of this doubt has a two-fold effect. This dynamic naturalizes the idea that people in prison and people who have been incarcerated are always the exploiter and never the exploited, the perpetrator, never the victim. This is

ironic considering the free person went looking for the relationship that they found and is usually in a more powerful position than the person that is incarcerated or recently released. The free person's feelings could get hurt and they also usually have more freedom, resources, and control, especially over someone that is still on parole. Where the formerly incarcerated are consistently positioned as someone who may hurt or exploit the free person, there is little to explicitly suggest that that the free person could use, exploit and hurt the incarcerated person right back. *Love After Lockup* announces its suspicion of the 'type' of person that is incarcerated upfront but over time communicates a more subtle uncertainty regarding the mental state of the free person intimately connected to the incarcerated, a consistent doubt draped in a thin veil of concern. When friends repeatedly state, "I'm just being realistic" (Chris, James' friend) and position the free person as stubbornly unrealistic, they undermine the free person's standing as a rational subject.

Care & Reentry

The word 'care' in the context of disability history and critical disability studies has a variety of associations and accompanying connotations. Care facilities, the "caring professions," and psychiatric care all find themselves vigorously critiqued as parts of the care industries and participants in the historical and institutionalized oppression of disabled people. Working to end the forced confinement of bodies and the knowledge - power- normalization of confinement as 'rehabilitative' and as 'care' is one way that the fight for anti-institutionalization and prison abolition are intertwined. The histories of incarceration and disability in the United States

are connected through shared landscapes and rationalizations of confinement *and* the contemporary prison industrial complex is also culpable for harming people with disabilities and creating more disability.[347] The call for anti-institutionalization and the abolishment of prison requires new models of care, new ways of "working, loving and living together"[348] As Ben-Moshe states:

> The goal is not to replace one form of control, such as a hospital, institution, and prison, with another, such as psychopharmaceuticals, nursing homes, and group homes. The aspiration is to fundamentally change the way we respond to difference or harm, the way normalcy is defined, the ways resources are distributed and accessed, and the ways we respond to each other.[349]

Love After Lockup brings our attention to our society's doubts about the possibility of care being feasible on an individual level. The suspicion that is brought to bear towards incarcerated individuals makes caring into a high-risk activity. This suspicion rests on the conception of incarceration, as not an experience, gone and done, but rather an incarcerated person as a different kind of person. Not caring is then normalized and rationalized as the reasonable way in which to respond to those who are incarcerated and those who have been incarcerated. By positioning the act of care as irrational, *Love After Lockup* attempts to contain the radical notion that not only does the incarcerated person warrant love, the individual, non-incarcerated people can provide that love. *Love After Lockup* exposes one of the obstacles to the reduction and eventual abolishment of prison and the imagination required to conceptualizes other futures – a

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[347] Syrus Ware, Joan Ruzsa, and Giselle Dias, "It Can't Be Fixed Because It's Not Broken: Racism and Disability in the Prison Industrial Complex" *Disability Incarcerated*, Palgrave Macmillan U.S., 164.
[348] Ware, JRuzsa, and Dias, "It Can't Be Fixed Because It's Not Broken," 178.
[349] Liat Ben-Moshe, "Alternatives to (Disability) Incarceration," *Disability Incarcerated,* Palgrave Macmillan US, 269.

striking lack of confidence that those inside are worth the work and that those outside are even capable of it. *Love After Lockup* plays up the danger of dating, being engaged to and marrying someone that is or has been incarcerated. But the issues these couples face fall into two categories: problems caused by confinement or parole and problems that flawed human beings not imprisoned also have, such as drug addiction, self-esteem issues, indecision, anxiety, anger, trust, and fidelity.

One of the motivations for this project has been a desire to better understand the ways that prison on-screen manifests and to push past some of the ready-made, well-tread paths upon which prison media studies have relied. An example of this well-worn path is thus: Why aren't more people concerned about conditions in prison? They don't see it prison life enough. Prison media is not authentic enough. People see overly violent and overly sexual prisons on screen. Why don't people respond to depictions of violent prison spaces? They don't see enough prison and it is not real enough… so on and so forth. *Love After Lockup* pulls us out of this circular logic. The point of *Love After Lockup* is not to expose prison, rather it is to expose relationships, perhaps even to expose love. The "is this just another con" question frames the show as an investigation and questioning of love's authenticity. Unstated, but certainly another structuring question is the ability of love to withstand the stresses of prison and reentry.

Critical disability studies draw our eyes to (and side-eyes) the ways that sanity and rationality are positioned in opposition to the possibility of love, care, and connection to people in the carceral system. Critical disability studies has also provided language to describe what happens when people do love, care, and connect despite structural barriers and societal stigma. Upon reentry, formerly incarcerated individuals are not free; they do

not revert to the status they had before incarceration. Their record follows them into job interviews, the voting booth and loan applications, and it impacts educational opportunities. In other words, the world is not as accessible as it once was.[350] Friends, family, and lovers can become the means by which formerly incarcerated individuals can access capital, security, and status despite the structural inaccessibility of the reentry world. The status of having been incarcerated and being on parole, and/or having been convicted with a felony, can be likened to the experience of living in a world built around specific norms of ability from which people are then made disabled but may more accurately be described as the state actively engaged in debilitation.

Debilitation

Foucault's conception of biopower, at the end of the *History of Sexuality Vol.1* is a starting point here. He describes this as not a return to the right to kill upon which sovereign power (also juridico-institutional power) rests but "a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death."[351]As states began to "take charge of life"[352] (by tracking populations, addressing sickness through mass vaccine, etc.) the government and other avenues of authority (medical, administrative, etc.) have gained an essentially modern

[350] It is also important to note that the accessible (pre-incarceration) vs. less accessible (post-incarceration) dichotomy varies in experience depending on the individual subject's positioning in the "matrix of domination" to use Patricia Hill Collin's term. It would be false to characterize the experience of freedom-incarceration-reentry as pure, unadulterated liberty followed by constraint. It also is not meant to ignore the experience of individuals who have gained access to education, sobriety, or spirituality during their time incarcerated but rather to emphasize the general, structural ways that post-carceral is a status, delimited from pre-incarcerated.

[351] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*. (Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 138.

[352] Foucault143.

form of power that focuses on birth and life both of the individual and the population.[353] Sovereignty's old power, based on the right to take life or let live has gained the complementary right to make live or let die.[354] Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* builds upon this idea to describe how the state begins to include natural life in its calculations and mechanisms, joining external politics and internal identity technologies (that Foucault had originally separated) to create a biopolitical body. Addressing race within the context of biopolitical power, Achille Mbembe in "Necropolitics" states that biopower functions by dividing people into groups; classification is necessary in order to separate those who must live from those who must die.[355] Mbembe states, "In Foucault's terms, racism is above all a technology aimed at permitting the exercise of power."[356] This technology functions by bringing into being "the perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat, or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my potential to live and security."[357] Mbembe suggests that the institution of slavery may be considered one of the first examples of biopolitical experimentation.[358] Henry Giroux's *Stormy Weather* does the work of tracing the historical course from Emmett Till to Hurricane Katrina as an example of biopolitical power in operation. Scholars have continued to grapple with how race fits within a biopolitical conception of power. Alexander Weheliye has described race as a constitutive category when framing the parameters of 'man,' the liberal humanist

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[353] Foucault 138.
[354] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, (2003): 241.
[355] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003):17.
[356] Mbembe, 17.
[357] Ibid, 18.
[358] Ibid, 21.

subject[359] and has also considered whether biopolitics can be applied to colonialism, including contemporary settler colonialism.[360]

Jasbir Puar adds to this work "a sovereign right to maim" which includes the power 'will not let nor make die.' Puar describes the ways Israel has, by bombing infrastructure such as hospitals and simultaneously purporting to minimize civilian deaths, enacted the right to maim Palestinians by promoting its efforts to avoid civilian casualties. Maiming thus functions not as an incomplete death or an accidental assault on life. Rather the end goal is the dual production of permanent disability, via the infliction of harm, and the attrition of the life support systems that might allow populations to heal from this harm.[361]

Debilitated bodies are also valuable as a means for the accumulation and circulation of capital, in particular to a rehabilitative economy. Puar's debility resonates with Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as, "state-sanctioned or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[362] My use of debilitation and the right to maim is one that is cognizant that while prison is disabling, I cannot assume a disabled body-mind is always the end result of incarceration.[363] Nevertheless, there is injury done to the status of the formerly incarcerated both through the lack of infrastructural support and through the imposition

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[359] Alexander G. Weheliye, After Man, *American Literary History* 20, Issue 1-2, Spring-Summer 2008, 321–336. https://doi-org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/10.1093/alh/ajm057
[360] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas viscus: racializing assemblages, biopolitics, and black feminist theories of the human*, (Durham, Duke University Press) 2014.
[361] Jasbir K. Puar, "The 'Right' to Maim: Disablement and Inhumanist Biopolitics in Palestine," *Boderlands,* vol 14, number 1, 2015), 8-11.
[362] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California* (University of California Press, Berkeley California, 2007), 28.
[363] "The prison environment both exacerbates existing disabilities and creates new ones." *Disability Incarcerated* (170).

of parole restrictions and criminal status. The state enacted, debilitated status of formerly incarcerated individuals also assists in providing a continued supply of bodies that will circulate back into correctional facilities.

Employment discrimination due to a criminal record is one of the most common problems for people after incarceration, an obstacle that is painfully ironic given that parole conditions often require gainful employment. Prison reformers have referred to the economic and societal exclusion that a criminal record produces as the 'mark of Cain.'[364] Also referred to as a "state-sanctioned negative credential," a criminal record makes the formerly incarcerated less employable than before they were incarcerated.[365] The ongoing "Ban the Box" movement, which began in Hawaii in 1998[366] has been somewhat successful in removing questions about conviction history from employment applications in the public sector (at least 23 states), but significantly less so in the private sector. "Banning the Box" also does not eliminate discrimination, for instance, researchers have found that when not allowed to question potential employees about criminal history, young African American men without criminal records had lower callbacks than when they could explicitly answer 'no' to a criminal record question.[367] Employers take the higher rates of criminal history for African American men and presumptively exclude. [368] Recognizing not only the lack of infrastructure but the obstacles that are put in the path of

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[364] Gubernick, Lucy. "Erasing The Mark of Cain: An Empirical Analysis of the Effect of Ban-the-Box Legislation on the Employment Outcomes of People of Color With Criminal Records," *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, vol. 44, no. 4, Aug. 2017, p. 1153.
[365] De Giorgi, Alessandro. "Back to Nothing: Prisoner Reentry and Neoliberal Neglect." *Social Justice* 44, no. 1 (147) (2017): 83-120. Accessed February 28, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/26405739.
[366] D'Alessio, Stewart & Stolzenberg, Lisa & Flexon, Jamie. (2014). The Effect of Hawaii's Ban The Box Law on Repeat Offending. American Journal of Criminal Justice. 10.1007/s12103-014-9251-9.
[367] Vuolo, M., Lageson, S. and Uggen, C. (2017), Criminal Record Questions in the Era of "Ban the Box". Criminology & Public Policy, 16: 139-165. DOI:10.1111/1745-9133.12250
[368] Michelle. Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

the formerly incarcerated requires moving away from individual-level accounts of prisoner reentry.[369]

By exposing the reach of the prison industrial complex into the lives of free individuals and past the point of reentry into 'free' life, *Love After Lockup* makes visible the post-incarcerated state of being as something other than freedom, a status that is an enaction of state power and societal stigma, one that is not death but is certainly not the enabling of life either. Employment is just one area where individuals are put on state-sanctioned, shaky ground. Johnna, before she picks up Garrett, mentions that she bought her house because she was worried that she and Garrett would be unable to rent an apartment because of his record. Being on parole and having a criminal record puts the formerly incarcerated subject into a position of vulnerability to the very system they supposedly left behind. *Love After Lockup* holds these moments that expose the carceral reach and the fact of debilitation in tension with a premise that still positions prisons and the people who are confined in them as different and separate. The show then repeatedly attempts to emphasize the conceptualization of those who care for the incarcerated as irrational, unreasonable, again, separated from the 'rest of us.'

The Future of Care? – A conclusion

In the first season finale of *Love After Lockup*, Angela has a talk with her friend Brenda who spent time in prison and had what she calls 'sugar daddies,' men she wrote to and professed to love. Brenda, her voice cracking, describes leaving one of these men who came to pick her up: "Because I didn't mean anything I wrote. I just said it because I

[369] Renée M. Byrd, "'Prison Treated Me Way Better Than You': Reentry, Perplexity, and the Naturalization of Mass Imprisonment," *Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics,* no.1 (2018): 95.

needed to be taken care of while I was in there. I would say that 90% of inmates that are in prison are using people because they're so lonely and they need somebody to tell'em, 'I love you.'" Brenda describes with emotion and empathy the need for care. Prison creates a deficit of care. It is by definition the isolation of someone from their loved ones, exacerbated by additional physical, emotional and psychological deprivations. If we are to take a step back from pathologizing the desire for care we may have to configure new ways to think about care, carers, and their limits.

Arseli Dojumaci offers "people as affordances" as a way to describe the phenomenon where people can enable or directly become a means by which a disabled person can navigate an environment that is structurally unaccommodating to that person's state. Multiple people can join to "create access by their own means" and this phenomenon must be understood in the context of the structural lack of accommodation as well as the individual connections that facilitate a 'work-around.' "People as affordances" is a product of the macro as much as the micro. It is a story of "becoming disabled."[370] Recognizing that Dojumaci is proffering a "critical disability theory of affordances" from an embodied position with a focus on physical disability and pain, I suggest that this is still a helpful concept for considering ways that people may move to assist in a world that has lacked affordances. A way to proffer care.

We can recognize the structural conditions that necessitate financial dependence on intimate partners as well as acts (obviously constrained by the resources and positionality of the non-incarcerated person as well) which serve as workarounds to access security, housing, mobility, and a sustainable standard of living. "People as

[370] Arseli Documaci, "People as Affordances – Building Disability Worlds Through Care Intimacy," *Current Anthropology,* Volume 61, Supplement 21, February 2020.

affordances" is a way to understand these acts in a way that is not about being dependent on or exploitative of another person but rather responding to the structural issues and recognizing the difficulty and pain they may cause.

It is perhaps no surprise that the relationships on *Love After Lockup* are suspect from the very beginning of the show since they encompass not only the lingering understanding of criminality as a status, a kind of person, rather than action but they are also set in a society where independence is fetishized. By paying attention to the ways that the rationality of those who declare attachment to the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals are questioned we bring into focus a problem that is not about the kind representation or information or even access to prison that we have had for the last several decades. Underlying the concern over the authenticity of prisons on screen is a desire to motivate more of the public to action, to demand change and to become aware of the pain being caused by these institutions that we repeatedly told we should assume are necessary. At least part of the problem, however, is not that people do not know what happens in prisons but rather can they care? What are the ways in which attempting to care is discouraged, made seemingly unfeasible? Can we imagine caring for the incarcerated as safer and more rational and more reasonable than not?

Love After Lockup is certainly cynical in its approach but it is also, nevertheless, about these couples, some of whom stay together, and some do get married. Attempts to love and care are certainly not easy and are definitely messy on *Love After Lockup* but they are also not entirely failed. Without explicitly being about parole or ethnographically focused on prison, the show creates space for, exposing the ways that the reach of prison extends outside the walls (the same walls that shows like *Lockup* and *Lockdown* boast

about getting inside). *Love After Lockup* strips some of the comfort offered by the idea that those that are incarcerated are a certain kind of person that is definitively held at a distance. The show brings attention to the ways that post-incarceration is a debilitated state. By exposing how *Love After Lockup* can make visible the harm and reach of the carceral network and yet also attempts to de-rationalize caring about those who are most impacted by it, I hope to aim attention at a way that the possibility for solidarity is questioned. *Love After Lockup*, while not set in a prison, still very much "uses prison as a central theme" (to borrow from Paul Mason's definition again). Additional scholarship should consider the ways that 'prison as a theme' in media extends past institutional walls and grapples with how one can or should connect to individuals who are or have been confined by the state. Can we imagine connections between the incarcerated and the free (or 'pre-incarcerated) as something other than exploitation, perhaps something closer to "mutual aid," a kind of solidarity, not charity?[371]

[371] Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018) 41.

EPILOGUE

Considering the Carceral during COVID-19

This dissertation has explored the depiction of prison life and real prison spaces, with particular attention paid to corrections officers. The history that I have laid out in the previous chapters emphasizes the impact of the Attica Rebellion in 1971 as a major public event that precipitated the scrutiny of corrections as a profession. The current health crisis occurring due to the spread of COVID-19 has resulted in another spike in critical attention to prisons, jails, and detention facilities, as environments that threaten the health, not only of those that are confined to them, but also staff, officers, and the general public. In a recent report by ABC News about the vulnerability of corrections officers to COVID-19, Shane Fausey, the national president of the Council of Prison Locals asserted that "officers are "human beings" and what's often shown in Hollywood movies isn't an accurate representation of what goes on inside institutions."[372] The inherent defensiveness of that statement speaks to the resentment of corrections, as a profession, at its perceived, historical position in prison media. The term 'essential worker' has become common parlance in the last few months, used to refer to staff, first

[372] Luke Barr, "Over 5,000 corrections officers have contracted COVID-19" *ABC News*, May 5, 2020. https://abcnews.go.com/US/5000-corrections-officers-contracted-covid-19/story?id=70520117

responders, and grocery store clerks keeping our hospitals open and necessities in our cupboards. Cary Johnson, a corrections officer in Michigan writing for the Marshall Project, describes the fear and uncertainty that COVID-19 has inspired, as well as a sense of being undervalued, "On social media, I see everyone thanking nurses, police officers, firefighters. Corrections officers always tend to be left out of the narrative, and I don't know why."[373] While others have written about the 'smug hack' stereotype of corrections officers in mainstream film, this project has provided some of the history and context necessary to complicate the relationship of corrections and media and to situate these statements amidst a longer history of how corrections understands and positions itself in public. COVID-19 reporting has made clear distinctions between corrections, the profession, and the state, with officers and union representatives repeatedly critiquing the lack of personal protective equipment and testing made available by the administrators. This project has provided some insight into the varying interests that media producers, corrections, and administrators bring to prison media. I have argued that using *Lockup* as an example, corrections officers are depicted as model citizens in the service of neoliberal paternalism, not through blind faith but out of necessity and a sense of honor in 'making do.' The question that the current pandemic provokes is if that narrative, in all its forms, can survive the state's mishandling if not abandonment during this pandemic. What will be the story of corrections and COVID-19 in the prison media of the future and how might corrections have a hand in how that story is shaped? How will the division between

[373] Cary Johnson, "As a Mom Working in a Prison, I Worry About Bringing Coronavirus Home," *The Marshall Project*, April 1, 2020. https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/04/01/as-a-mom-working-in-a-prison-i-worry-about-bringing-coronavirus-home

the incarcerated and those who work in the same confined, health adverse location as them be maintained or broken down?

The spread of COVID-19 has brought an unprecedented amount of attention to prisons as public health hazards. Prisons and other "group settings" such as nursing homes have become COVID-19 infection hot spots; being architecturally and functionally less able to accommodate social distancing guidelines and quarantine recommendations, in addition to being an environment often lacking in medical care and facilities regardless of the onslaught of a pandemic. According to some reports the rates of infection for the incarcerated are as high as 70% of those tested reported positive.[374] COVID-19 is not, however, the only infectious disease that prisons in the United States have struggled to keep under control. The history of HIV in the American prison system, for example, could prove helpful for understanding the current approach to contagion. The Bureau of Prison's records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) includes films about HIV and infection in prison and they have not, to my knowledge, been included in prison media histories, nor histories of contagion in the United States. Considering how health, healthcare, and infection have been depicted in instructional films whose designated audience were the incarcerated and corrections officers would be one direction that I could grow this project in response to our current historical moment.

The news coverage of COVID-19 in jails, prisons, and ICE detention centers has underscored the falsity of imagining institutions of confinement as separate and sealed off

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[374] Michael Balsamo, "Over 70 percent of tested inmates in federal prisons have COVID-19," (AP) *PBS News Hour*, April 29, 2020. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/over-70-of-tested-inmates-in-federal-prisons-have-covid-19

environments. Reports on rates of COVID-19 in prisons by corrections officers have, in particular, drawn attention to corrections officers as a key means by which prisons are never truly unconnected to the larger communities around them. The impossibility of making confined, overcrowded, understaffed, and unhygienic spaces safer amid a pandemic has come into focus and provoked protests and claims to humanity from the incarcerated and from officers.[375] While officers have turned to media outlets to make their plea, the incarcerated have mounted protests inside prisons and jails across the country; by one count over 75 protests have occurred thus far since late March.[376] In some states, the recognition of prisons and jails as inherently unsafe to public health (especially) during a pandemic, has provoked changes that had previously been considered politically untenable. Governor Gavin Newsome is proposing the closure of 2 detention centers and shortening parole periods in California.[377] In some localities, judges are purposefully keeping low-level offenders out of jail.[378] Some states are releasing the elderly who have neared their release dates.[379] The vast majority of the over 2 million incarcerated individuals (not counting those detained by ICE) sitting in American prisons and jails, however, have not been made safer, instead, they have been further isolated (due to the suspension of personal visits) and in some cases put in solitary quarantine. It

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[375] "U.S. prisons are crowded, dirty and opaque. COVID-19 is running rampant." *PBS News Hour*, May 14, 2020. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-prisons-are-crowded-dirty-and-opaque-covid-19-is-running-rampant

[376] Dan Berger, Ryan Fatica, and Duncan Tarr, "As the coronavirus spreads, prisoners are rising up for their health," *The Appeal*, April 27, 2020. https://theappeal.org/prisoners-protest-coronavirus-health/

[377] Charles Davis, "California governor proposes closing 2 prisons in response to COVID-19" *Business Insider,* May 15, 2020. https://www.businessinsider.com/california-governor-closing-2-prisons-in-response-to-covid-19-2020-5

[378] Christina Williams, "Multiple inmates, officers test positive for COVID-19 at Lucas County Jail," 13ABC News, April 20, 2020. https://www.13abc.com/content/news/Inmates-and-officers-test-positive-for-COVID-19-at-Lucas-County-Jail-569791631.html

[379] Josiah Bates, "Campaigns, Fundraisers Work To Bail New York City Inmates Amid COVID-19 Outbreaks in Jails and Detention Centers," *Times*, April 17, 2020. https://time.com/5821512/bail-campaigns-new-york-inmates-coronavirus/

will be important, as the pandemic continues into the next year, to consider how these decisions and their consequences are reported. Given the current uncertainty as to the staying power and impact of COVID-19 in the U.S., I can only gesture toward the fact that the release of even some incarcerated individuals, may prove decarceration more possible than previously imagined.

Even as media coverage of the spread of COVID-19 through state and federal prisons increases, the impact of another increase may also impact conceptions of carcerality; the marked increase in media consumption by those staying at home, whether by order or by self-quarantine. The unincarcerated public with non-essential jobs have increased their social media usage, cable news ratings have doubled, and Netflix subscriptions have surged.[380] Media consumption has generally increased on a global scale but changes in media habits thus far have been found, perhaps unsurprisingly, to vary generationally[381] and, of course, are still impacted by inequalities in access and income that existed before COVID-19. Understanding the impact of quarantine viewing is certainly out of the scope of this project, but some of the media being consumed is prison media and the previous chapters have provided some tools for the work to come. I positioned the 1970s, its prison media objects, and its social-political context, as important antecedents to the consumption of carceral media today. Much work remains to be done to add historical depth and complexity to our understandings of prison media of the 80s, 90s, and 2000s. The previous chapters can stand as a reminder that prison on-

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[380] "Media Consumption in the Age of COVID-19" *J.P.Morgan Global Research*, May 1, 2020. https://www.jpmorgan.com/global/research/media-consumption

[381] Katie Jones, "This is how COVID-19 has changed media habits in each generation," *World Economic Forum*, April 9, 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid19-media-consumption-generation-pandemic-entertainment/

screen and prison as a production space are home to an assortment of interests and power relations. This project has focused attention on corrections, partnered with but distinct from the state apparatus and administration of carceral institutions, as a profession with its own interests to protect. The still mostly unexamined archive of correctional officer instructional media demands attention from any scholar concerned with changes in the corrections profession and how the job of corrections is argued for. While access may always be an issue in this area, some instructional media can be found online and some may also already be archived in various formats. Work also remains to be done on the consumption of media by the incarcerated as well; for entertainment, education and instruction, and the various industries that produce and profit from this media.

I have maintained a focus on nonfiction film and television but would be remiss to not recognize that the popularity and critical success of Jenji Kohan's *Orange Is the New Black* (2013 -2019) has contributed to the increase in discussions about prison in popular media and most likely also inspired the production of more prison television. Ava DuVernay's *The 13th* (2016) on *Netflix,* based on Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, is also certainly a notable contribution to the prison documentary genre, not only because of its popularity but because of its clear linkage of incarceration with slavery in the United States. As scholars consider the increase of prison media and the criticism of mass incarceration in the first two decades of the 2000s, these critically acclaimed film and television productions must be considered alongside and connected to programming like *Lockup*, whose production period overlaps with them both. In addition to prison media directly situated in prison or explicitly about prison, I believe scholars interested in

prison media should pay attention to the increasing production coming out of the true-crime, genre.

The success of Netflix's *Making a Murderer* (2015 -2018) inspired a cascade of televisual crime investigation programs in the last five years.[382][383] True crime docuseries regularly allude to prison but their focus is usually on the particulars of a misdeed. Netflix's *Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem, and Madness* (the series that became a phenomenon during the first few weeks of the COVID-19 stay home orders)[384] for example repeatedly used brief clips of Joe Exotic on a video call from prison to remind viewers of the 'king's' eventual fall and as an authenticating, if suspect, voice. Some true-crime series, however, utilize prison spaces more often. Episodes of Netflix's *I Am a Killer* (2018) used a mix of interviews, reenactments and stock footage to tell their story of murder, but each is grounded by the candid descriptions provided through talking-head interviews with the incarcerated clearly speaking from inside prison. These two examples of true crime docuseries focus on extreme and extraordinary acts or attempted acts of violence. *Time: The Kalief Browder Story* hails from a different side of the true-crime / investigative genre, where the object of investigation is not the sordid details of a gruesome crime but rather the cruelty and injustice of the criminal justice system itself. Additional attention should be brought to bear on these true-crime docuseries, including

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[382] *Making a Murderer* is often cited as the progenitor of the contemporary wave of true crime television but the existence of the television network Investigation Discovery (owned by Discovery Communications and rebranded as such in 2008) points to much earlier recognition, at least on the part of the industry, of the public's growing appetite for this genre.

[383] Martha Sorren, "How 2016 Kicked Off A True Crime TV Phenomenon That Shows No Signs Of Stopping," *Bustle*, December 29, 2016. https://www.bustle.com/articles/198758-how-2016-kicked-off-a-true-crime-tv-phenomenon-that-shows-no-signs-of-stopping

[384] Todd Spangler, "'Tiger King' Nabbed Over 34 Million U.S. Viewers in First 10 Days, Nielson Says," *Variety*, April 8, 2020. https://variety.com/2020/digital/news/tiger-king-nielsen-viewership-data-stranger-things-1234573602/

not only how they address incarceration and corrections as topics and how they utilize prison spaces and prison iconography but also how the production companies making them have gained access to individuals still incarcerated. *I Am a Killer,* in particular, may indicate a marked departure from decades of prison policies across the United States that have pointedly attempted to limit the means by which incarcerated individuals could gain public attention and celebrity status.[385] With the expansion of the true-crime genre, the likelihood that in some cases some of the genre distinctions between prison media and true crime will be blurred becomes more probable. Another vein of possible research outside of the scope of this project would be to consider how the increase in true crime series may be related to prison media, as well as how individual true-crime series utilize prison spaces and depict incarceration and the incarcerated.

This project provides some of the prison media history that can be built upon to broaden conceptions of the genre and acknowledge the participation of corrections in it, with a wary eye towards the long-standing call for more accurate, more real prisons on screen. The current health crisis occurring as COVID-19 sweeps through institutional settings makes even more urgent the need to reimagine a future where confinement is not the unquestioned solution to a host of social and economic problems. Throughout this project I have repeatedly, where possible, shifted attention to the profession of corrections, rejecting the conception of prisons as entirely defined and even controlled by the incarcerated. The current emergency serves to underscore the fact that corrections officers are also at the mercy of the institution they work for. How this fact is framed and

[385] Melissa Chan, "'Real People Keep Getting Re-traumatized.' The Human Cost of Binge Watching True Crime Series," *Time.com*, April 24, 2020. https://time.com/5825475/true-crime-victim-families/

how the pleas to humanity from officers are situated in relation to those very same pleas coming from the incarcerated may serve to maintain the status quo of neoliberal paternalism and the acceptance of a prison as a debilitating space; alternatively, it may actually contribute to radical change in the carceral system of the United States.

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APPENDIX

Titles and brief descriptions of the *Correctional Officer* films viewed at the National Archives and Records Administration and referenced in Chapter 2.

1. *Security in a Correctional Facility* (1976)

Produced in consultation with California Corrections Training Academy, Douglas Smith administrator; California Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department. Emphasis on the basic rules, "No Escapes, No Contraband, No Disorder" as well as inmate classification and inspection. Topics include contingency plans, firearms control, key control, inmate counts, emergency plans. "If you've been in corrections for any length time, you know that what really keeps inmates in is you - the correctional officer, all the rest, the bars and doors are just tools you use to help you get the job done. "

2. *Supervision of Inmates* (1976)

Produced in consultation with California Corrections Training Academy, Douglas Smith Admin.; California Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo, Lt. Otis Thurman, Training Coordinator; Los Angeles County Sheriff Department, and Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department. Interviews with several officers addressing a series of questions: "What is supervision? What are inmate attitudes? What do you watch for? What is the best approach? What about discipline? What have you done wrong?" "If you are a new officer, this film will show you various approaches to the correctional officer's job, if you are an experienced officer, you probably know as much as the officers in this film, and this is an opportunity to compare what you believe with what they believe."

3. *Courtroom Demeanor* (1978)

Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker, Federal Correctional Institution Lompoc, California; Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Jerry R. Hawley Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff; Sheriff John Carpenter, Capt. John Dafoe, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department, and James Menard Illinois Department of Corrections. It begins with a violent altercation between incarcerated men that an officer then breaks up. Rules of testifying in court: "prepare yourself," "enter every detail in your notes," "review your notes," and "attend pretrial conference." "As you are well aware, the judge and jury have definite expectations of an officer of the law, like it or not, they expect you to be dignified, self-restrained, and objective."

4. *Cell Searches* (1978)

Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker, Federal Correctional Institution, Lompoc, California; Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis, Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board on Corrections, Standards, and Training; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff; Sheriff John Carpenter, Capt. John Dafoe, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department, and James Menard, Illinois Department of Corrections. Presents the reasons for cell searches: "Prevent Violence, Prevent Escape, Prevent Contraband, and Maintain Sanitation Standards." Examples of object, cell, and clothing searches are paired with general principles to "Be Systematic, Be Thorough," Be Curious." "When you are done with a

cell search is it basically the same way you found it?" Respect for inmate property is as essential for institutional security as actually finding contraband in the cell."

5. Dining Room Conduct (1978)

Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker, Federal Correctional Institution, Lompoc, California; Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis, Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board on Corrections, Standards, and Training; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff; Sheriff John Carpenter and Capt. John DaFoe, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department and James Menard, Illinois Department of Corrections. This film covers three points for maintaining order in the dining room: "Food Quality Affects Security," "Stay Alert," and "Watch for the Unusual." "More serious inmate disturbances have started in dining rooms than anywhere else in correctional institutions."

6. *Inmate Body Searches - Part 1 (Clothed)* (1978)

Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker, Federal Correctional institution, Lompoc, California; Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis, Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board on Corrections, Standards and Training; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff; Sheriff John Carpenter and Capt. John DaFoe, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department and James Menard, Illinois Department of Corrections. It begins with the reasons for body searches, "Prevent Weapons, Prevent Trafficking, Protect Inmates From Themselves, Prevent Theft And Waste, Prevent Health Hazards." Includes demonstrations of a hair search, squeeze search, and groin search. "Your purpose is prevention not punishment."

7. *Inmate Body Searches – Part 2 (Unclothed)* (1978)

Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker, Federal Correctional institution, Lompoc, California; Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis, Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board On Corrections, Standards and Training; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff; Sheriff John Carpenter and Capt. John DaFoe, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department and James Menard, Illinois Department of Corrections. Continues the themes from *Inmate Body Searches – Part 1.* Various pairs of officers and undressed incarcerated individuals are presented. Particular attention paid to searching for puncture or injections marks. "Even though you have your own style it is a good idea to remember what is important, to make sure you have not deviated from your own sense of good practices and the appropriate attitude."

8. *Staff-Inmate Relations Part 1* (1978)

Produced in consultation with Thomas Walker, Federal Correctional institution, Lompoc, California; Douglas Smith and Walter Lewis, Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board On Corrections, Standards and Training; Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff; Sheriff John Carpenter and Capt. John DaFoe, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department and James Menard, Illinois Department of Corrections. Considers what good supervision by corrections officers means. "Be Firm But Fair" is offered as a key principle. "You've probably heard the saying" the correctional staff runs the jails and penitentiaries and

prisons because the inmates allow you too. If you are an experienced correctional officer, you've probably heard the saying before and you know that there is some truth to that."

9. *Con Games Inmates Play* (1981)

Produced in consultation with Otis Thurman, California Department of Corrections; Walter Lewis Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Thomas Walker, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Jerry R. Hawley Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training; Bud Allen, Correctional Consultant. Seven scenarios in which officers are the subject of manipulation by incarcerated individuals under their supervision. "The purpose of this program is not to scare you or make you afraid of inmates but to remind you of some common-sense techniques to protect yourself from the con game. And this program is certainly not intended to tell you to be less humane toward inmates. There is no substitute for your own good judgment. If you don't exercise command and control, then someone, someday, may try to control you. If you don't see yourself as a leader, then for sure, you'll be led."

10. *How Inmates View the Staff* (1981)

Produced in consultation with Otis Thurman, California Department of Corrections; Walter Lewis Departmental Training, California Department of Corrections; Thomas Walker, Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training. Begins with the question, "From the inmate point of view what makes for a good corrections officer?" Proceeds to interview various, unidentified incarcerated individuals, asking, "What makes a bad officer? "What do

inmates believe a new officer should be aware of?" Concludes with, "This should not be just the end of the program but the beginning of a discussion at your institution. To be effective in your rolls of supervision, custody, and security, obviously you have to understand the people you work with and supervise, so the question is - do you?"

11. *If You're Taken Hostage* (1981)

Filmed with the cooperation of the California Institute for Men, Chino, Women Chino; the Federal Corrections Institution at Terminal Island; California State Prison, San Quinten; LA County Sheriff's Department, California Men's Colony, San Luis Obispo; California Rehabilitation Center, Corona; Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department. Several examples of hostage situations are shown. Officers are instructed that they should do what their captors tell them to, they should not speak unless spoken to, they should not try to be deceptive and they should maintain their dignity. Officers are also instructed to look for cover in case of assault by authorities. "Sometimes inmates try to make hostages feel guilty for problems in the institution. you don't have to accept guilt but you don't have to defend the institution either…"For your own safety, it's a good idea to try to be seen as a human being, not a correctional officer or a representative of the institution."

12. *Introduction to Contraband* (1981)

Produced in consultation with Otis Thurman, California Department of Corrections; Walter Lewis, California Department of Corrections; Thomas Walker, Federal Bureau of Prisons; Jerry R. Hawley, Oregon Board on Corrections Standards and Training and L.D. Thomas, California Department of Corrections. The narrator defines

contraband and notes that knives are probably the most common weapons found in penal institutions, displaying the knives from the contraband collection at San Quinten state prison in California as examples. Metal detectors, ‘keister weapons,’ means of escape, and narcotic paraphernalia are discussed. “For some inmates hiding contraband is a big game and you are going to have to stay alert if you intend to win.”