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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SEEING THE STATE:
WOMEN, INCARCERATION, AND SOCIAL MARGINALITY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

CESRAÉA RUMPF

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2014

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One of the best features of Loyola University Chicago's Sociology Department is the sense of community that graduate students have created. I am proud to be part of a department where graduate students support and root for one another. I have gained

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For Mom and Dad, who taught me how to love unconditionally

For Caroline, who pushed me to question

But prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings.

—Angela Davis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
ABSTRACT	xix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Situating this Study	2
Containing Social Marginality	4
The Neoliberal State	9
The State's Creative Power	12
Governance	14
Therapeutic Governance in Carceral Sites	15
Gendered therapeutic governance in carceral sites	19
Life After Incarceration	27
Barriers to Reentry	28
Desistance from Crime	32
Reentry as a State Project	36
Overview of the Current Project	37
Theoretical Framework	40
Overview of the Argument	41
A Note about Language	43
CHAPTER TWO: METHODS	45
In-Depth Qualitative Interviews	46
Ethnography vs. Interviewing	47
From a Life-History to a Topic-Centered Approach	49
Photo-Elicitation Interviews	52
Participant's Voice	52
Sensitive Nature of Research	54
Depth of Information Shared	56
Recruitment	58
Initial Recruitment	59
Ongoing Recruitment	63
Data Collection	65
Length of Interviews	66
Compensation	66
Interview Settings	68
Interview Process	70
An Evolving Interview Guide	72
Introducing Photo-Elicitation Interviewing	75
Photo-Elicitation Interviews	79
Analysis	81

Sample	82
Strengths and Limitations of Methods	84
Multiple-Interview Design	84
Recruitment Strategy	87
Participant-Generated Photographs	88
Conclusion	99
 CHAPTER THREE: CREATING LIFELONG “CRIMINALS”	 101
Criminalization and State Violence	104
Police and Community Violence	109
Constrained by Court Processes	114
Inadequate information	116
Coercive plea deals	122
The Violence of Incarceration	126
Giving birth on the inside	136
Turning “Addicts” into “Criminals”	140
The Dominant 12-Step Logic	141
Embracing the 12 Steps	146
Religious Narratives of Redemption	148
Lifelong Personal Transformation	152
Disparity of Post-Incarceration Services	156
Conclusion	159
 CHAPTER FOUR: THE POST-INCARCERATION MORAL ORDER	 161
The Post-Incarceration Moral Order	165
Religion	172
Recovery	180
Monitoring and surveillance	185
Criminalizing recovery	198
Ritual and Moral Order	208
Conclusion	212
 CHAPTER FIVE: A RACED AND GENDERED POST-INCARCERATION MORAL ORDER	 214
From Failed to Rehabilitated Femininity	218
“It Ain’t Nothin’ Like Havin’ Your Own”	221
Appearance and Embodied Femininity	228
Romantic Relationships	237
Getting it right	239
“I want to be able to be marriage material”	243
Ambivalence about marriage	246
Independence	248
Motherhood	254
Ann W.: “I was humiliated...I was ashamed”	254
Iris: “You don’t look like the type that needs to be going to prison”	257

“If I’m not right, I can’t be right for them”	261
Being there	263
Modeling success	266
Employment	271
Work and identity	272
Finding employment	276
Conclusion	280
CHAPTER SIX: MANAGING THE POST-INCARCERATION MORAL ORDER	283
Moral Order as Constraining	286
Moral Order as Enabling	303
Following the Rules	303
“Playing the Game”	306
Negotiating the Recovery Script	313
Self-Advocacy within the Criminal Legal System	321
Cracks in the Moral Order	325
Community	326
Critique	332
Challenging the System	338
Conclusion	344
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	346
Implications	353
Multiple Approaches to Overcome Drug Use	354
Decouple “Criminal” and “Addict”	356
Social Transformation	359
Abolitionist projects	360
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLIER	364
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE	366
APPENDIX C: PHOTO INSTRUCTION SHEET	372
APPENDIX D: PHOTO RELEASE FORM	376
REFERENCE LIST	378
VITA	389

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Cook County Jail Women’s Division	101
Figure 2. Entering Cook County Jail	102
Figure 3. Past home	111
Figure 4. Childhood home	122
Figure 5. Rented room	122
Figure 6. “What it’s like now.”	123
Figure 7. Bus ride to work	139
Figure 8. 12 Step meeting directory	146
Figure 9. Religious books	146
Figure 10. Starting Again exterior	162
Figure 11. Starting Again staircase	162
Figure 12. Church service	173
Figure 13. 12 Step meeting attendance sheet	187
Figure 14. Certificates	189
Figure 15. Drop cups	192
Figure 16. Route to the probation office	195
Figure 17. Probation office waiting area	196
Figure 18. Homeless shelter	199
Figure 19. Public park	200

Figure 20. Abandoned truck	200
Figure 21. Rap sheet	206
Figure 22. Carmel's New Life	210
Figure 23. Rose's alley	215
Figure 24. Rose's room	221
Figure 25. The Lioness's door	222
Figure 26. The Lioness's bed	224
Figure 27. A suitable home	225
Figure 28. "My own place"	227
Figure 29. Chicago Police	233
Figure 30. Personal hygiene items	235
Figure 31. Christmas morning	240
Figure 32. Dining room table	271
Figure 33. "My first job"	273
Figure 34. Debit card	274
Figure 35. Two-hour commute to work each way	279
Figure 36. Park where drug deals occur	290
Figure 37. People high on the bus	290
Figure 38. Daily "triggers"	291
Figure 39. UIC basketball game	334
Figure 40. Chicago's 500 th homicide of the year	336

ABSTRACT

Based on in-depth, semi-structured qualitative and photo-elicitation interviews with 36 formerly incarcerated women, this dissertation answers three central research questions: (1) How does the state structure women's post-incarceration experiences? (2) How do these post-incarceration experiences relate to women's experiences of criminalization and incarceration? (3) How do women respond to criminalization, incarceration, and post-incarceration? By centering women's standpoint, I draw upon poststructuralist theories of the state to show how women experienced governance *across* multiple sites. I first examine the violence and dehumanization women experienced in their encounters with the criminal legal system and how the state labeled women as "criminals" and "addicts." After imprisonment, women encountered what I term a *post-incarceration moral order* in which they had to continuously perform their "rehabilitated," "moral," and "clean" identities under high levels of surveillance. State and non-state actors offered religion and recovery, specifically the 12-Step logic, as mechanisms for women to use to demonstrate their personal transformations, and recovery homes, drug treatment programs, and religious groups ultimately extended the discourses around "criminal" and "rehabilitated" identities that women experienced while incarcerated. Women contrasted their present selves with their past selves in ways that showed how personal transformation was an embodied process of moving from a failed femininity to a rehabilitated femininity. I show how women experienced the post-

incarceration moral order as both constraining and enabling, as well as the strategies they used to navigate the order. I discuss women's resistance of the order's individualistic focus by highlighting moments of collectivity and critique, what I term *cracks in the moral order*. Women realized that personal transformation alone was not the answer to the problems they faced and that there was a need for broader social change. My research indicates a need for fundamental changes to the criminal legal system that go beyond reforming the conditions of imprisonment and easing the barriers people face post-incarceration. Specifically, I argue for the need for more types of drug treatment, rather than the dominance of the 12-Step approach; the need to decriminalize drugs; and the value of abolitionist projects that link personal and social transformation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I examine the experiences of women who are involved with the criminal legal system. As I show throughout this chapter, criminalization and incarceration are growing issues for disadvantaged women, particularly poor and low-income women and women of color. Based on a series of in-depth qualitative and photo-elicitation interviews with 36 women living in Chicago, I ground my research in the standpoint of formerly incarcerated women to understand how multiple institutions and organizations connected to the carceral state shape women's experiences with criminalization, incarceration, and life after jail and prison.

Throughout the dissertation, I rely on women's narratives and the photographs they created for this project to show how the criminal legal system dehumanized women and ultimately offered religious narratives and the 12-Step approach to recovery from drug use as mechanisms for them to use to demonstrate their "rehabilitated" identities. I also show how the recovery homes where women lived post-incarceration offered critical support, while ultimately extending the discourses around "criminal" and "rehabilitated" identities that women experienced while incarcerated. I examine what these discourses meant for women's sense of self, as well as the range of ways women critiqued and resisted the individualistic focus on personal transformation they regularly encountered throughout and after incarceration.

In this chapter, I situate women's experiences in the present-day era of mass incarceration in the United States, as well as review the literature on governance and reentry, which together provide the theoretical framework for this project.

Situating this Study

Over the past forty years, the United States has experienced an unprecedented expansion of its prison system. Between 1972 and 2007, the rate of people incarcerated in the United States more than quintupled (National Research Council 2014). In the present era of mass incarceration, approximately 2.2 million individuals are incarcerated in prisons and jails in the United States, and over 7 million people are under some form of correctional supervision (National Research Council 2014). The United States incarcerates more individuals than any other country in the world and incarcerates at a higher rate than any other country (National Research Council 2014). A disproportionate number of incarcerated people are African-American or Latino (Alexander 2010; Davis 2003; Wacquant 2009). The racial bias in arrest, prosecution, and incarceration rates has prompted critical analyses of the carceral state as a racialized form of social control (Alexander 2010; Davis 1998, 2003; McCorkel 2013; Wacquant 2009). Michelle Alexander (2010), for one, argues that mass incarceration is “the new Jim Crow” in the sense that it supports a racial caste system in the United States not only through incarceration but also through disenfranchisement and the loss of social rights and benefits imposed on individuals post-incarceration. Similarly, Loïc Wacquant (2009) argues that the present day U.S. prison system is the latest institution that operates to confine and control African Americans, following chattel slavery, the Jim Crow System,

and the urban ghetto in northern metropolises. An important contextual point about mass incarceration in the United States is that public and private prisons largely have abandoned their past goal of rehabilitation and replaced it with a managerial ethos (Haney 2004, Wacquant 2009), as well as “the goals of incapacitation, deterrence, and retribution...” (Beckett and Western 2001:46).

Although men make up the vast majority of the U.S. incarcerated population, the penal system has impacted and continues to impact women in direct and damaging ways. Between 1972 and 2010, women’s incarceration rate (including jail and prison) rose twice as quickly as that of men (National Research Council 2014). The United States presently incarcerates more than 200,000 women in state and federal prisons and local jails throughout the country, and more than one million women live under some form of correctional supervision, such as probation, parole, or serving time in alternative-to-incarceration programs located in community settings (Haney 2010; The Sentencing Project 2007). These gendered shifts in the criminal legal system’s focus target particular women; incarceration disproportionately impacts women who belong to marginalized groups, particularly women of color and women who are poor, undereducated, survivors of physical and/or sexual violence, and who struggle with mental health issues (Schlesinger and Lawston 2011).

This profile indicates that most incarcerated women face multiple forms of social disadvantage throughout their lives. Incarceration constitutes a secondary victimization for many women who encounter state violence in the form of inadequate medical and mental health care; shackling during childbirth; and sexual abuse by prison guards, the majority of whom are men who perform body searches and have access to women when

they undress, shower, and use bathroom facilities (Amnesty International 1999; Davis 2003; Davis and Shaylor 2001; Flavin 2009; Law 2009; Richie 2012). Indeed, Angela Y. Davis and Cassandra Shaylor (2001) explain:

Women's prisons are located on a continuum of violence that extends from the official practices of the state to the spaces of intimate relationships...Prisons are places within which violence occurs on a routine and constant basis; the functioning of the prison depends upon it. The threat of violence emanating from prison hierarchies is so ubiquitous and unpredictable that some women have pointed out the striking similarities between the experiences of imprisonment and battering relationships. (P. 7)

The very experiences that make women vulnerable to criminalization and incarceration play out while they are in the custody of the state.

Containing Social Marginality

Undeniably, the War on Drugs is a leading cause of mass incarceration in the United States. As a recent report by the National Research Council (2014) documents, changes in policy over the past 40 years contributed to more prison admissions, as well as longer prison sentences. Many of these policies, such as mandatory minimum sentences, had to do with drug-related charges. The War on Drugs has contributed to more people being sentenced and incarcerated for low-level drug offenses. At the end of 2010, 17.4% of people incarcerated in state prisons were serving time for drug-related offenses, a thirteen-fold increase from 1980 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2012). At year-end 2011, 48% of people incarcerated in federal prisons were serving time for drug-related offenses (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2012).

The War on Drugs also is a leading reason for the spike in women's incarceration. Feminist scholars (Chesney-Lind 2003; Covington and Bloom 2003; Davis and Shaylor

2001; Gaskins 2004; Richie 1996, 2001, 2012; Sokoloff 2007) have advanced an understanding of how the War on Drugs has hit women particularly hard, operating, in effect, as a “War on Women” (Bush-Baskette 1998). For instance, mandatory minimum sentencing laws have contributed to more and longer prison sentences for low-level drug offenses, which typically are the offenses for which women are charged. Women’s positions in low levels of drug operations means they have limited information to trade with law enforcement in negotiating plea agreements that can result in shorter sentences (Chesney-Lind 2003). Additionally, women’s involvement in drug-related offenses often is connected to their relationships with men, relationships that may or may not be abusive (Gaskins 2004). Police may arrest women when they find drugs in their homes, even if the drugs are not theirs, and abusive partners often force women to participate in their drug involvement (Gaskins 2004; Richie 1996). Furthermore, women’s drug use often is a strategy to manage effects of trauma, specifically physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in childhood and in adulthood (Richie 1996). Yet mandatory minimum sentencing laws mean that judges cannot consider such mitigating circumstances when sentencing women for drug-related offenses (Chesney-Lind 2003; Gaskins 2004).

Despite the War on Drugs’ clear role in driving mass incarceration, broadly, and increases in women’s incarceration, specifically, the War on Drugs alone does not explain mass incarceration in the United States. Rather, the War on Drugs is a mechanism the state has used as part of a larger project to contain social marginality.

The era of mass incarceration in the United States developed alongside the retrenchment of the U.S. social welfare state (Bumiller 2013; Wacquant 2009). Over the past decade or so, welfare and penal scholars have begun to explore the connection

between the criminal legal and welfare systems and deepen their understandings of how the state operates (Beckett and Western 2001; Bumiller 2013; Garland 2001; Haney 2004, 2010; McCorkel 2004; Wacquant 2001, 2009). These scholars have documented the convergence of the welfare and the penal states since the mid-1970s, showing how both social welfare policy and penal policy have taken a punitive turn. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), for instance, effectively ended the right to entitlement for caretakers by replacing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Whereas AFDC had been a reliable though meager source of cash assistance for poor families (primarily headed by single women), TANF withdrew public support for (women's) caretaking by introducing a lifetime limit of 60 months of cash assistance and strict work requirements, often referred to as "workfare" (Haney 2004, Hays 2003, Wacquant 2009). Importantly, the racialized and gendered "controlling images" (Collins 2000) of the "welfare queen" and "jezebel" influenced welfare reform. The rhetoric of the welfare reform debates revealed politicians' and the white, middle-class electorate's concern that single Black mothers had grown financially dependent on the state (Hays 2003). In a revival of the culture of poverty thesis, politicians proclaimed that sexually irresponsible women (read: African-American single mothers) who lacked a work ethic and had no respect for family values were depleting the state of financial resources through their generational use of public assistance. Research on welfare recipients consistently challenged this rhetoric but had little impact on changing the terms of the welfare reform debate or the popular image of welfare recipients. Key welfare reform provisions, such as the implementation of lifetime limits on TANF, work requirements,

and incentives for marriage, reflected an effort by the state to instill poor women of color with family and work values (Hays 2003).

Such explicit shifts have prompted scholars to argue that the convergence between the welfare and penal systems represents a coordinated effort by the state to regulate social marginality in new ways (Beckett and Western 2001; Bumiller 2013; Davis 1998; Haney 2010; Wacquant 2009). Wacquant (2009) argues that the retrenchment of social welfare policies and the rise of the penal state are linked projects of the neoliberal state that manage and regulate marginal populations. He offers a preliminary gender analysis of these trends by explaining how the Left hand of the state morally reforms poor women of color and their children through Public Aid's bureaucracy, while the Right hand of the state morally reforms poor men of color through the penal system. In short, the state employs a gendered division of labor in regulating marginal populations.

Wacquant (2009) glosses over, however, the way that the penal state increasingly is locking up women, particularly poor women and women of color. Critiquing Wacquant's (2009:15) conclusion that the complementary roles of the Left and Right hands of the state represent the "(re)masculinizing of the state in the neoliberal age," Kristin Bumiller (2013:83) explains, "The most important strategy being adopted by this evolving state is, in fact, a pretence of androgyny, which casts the state as legitimate in its exercise of greater control and surveillance of a new criminalized population that now includes greater numbers of women and less violent men." The Left and Right hands of the state do, in fact, work together to regulate the poor, but women are not immune from the expanding reach of the penal state. Rather, as social welfare assistance, public

institutions, and jobs have withered away, the criminal legal system has stepped in to fill the gaps through which women fall.

Lynne A. Haney (2010:7) also notes “[t]hese shifts in the gendered realities of punishment... While poor women have always had their lives regulated by the state indirectly, through social policies, laws, and encounters with caseworkers, more of them are living and raising children quite literally within the state – often for long stretches of time.” Similarly, Jill A. McCorkel (2013:218) draws attention to the centrality of gender, as well as race, in the drive to mass incarceration in the United States: “In terms of racial politics, mass incarceration was made possible by not one but two galvanizing tropes of the drug war: the ‘gangbanger’ and the ‘crack ho.’...[The ‘gangbanger’s’] gendered counterpart, the crack ho, is feared for her sexual fecundity, lack of mothering skills, and dependency on state subsidies.” McCorkel (2013:281) explains that these tropes are “social constructions,” used as scapegoats to explain why white, middle- and working-class Americans feel their economic stability is threatened. But these “racist constructions...obscure the degree to which crime, poverty, and racial marginalization are a function of broader shifts in the political economy and of a social order that systematically privileges whites” (McCorkel 2013:218). As Angela Davis (1998:11) highlighted many years prior, “Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of the social problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty.” The state attempts to make social problems “disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages...But prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings” (Davis 1998:11). Increasingly, the criminal legal system is “disappearing” women, specifically poor women and women of color.

My research uses an intersectional framework to take up the question of what this punitive turn in state policies and practices means for women. Specifically, I investigate the raced and gendered dynamics of women's experiences of criminalization, incarceration, and post-incarceration. For the remainder of this chapter, I situate my project in two areas of literature that are somewhat disparate: the neoliberal state and reentry. I then provide an overview of the project and my central argument.

The Neoliberal State

Scholars who advance an understanding of how multiple state institutions work in conjunction to regulate social marginality in the United States today typically use a poststructuralist state theory approach and agree on a few defining features of the neoliberal state (Bumiller 2008; Garland 1996, 2001; Haney 2004, 2010; Wacquant, 2009, 2012a, 2012b). First, the neoliberal state supports a deregulated, free market approach, which facilitated deindustrialization and globalization beginning in the 1970s. This approach prioritizes the profits of businesses and corporations, while neglecting protections for workers. Second, under neoliberalism, the state no longer operates in a centralized fashion, wherein there exists a single, identifiable authority. Rather, the neoliberal state is a decentralized state, devolving its responsibilities to a host of non-state actors, what Nikolas Rose (1999:49) refers to as “government at a distance.” Through contracts and partnerships, private companies and non-profit organizations do the work that the state once did. Haney (2010) uses the term “state hybridity” to describe the decentralized and devolved manner in which the neoliberal state operates:

Public partnerships with non-profits and private companies have led to a multiplication of actors now playing the role of the state. Quite often, these actors are disguised as community members, therapists,

businessmen, or NGO activists...But they remain part of the state arena through their budgets, contracts, staffing, and legal mandates. In many ways, these agencies are akin to satellite states – they circle and hover around the centralized ‘mother ship,’ relying on her for material survival, legitimacy, and authority. Yet, on a day-to-day level, they claim autonomy from her and the ability to set their own agendas. (P. 16)

The multiplication of people and organizations carrying out the state’s work extends the state’s reach beyond institutional settings and into communities.

David Garland (2001) explains that this devolution of state responsibilities is connected to social insecurity and the public’s concern about crime. The economic and social insecurity brought about by market deregulation, globalization, and deindustrialization created support for an expanding penal state. As the middle class felt their social position increasingly threatened, they supported “tough-on-crime” policies to ensure social control (Garland 2001; see also Bumiller 2008; Davis 2003; McCorkel 2013; Wacquant 2009, 2012a, 2012b). The state’s inability to provide social security, however, pushed federal, state, and local governments to develop new crime control strategies, what, drawing on the work of Pat O’Malley (1992), Garland (2001) calls “responsibilization strategies.” With these strategies, governments are “seeking to act upon crime not in a direct fashion through state agencies (police, courts, prisons, social work, etc.) but instead by acting indirectly, seeking to activate action on the part of non-state agencies and organizations” (Garland 1996:452). Private agencies, non-profit organizations, and community members, through initiatives like coordinated-community response efforts and neighborhood watch programs, accept responsibility for ensuring public safety, thereby relieving an overburdened state, at least partially, of one of its central tasks (Garland 1996, 2001; see also Haney 2010; Hannah-Moffat 2000).

The expanded reach of the neoliberal state is targeted, though, in the sense that it bears down upon groups located at the bottom of the social hierarchy, through punitive “workfare” policies, initiated by the PRWORA, and criminalization (Wacquant 2012a, 2012b). Wacquant (2012a) characterizes the neoliberal state as:

[A] *Centaur-state that displays opposite visages at the two ends of the class structure*: it is uplifting and ‘liberating’ at the top, where it acts to leverage the resources and expand the life options of the holders of economic and cultural capital; but it is castigatory and restrictive at the bottom, when it comes to managing the populations destabilized by the deepening of inequality and the diffusion of work insecurity and ethnic anxiety. (P. 74)

Thus, Wacquant (2012b:245) argues that the linked projects of social welfare retrenchment and penal state expansion are parts of “a political project of state crafting.” In order for the “free market” to work, the state must step in to discipline (through “workfare”) or contain (through “prisonfare”) the population of surplus labor concentrated in disadvantaged urban communities. Wacquant (2012b:245) “propose[s] a ‘thick’ sociological characterization of neoliberalism that adds three components to market rule: supervisory workfare, an invasive police and prison apparatus, and the cultural trope of ‘personal responsibility’ to glue them all together.”

Taken together, these theorists show how the neoliberal state’s orientation to its subjects has changed, particularly with regard to the poor communities and communities of color it deems threats to social order. The neoliberal state works through a mix of state and non-state actors to govern and extend its punitive reach into the lives of people living on the margins of society.

The State's Creative Power

Poststructural state theorists also draw on Michel Foucault's (1977) conceptualization of the state's disciplinary and discursive power. According to Foucault (1977:214), modern society is characterized by an "omnipresent surveillance." People become aware of the norms that govern society, as well as the consequences of violating these norms. The institutions (such as schools, hospitals, the military, work, and the family) that teach and then enforce these norms are seemingly endless (Foucault 1977:138). In this way, power is productive. It no longer is something that is possessed and then exercised on people. In modern society, power actually produces individuals. It shapes their thoughts, desires, and behaviors to align with social norms. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner (1991), citing Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, explain:

The individual now is interpreted not only as a discursive construct, but as an effect of political technologies through which its very identity, desires, body, and 'soul' are shaped and constituted. 'Discipline "makes" individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise' (Foucault 1979: p. 170). The ultimate goal and effect of discipline is 'normalization', the elimination of all social and psychological irregularities and the production of useful and docile subjects through a refashioning of minds and bodies. (P. 47)

Disciplinary power operates in such a way that individuals become self-regulating docile (that is, controlled) bodies. Discourses, meaning language and ways of knowing, produce normative categories that people internalize and follow. Punishment no longer is needed, since individuals regulate themselves in order to conform to what is normative. In contrast to the visible exercise of pre-modern power, as evidenced by public displays of torture, modern power operates invisibly. As Foucault (1977:201) explains, "the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary."

Building upon this notion of disciplinary, discursive power, poststructuralist state theorists recognize that states have the power to create particular subject positions (Bourdieu 1994; Brush 2003; Scott 1998; Seidman 2008). The state has the authority to deem which categories of being are socially legitimate and in this sense contributes to the “construction of social reality” (Bourdieu 1994:13). The state determines which identities are recognized and thus whether and how individuals are able to exist in the social world according to the categories in which they fit. As Bourdieu (1994:12) explains, “By stating with authority what a being (thing or person) is in truth (verdict) according to its socially legitimate definition, that is what he or she is authorized to be, what he has a right (and duty) to be, the social being that he may claim, the State wields a genuinely *creative*, quasi-divine, power.” Thus, the state not only regulates individuals, it shapes their very identities and sense of being.

The state’s creative power is an important focus of scholarship on social control and responses to deviance. In their study of methadone maintenance treatment, for instance, Julie Harris and Karen McElrath (2012) found that programs imposed a strict “‘clean/dirty’ dichotomy” in how they regarded clients. Clients recognized as “clean” (i.e. not using heroin) received rewards, such as “take-home doses” of methadone, which meant they experienced less surveillance. Clients recognized as “dirty,” however, were monitored more closely by staff and had to undergo urinalysis testing. Harris and McElrath (2012:815) conclude that this dichotomy impacted clients at the level of identity: “Recovery from drug dependence is a process. However, as a means of social control, the clean/dirty distinction served to dichotomize recovery and reinforced spoiled identities. In turn, the dichotomy restricted opportunities for developing client identities

that incorporated incremental steps of the self in recovery.” The programs effectively erased certain identities, such as recovering drug user, instead presenting clients with only two recognized subject positions: “clean” or “dirty.”

Governance

Foucault’s (1991) work on governmentality also is central to researchers’ investigations of how the penal state impinges upon people’s lives. Governmentality refers to the ways that states manage whole populations, in addition to individual subject positions, through discourse, scientific measures (such as surveys and statistics), and expertise (Brush 2003; Foucault 1991). With discourse, the state legitimizes whole fields, such as mental health and criminal justice, that label certain individuals as deviant and proscribes steps they must follow to achieve the normalized standard (Seidman 2008). With science and expertise, the state relies on technological advances to manage populations more effectively through increased surveillance, as well as gathering and storing larger amounts of and more detailed data about populations (Brush 2003; Foucault 1991). States’ ability to gather data and use statistics to understand and predict phenomena increases states’ power: “the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of the government, aware, *vis-à-vis* the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it” (Foucault 1991:100). Individuals’ freedom and agency diminish as the state reaches into public and even private arenas that it previously could not penetrate.

Foucault’s work on governmentality has inspired punishment scholars to investigate ways that the state manages “risky” populations through interventions designed to encourage self-regulation and self-discipline. Rather than manage social

problems, the state works to manage individuals. As Garland (2001:15) observes, since the 1970s, “control theories,” rather than social deprivation theories, have dominated “contemporary criminology and...the crime control policies to which they give rise.” Rather than address structural inequality and social deprivation, the state, through formalized punishments (such as incarceration, correctional supervision, and mandated drug treatment), encourages a variety of individual-level controls. In other words, the state works to produce specific subject positions. It often attempts to do so by intervening in criminalized people’s lives through a variety of private and public service providers. For instance, in their review of the National Parole Board’s decisions for incarcerated women in Canada, Sarah Turnbull and Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2009:532) study “the penal technique of applying parole conditions to female offenders and how conditions are used to produce normative, self-governing subjects.” While identifying parole conditions as a “repressive” technique of penal power that restrict and surveil women, Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009:535) conclude that they also are “productive forms of risk management and targeted governance that aim to activate women’s capacity to change into responsibilized, self-governing penal subjects.” Reuben Miller (2014) reaches a similar conclusion in his ethnographic study of prisoner reentry programming for men. He views reentry as a “people changing institution,” arguing that the programming attempts to change individuals’ “psychological dispositions” in order to produce self-governing, reformed individuals who no longer pose a threat to the social order.

Therapeutic Governance in Carceral Sites

Rose (1999:93) details how therapeutics is an important technology of governance: “At a time when the individual is to be free from the imposition of codes of

morality by religious, political or legal authorities, we have no authoritative ways of judging conduct other than those founded upon a scientific knowledge of the self.” The expertise of “psy professionals” stands in as a recognized authority that encourages self-governance. Rose (1999:93) argues, “In striving to live our autonomous lives, to discover who we really are, to realize our potentials and shape our lifestyles, we become tied to the project of our own identity and bound in new ways into the pedagogies of expertise.” The continual drive for self-knowledge in order to better one’s self encourages individuals to look inward.

In a similar way, punishment scholars study how the penal state encourages an inward focus on self-improvement by imposing therapeutic interventions on individuals who are under correctional supervision. In addition to punishing people for their “criminal” behavior, therapeutic interventions claim to help individuals come to know themselves so that they can correct their individual deficiencies that have led to their “criminal” involvement. These therapeutic interventions often are related to drug use, which is unsurprising given the large number of people who are caught up in the criminal legal system due to drug-related charges, and are rooted in the “therapeutic community” (TC) treatment model. Teresa Gowan and Sarah Whetstone (2012) and Kerwin Kaye (2010) delineate the historical development of TCs as alternatives to incarceration and their deepening relationship with the criminal legal system. The TC model grew out of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Charles Dederich founded the TC model and “developed the principles and intensive group work of AA meetings into a full-time residential community, a place where addicts could heal their ‘flawed personalities’ through intensive mutual discipline and support” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:74). In these

highly regulated facilities, it is not just staff members who monitor residents, but also residents who monitor one another's behaviors, call each other out publicly, and report rule infractions and "problematic" behavior to staff. The TC model also employs a highly confrontational approach, known as "attack therapy," and public forms of humiliation as punishment for rule infractions (Kaye 2010). These extreme and punitive interventions are justified by the TCs' view of "addiction" as "aris[ing] from a 'personality disorder' characterized by a lack of self-insight" (Kaye 2012:213). As a result, "TCs focus upon behaviorist controls" (Kaye 2012:213).

Although "TCs have become the program of choice within the criminal justice system," there are varied forms that TCs take today (Kaye 2012:211). Gowan and Whetstone (2012:74) explain that as TCs became a common alternative to incarceration, they had to tone down their "lack of professional hierarchy, extraordinary shaming rituals and untrammelled moralism" and require professional cognitive behavioral therapy training for counselors. Yet the focus on strict interventions to bring about behavior modification remains a central organizing principle of TCs. While rehab facilities serving the most elite groups most significantly modified the TC approach, "the influence of professional psychology and medicine is far less evident in the TCs serving poor and working class clients...an increasingly intimate relationship with the criminal justice system may have even reinforced the confrontational and authoritarian characteristics of the original TC" (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:74).

In their recent ethnographic studies of TC-inspired drug treatment facilities that serve as alternatives to incarceration, Kaye (2012) and Gowan and Whetstone (2012) both conclude that these facilities are "a primary site for the re-socialization and control

of the poor” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:70). Kaye (2012) argues that the facility’s conceptualization of the “drugs lifestyle” mirrors earlier descriptions of the “culture of poverty,” specifically identifying lack of a work ethic and “pathological personality” as causes of social problems. As follows, the treatment focuses on changing individuals’ presumed values and behaviors. According to Kaye (2012):

Drug treatment thus becomes an ‘apolitical’, semi-medicalized means of addressing a wider set of policy concerns pertaining to the wide swath of the mostly Black and Latino poor, particularly men, who are not captured within the wide net cast by the criminal justice system. In its criminal justice incarnations, drug treatment is effectively a means of ‘treating’ the so-called ‘culture of poverty’. (P. 214)

The TC works to modify residents’ behaviors and routines so that they become ready to participate in the low-wage labor market. Work is the mark of a rehabilitated, “productive citizen” who no longer is a “criminal” (Kaye 2012:216, see also Simon 1993).

Importantly, Kaye (2012) and Gowan and Whetstone (2012) also note that the TC model of drug treatment is a moral project. According to Gowan and Whetstone (2012):

The central determinant of both the client’s past and his future was his moral orientation...the key to a drug-free future lay not on the level of brain chemistry but via a radical modification of ‘behaviors’ and ‘criminal thinking’. The clients were frequently reminded of their criminal status...these practices unified the moral and medical frameworks – the needy powerlessness of the addict wed to the risky agency of the criminal. (P. 78)

Again, this framework points to an individualistic project focused on the “radical reworking of...[the] self” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:79). The moral tone of this “radical reworking” has everything to do with race. Similar to Kaye’s assessment of the overlap between the “drugs lifestyle” and the “culture of poverty,” Gowan and Whetstone (2012) observed:

As the [treatment] narrative slipped away from biochemistry and psychology toward morality and culture, the reprogramming process took on a highly racialized character...It was the African Americans, and above all the younger men, who were seen to have the most problematic way of life. The disproportionate number of African Americans both in the facility and in the system at large justified the expansive characterization of black cultural patterns and black communities in general as ‘negative’ influences that created the danger of ‘relapse’. Only through both a radical cultural makeover and a kind of permanent social quarantine could the inner-city African American achieve recovery (Fader, 2008). (P. 81-82)

This research shows how therapeutic governance operates in carceral settings. People learn to regulate their desires, reform their thinking, and modify their behavior in order to come in line with the status quo. These settings bracket out structural inequalities in favor of teaching participants to look inward to reform their personal failings. This individualistic focus reflects the institutionalized racism that structures the overall criminal legal system and drug treatment field, as well as a racist dismissiveness of entire communities that deal with the oppression of structural violence on a daily basis.

Gendered therapeutic governance in carceral sites. Of course, therapeutic governance is a gendered, as well as a raced and classed, process. As women’s incarceration rates steadily grew, scholars focused on how the criminal legal system approaches the women it holds under correctional supervision. In response to concerns that prisons treated women just like men (also referred to as “equality with a vengeance”) and thus harmed women by not considering the gendered aspects of their criminalization and incarceration, “gender-responsive programming” has grown in prisons and alternative-to-incarceration programs. Rather than address the structural conditions that shape women’s pathways to incarceration, however, this programming often takes the form of a particularly gendered type of therapeutic governance that encourages

participants to recognize weak control of flawed selves as the core problem they must address. As Bumiller (2013:63) explains, gender-responsive programming justifies the state's use of incarceration as a tool to teach women, whom the criminal legal system views as deviant, to make "better lifestyle choices." Far from challenging sexism, poverty, and racism as intersecting systems that constrain women's opportunities and make them vulnerable to multiple forms of violence, "[p]ractitioners of gender-responsive programming hope that through involvement in rehabilitation programmes their clients will adopt an ethic of personal responsibility and, as model citizens, will have the capacity to overcome their addictions and enticements to criminal activity" (Bumiller 2013:63).

Hannah-Moffat (2000) noticed a similar dynamic in her research on women's prisons in Canada. She explains how prison reform efforts, led by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, effectively co-opted feminist and Aboriginal notions of "empowerment" to fit within the system's "responsibilization" framework. Prison programming focused on how low self-esteem, rather than structural inequalities, caused women's disempowerment. Citing the Task Force, Hannah-Moffat (2000:518) notes that it "suggests improved self-esteem and the empowerment of women will give women the 'ability to accept and express responsibility for actions taken and future choices' (TFFSW 1990:107). These statements are used to reaffirm a commitment to woman-centredness and reinforce a construction of women's shared disempowerment and marginalization." Furthermore, this co-optation of "empowerment" discourse "legitimate[s] the expansion of women's prison capacity" (Hannah-Moffat 2000:518). Prison becomes a way to connect women to the treatment the state determines they need in an environment that the

state determines is most suitable (Bumiller 2013; Hannah-Moffat 2000). This treatment is depoliticized and consists of classes such as life skills, parenting, and anger management that “empower” incarcerated women by teaching them to “conform to a series of normative standards” (Hannah-Moffat 2000:524).

In the United States, ethnographic research in women’s prisons and in alternative-to-incarceration programs for women documents similar ways that therapeutic governance is gendered. Allison McKim (2008), for one, studied a residential drug treatment facility for women mandated there as a condition of parole or as an alternative to incarceration. The program drew on a number of drug treatment models, including the TC model. It also used a “habilitation” model of treatment, meaning that staff viewed clients as “lacking a ‘self’” to rehabilitate; rather, “a woman’s weak or nonexistent self is the root cause of her problems, especially addiction” (McKim 2008:309, see also McCorkel 2013). While the program did not focus on “women’s economic dependence on the state,” it targeted women’s “dependency of their self-concept on others. The staff pushed clients to ‘focus on themselves’ and their internal emotional life rather than on other people, social roles, or obligations to combat the lack of self-awareness that fueled their criminality” (McKim 2008:309). This focus on the self conflicted with traditional feminine responsibilities to care for others, particularly children. Yet, the program’s “therapeutic governing practices” rested on “stereotypically feminine emotionality,” as women were supposed to continuously and openly share the most intimate details of their lives, including experiences with interpersonal violence. Women had to do the emotional work to learn their “selves,” and to how to govern themselves, before staff deemed them ready for the responsibilities of mothering and employment. The program sought to

produce a particular type of feminine subjectivity, that of “an emotional, introspective, liberated woman” (McKim 2008:321).

In her comparative ethnographic study of two alternative-to-incarceration programs, Haney (2010:6) also documents gendered forms of therapeutic governance, drawing attention to the different “modes of state regulation” she observed in each site. In the first site, a residential facility for incarcerated teen mothers that she studied in the early 1990s, the staff primarily focused on breaking the young women’s dependence on the state, such as their use of various welfare programs. Ten years later, post-welfare reform, Haney found a very different focus in her second site, an alternative-to-incarceration residential facility for adult women with children. Rather than target dependence, this program “emphasized the distortions presumably embedded in women’s minds and set out to break their addictions by putting them on the road to recovery” (Haney 2010:6). Similar to McKim’s (2008) site, this program focused on women’s “selves” as flawed. Haney explains that the program used a “discourse of desire to define what women should want and where they should find pleasure.” As such, the program worked “to rehabilitate the ‘self’ by cleansing and ridding it of all dangerous desires” (Haney 2010:13). The staff members used “addiction” as a “metanarrative” to encapsulate all of the issues they deemed problematic (Haney 2010:128). Haney (2010) explains:

Those convicted of fraud, burglary, and other property crimes were addicted to money, as were those incarcerated for selling drugs. Others were diagnosed as addicted to destructive and unhealthy relationships. Women with long histories of domestic violence were thought to be addicted to abusive men, sex, or male attention. Most generally, there were those who were addicted to a way of life – to the energy, sounds, and sensations of street, or ‘gangsta life.’ What united all these women was an

inability to resist destructive impulses and to develop enough self-awareness to understand what caused them harm. (P. 128)

Again, the answer to all of women's problems, particularly their "criminality," was self-awareness that would "empower" them to govern their "selves." The way to become self-governing individuals was to expose their lives and emotions to counselors and peers, who in accordance with the TC model aggressively confronted women in humiliating ways, and show in group and individual counseling sessions that they accepted others' criticisms and were identifying their personal flaws and learning how to correct them.

Finally, McCorkel's (2013:101) ethnographic study of a drug treatment program located in a women's prison further illuminates how the habilitation model relies on confrontational and humiliation tactics to "make the self visible and interpretable." She explains that men's and women's prisons have the same objective, which is "to hold prisoners accountable," but the strategies to achieve this objective vary because of gendered assumptions about causes of criminality and the risks incarcerated people pose (McCorkel 2013:216). McCorkel (2013:216) discusses how "techniques of control" in men's prisons reflect a "commitment to inscribe control as tightly as possible on the body. These institutions do not aim...to reform the minds of the men they imprison. They are dedicated only to physical containment because the unruliness they are most concerned with is men's capacity for violence." On the other hand, staff and correctional officers in the women's prison McCorkel (2013:217) studied adopted a view of women's "criminal activity and drug use as symptoms of a disordered self. Her unruliness was linked not simply to her criminality, but also to her mothering skills, sexual practices, and dependency on men and the state. Managing the risks she posed meant inscribing control

as tightly as possible on the self.” Like the studies discussed above, McCorkel (2013) makes clear how therapeutic governance is a gendered practice that recognizes women’s vulnerability, hardships, and victimization but reinterprets them as signs of flawed, incomplete, disordered, and even diseased selves rather than as consequences of racism, sexism, and poverty.

More so than other work on gendered governance, McCorkel focuses on morality and race, in addition to gender. As noted above, she argues that the specter of the “crack ho,” a racialized controlling image (Collins 2000), fueled the rise of mass incarceration. As with its counterpart, “the gangbanger,” the “crack ho” “is portrayed as contributing to the moral and economic decline of impoverished, predominantly Black, urban neighborhoods...” (McCorkel 2013:281). Given this context, it is not surprising that the prison McCorkel studied adopted the habilitation model of women’s treatment at precisely the moment its population transitioned from majority white to majority African American. The habilitation model views criminalized Black women as “real criminals” who are “morally culpable for their crimes” and, for the sake of restoring social order, who are desperately in need of a punitive, though therapeutic, intervention that will make them build up a complete self where one did not previously exist (McCorkel 2013:217).

A common finding across this research with criminalized women is that the therapeutic interventions women encounter in carceral sites “constructs clients’ problems internal to the self, which, like other individualizing forms of governance, obscures structural inequality” (McKim 2008:321). As Haney (2010:13) puts it, the goal of the program she studied “was to bracket inmates’ social and economic marginalization in order to target their psychologies.” Much like Kaye’s (2012) and Gowan and

Whetstone's (2012) critiques of TCs' endeavors to disabuse people of their association with what the criminal legal system views as pathological behaviors endemic to urban Black communities, scholars focusing on the therapeutic governance of criminalized women show how programs target women's presumed deficiencies to bring them in line with certain notions of femininity deemed appropriate for poor women, who often are women of color. As Bumiller (2013:65) cautions, "It is questionable whether the therapeutic function that programmes achieve, or profess to achieve, is viable within a penal or probationary setting."

Taken together, this critical research on governance deepens our understanding of how punishment is carried out today, by state and non-state actors, in prisons as well as in community-based settings. Overall, the take-away message for participants in these programs is that internalization of strategies that enable them to modify their "criminal thinking" and "criminal behavior" will set them free not only from "addiction," but also from criminal involvement. Participants must take personal responsibility for their drug use and subsequent criminalization and then face the task of developing new, disciplined selves that are capable of self-regulating their desires.

One limitation of this research is that it often focuses on a single site that draws on the TC model. Additionally, most of the participants in these sites are mandated to be there as part of their formal sentences. As a result, we have a rich but partial understanding of the relationship between punishment and governance today. As mentioned above, Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009:538) broaden this focus by looking at parole as an institution, specifically how parole decisions for women in Canada "perpetuate normative assumptions of femininity and generally treat women's problems

as moral and psychological deficits that can be addressed through therapeutic interventions.” Jessica J.B. Wyse (2013) also studied parole, and her research in a western state in the United States reveals the gendered ways parole officers conceptualized men’s and women’s “criminal selves.” Wyse (2013:233) found that parole “officers view the male self as flawed or underdeveloped and the female as permeable and amorphous, that is lacking firm boundaries by which to contain emotions and function independently of others.” As a result, officers had different approaches in working with men and women on their caseloads. While officers focused on men’s economic roles, they worked with women by “encouraging emotional containment and discouraging relationship formation” (Wyse 2013:233). This research indicates how gendered governance operates beyond single sites. By analyzing the parole board’s decisions (Turnbull and Hannah-Moffatt 2009) and observing and interviewing parole officers and reviewing their case notes (Wyse 2013), however, this research offers a top-down assessment of parole, meaning the researchers do not start from the standpoint of the women who are governed by parole conditions. This research thus cannot speak to how women experience and respond to these conditions.

My research responds to these limitations by starting with the standpoint of formerly incarcerated women and centering their narratives to understand how governance operates *across* multiple sites and in settings that are not overtly punitive. I suspect that the staff members who worked at the recovery homes and agencies through which I recruited would be deeply troubled by the TC model. Aside from one woman who had lived in a TC program prior to the recovery home where I met her, the women I interviewed did not report experiencing confrontation, humiliation, and shaming as

tactics that recovery homes used to teach recovery from drug use. Women much more commonly talked about 12-Step principles and religion as the mechanisms of their recovery. As a result, I view what I term “the 12-Step logic” as a pervasive, though understudied, type of therapeutic governance that undergirds women’s incarceration and post-incarceration experiences. Additionally, although most of the women I interviewed were on parole or probation, most were not mandated to live at the recovery homes where I met them. Women often chose to stay at these homes because they had nowhere else to live or because they wanted the structure and support they hoped these programs would provide. Consequently, my research suggests ways that therapeutic governance persists beyond incarceration and in some cases even beyond periods of formal correctional supervision.

Life After Incarceration

One of the consequences of mass incarceration is that an increasing number of people must navigate “reentry,” or “the process of leaving prison and returning to society” (Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001:1). As Jeremy Travis (2009:2) notes, each year more than 700,000 men and women leave state and federal prisons and more than nine million individuals leave jails, representing what Joan Petersilia (2003:3) identifies as “[o]ne of the most profound challenges facing American society...” today.¹ Of particular concern to reentry scholars is the reality that the majority of men and women who are released from prison will be arrested post-release, and many will return to prison (Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001:1). As such, scholars largely have focused on what

¹ Travis (2009) explains that there are a total of about 13 million releases from jail each year. These releases represent about nine million individuals, some of whom are released more than once.

prevents and facilitates “successful” reentry processes. Below, I provide a brief overview of this work.

Barriers to Reentry

Reentry scholars document a host of barriers that formerly incarcerated men and women face upon release. One of the most pressing issues is that individuals typically return to the same disadvantaged communities where they lived prior to incarceration (La Vigne et al. 2003; Richie 2001). As La Vigne et al. (2003) note in their research on reentry in Illinois, the majority (53%) of men and women leaving prisons throughout the state return to Chicago. Of those individuals, the majority is concentrated in just six of 77 community areas. These six community areas “are among the Chicago communities that are most socially and economically disadvantaged...characterized by families living below the poverty level; moderate to high levels of renter-occupied housing, unemployment, and female-headed households; and above average Part 1 crime rates²” (La Vigne et al. 2003:51). As a result, formerly incarcerated men and women face the same structural conditions upon returning home that contributed to their incarceration in the first place.

Services in jails and prisons, as well as those available through parole, leave people ill-equipped to deal with the barriers they face after their release. Jail and prison programming typically is inadequate at helping people address issues such as drug use and physical and mental health issues, and few individuals benefit from education and employment training while incarcerated (Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001). As Mona

² Part 1 crimes include murder, aggravated assault, rape, robbery, larceny, burglary, and arson (La Vigne et al. 2003:57).

Lynch (2000) and Tara D. Opsal (2009) found in their research, parole officers generally provided little assistance with overcoming structural barriers, since parole has shifted from an institution focused on rehabilitation to one that manages risk through surveillance (Simon 1993). Although Lynch (2000:51) encountered the “rehabilitative rhetoric” in her research of parole in California, she found limited employment, counseling, and educational resources that could address rehabilitative goals in contrast to the abundance of resources available “to carry out law enforcement related goals...” She concludes that this “resource imbalance” contributed to officers’ focus on “parolee attitude and choice of behavior as the key (or impediment) to success...” (Lynch 2000:53).

Formerly incarcerated people also bear the additional harms caused by incarceration itself, but find few or no community-based resources to address these issues. For instance, certain criminal convictions prohibit formerly incarcerated men and women from accessing a variety of public benefits, such as public assistance, food stamps, and public housing (Alexander 2010; Petersilia 2003; Sokoloff 2007). Additionally, the “negative credential” of the criminal record severely curtails employment opportunities (Pager 2007:32). Not only do federal and state laws prohibit people with criminal convictions from employment in certain fields, Devah Pager’s (2007) research documents how employers discriminate against applicants with a criminal record, particularly Black applicants. She found that Black applicants who had completed high school and did not have a felony conviction still were less likely to receive an interview than white applicants who had not completed high school and had a felony conviction. Thus, formerly incarcerated Black men shoulder the double burden of

racism and discrimination based on criminal background in the labor market. Given these constraints, the resulting picture is that the criminal legal system removes individuals from disadvantaged communities, exposes them to further disadvantage through the experiences of incarceration, and returns them to the same communities with the additional disadvantage of the criminal record.

The relationship between incarceration and community barriers is particularly difficult for women. As Beth E. Richie (2001) found, given the multitude of issues women's home communities face, women often feel that their concerns are not valued. Richie (2001) summarizes:

Women of color returning from jail or prison do not feel embraced by their communities, and they are not identified as having the right to demand services from it. The sense of being marginalized within the context of a disenfranchised community has a profound impact on the ability of women to successfully reintegrate into it. (P. 383)

Additionally, Richie (2001) and Andrea Leverentz (2014) point out that incarcerated women often have survived childhood physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence in adult relationships, and violence in their communities. Complicated and unsafe relationships with family members and partners pose additional barriers to women's reentry. As Richie (2001:375) explains, the women she interviewed "described very basic needs for safety and protections from further abuse upon release." Lack of financial stability, exacerbated by restricted employment and housing opportunities, as well as childcare needs, make it difficult for women to sever ties completely with family members, partners, and even entire communities that may threaten their safety, as well as their recovery from drug use.

On the other hand, women may feel tied to their families and communities, which also can complicate reentry efforts. Leverentz (2014:16) notes that the “self-help messages” women in her research encountered post-incarceration “often come into conflict with the women’s structural positions and their social expectations.” Although these “self-help messages” instructed women “to avoid people, places and things related to their offending...these people, places, and things often include family members who form central parts of their identity and social networks and neighborhoods that are the only ones they know and in which they feel comfortable” (Leverentz 2014:16). Women’s caretaking responsibilities as mothers, daughters, and romantic partners made it difficult for women to focus solely on helping themselves (Leverentz 2014).

Finally, reunification with children is a central and gendered challenge associated with reentry. The majority of incarcerated women are mothers, and most were the primary caretakers of their children prior to incarceration. In 2004, 55% of incarcerated mothers in state and federal prisons reported living with their children prior to incarceration, in contrast to 36% of incarcerated fathers (National Research Council 2014:171). Of these mothers, 42% reported living in single-parent households, in contrast to 17% of fathers (National Research Council 2014:171). After their release, women face the challenge of reuniting with their children, which can be particularly difficult if Child Protective Services (CPS) has gotten involved and placed the children in foster care. For instance, in addition to meeting parole stipulations, women also must follow CPS’s requirements and prove to the agency’s satisfaction that they are financially, emotionally, and mentally prepared to become the primary caretakers for their children (Dodge and Pogrebin 2001; Richie 2001).

Desistance from Crime

Another area of the reentry literature focuses on how individuals, despite the multiple barriers they face post-incarceration, manage to desist from crime. The social control theory of desistance (Laub and Sampson 2001) argues that a variety of social bonds act as a form of social control that encourages desistance from crime. Life events such as employment, joining the military, and marriage provide attachments to mainstream society. As Petersilia (2003:207) summarizes, “These triggering events, in turn, create new systems of social support and emotional attachment, as well as monitoring and control provided by new obligations and activities that are often repeated each day.” As people benefit from their involvement in social institutions, they have more to lose should they become involved again with the criminal legal system. Thus, these social bonds provide disincentives to participate in crime.

Research on desistance primarily focuses on men, and thus we know less about the role of social bonds in women’s post-incarceration experiences. Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph’s (2002) and Leverentz (2006, 2014)’s work are important correctives to this focus on men. These scholars argue that a symbolic interactionist perspective, which foregrounds the interaction between individuals and their social environments and “the ways in which women with a history of criminal justice involvement make sense of their lives in interaction with others” (Leverentz 2014:11), is more useful than a strict theory of social control in understanding how social bonds matter for formerly incarcerated women. Regarding romantic relationships, for instance, Leverentz (2006, 2014) documents that the quality of relationships matters, as does the trajectory they follow. Based on her qualitative research with women, she argues that we

must view relationships as a process in order to fully comprehend how they can both support and undermine recovery and reentry at different points in time.

Building upon Laub and Sampson's (2001) work, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) develop a "theory of cognitive transformation" to understand the process of desistance. They explain that social control theories emphasize how social bonds constrain individuals, thus serving as an external form of control. Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002:992), rather, stress the importance of agency, or "the actor's own role in creatively and selectively appropriating elements in the environment... We argue that these elements will serve well as catalysts for lasting change when they energize rather fundamental shifts in identity for changes in the meaning and desirability of deviant/criminal behavior itself." While social bonds are critical, they are only part of the desistance process. Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002:992) advance a "more 'agentic' view of desistance," which they argue has more explanatory power. For instance:

The idea that there is a dynamic interplay between the individual and catalysts for change helps explain why some individuals exposed to a given catalyst...fail to hook onto them, others find success at time Y when they have failed miserably at time X, and still others manage successful changes using very limited resources. (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002:1055)

Importantly, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) developed their more nuanced theory of desistance based on a mixed-methods study, which included life history narratives, with men *and* women. Gender differences in the life history narratives, which revealed that women more frequently than men discussed religious transformations and children as catalysts for change, encouraged Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002)

to focus on the interaction between individual agency and social bonds. Their work, as well as Leverentz's (2014) indicates the need for more research that focuses on women's post-incarceration experiences.

Shadd Maruna's (2001) work has had a particularly strong influence on the desistance literature. Based on qualitative research with formerly incarcerated men and women in Britain, Maruna argues that an individual's changing sense of identity is critical for desistance. Narrative is central to this process, as "desisting individuals" craft "redemption scripts." The "redemption script allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life" (Maruna 2001:87). The script allows individuals to make sense of their past, criminal behaviors while envisioning the rehabilitated selves they have (or want) to become. From Maruna's (2001:7) perspective, "develop[ing] a coherent, prosocial identity" is the critical first step in people's successful desistance processes. By focusing on narratives, Maruna (2001) de-emphasizes the importance of social bonds and environment, which are the driving mechanisms of change in social control theories and which are more central in Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation.

Although Maruna's (2001) research mostly focused on men, Opsal (2011) and Leverentz (2014) are two scholars who have focused on the role of narrative in women's sense of identity post-incarceration. Similar to Maruna (2001), both highlight the centrality of women's identity work as they leave prison and attempt to adjust to life on the outside. In her qualitative research with women on parole, for instance, Opsal (2011:160) found that they used "narrative strategies" to reclaim a positive self-identity; "[s]pecifically, they challenged the cultural meanings associated with the felon identity,

disassociated from their past drug- and alcohol-using selves, and identified as mothers.”

Leverentz (2014) documents how women’s self-described narratives of a changing self were complicated by challenges they faced in their communities and personal relationships, which contributed to resuming drug use and at times re-incarceration. She concludes, “Narratives are revised and rewritten based on current views and circumstances, and the connections between key moments, behavior, and identity change are not always clear or stable in theses [women’s] narratives over time” (Leverentz 2014:176).

Research that investigates post-incarceration experiences has provided critical insights about the mounting barriers people face after release as well as the relationship between identity and ending involvement with the criminal legal system. Importantly, this relationship is a mutual one, in which individuals’ changing sense of self can facilitate social bonds and new behaviors that help to guard against further legal involvement and in which legal involvement and one’s larger environment can nurture changing conceptions of self.

A significant omission in the reentry literature is that it largely is disconnected from theories of the state, particularly theories of how the neoliberal state contains social marginality through punitive policies, criminalization, and mass incarceration. With a few exceptions that I discuss below, reentry scholars have failed to draw on the rich theorizing on governance and punishment, discussed above, in their investigations of post-incarceration experiences. Furthermore, they tend to study reentry as a distinct phase in people’s lives, without connecting it to people’s experiences of criminalization and incarceration. This orientation is fundamentally flawed. Reentry not only follows from

criminalization and incarceration, but people carry their experiences with criminalization and incarceration into their lives post-incarceration. Thus, it is practically and theoretically important to approach studies of reentry as connected to the state's overall efforts to contain social marginality.

Reentry as a State Project

An emerging subsection of the literature on post-incarceration experiences conceives of reentry as an institution and as a state project of poverty management (Bumiller 2013; Miller 2014; Wacquant 2010). As Bumiller (2013:81) notes, “the rise of incarceration, and now its companion reintegration project, is fully integrated into broader state strategies for regulating minorities and the poor.” Similarly, Miller (2014) conceptualizes reentry as a “welfare state-criminal justice hybrid institution” that seeks to reform the character of the urban poor through surveillance and requirements imposed on formerly incarcerated men by a host of state and non-state actors. Growing parole caseloads force officers to focus on surveillance and risk management rather than connecting people to social services or assisting with reintegration in meaningful ways. Meanwhile, the state devolves responsibility for the care of formerly incarcerated individuals and the facilitation of their reintegration to local community organizations (Bumiller 2013; Kaufman 2014; Miller 2014). Bumiller (2013:58) explains that the resulting “piecemeal and varied” reentry system does little to help individuals avoid ongoing experiences of criminalization, as overwhelmed social service agencies consistently fail to meet people's needs.

Because Bumiller (2013:57) views the government's “new emphasis on re-entry funding and programmes [as] represent[ing] a consolidation of state power rather than a

dramatic shift in the contemporary American system of mass incarceration,” she argues that lack of employment and housing options and insufficient social services are *not* barriers to reentry. Rather, these deficiencies are critical parts of the “synergistic relations among prisons, the reintegration industry, social services, and the labour market” (Bumiller 2013:74). Bumiller (2013:72) explains that employers of “bad jobs” rely upon formerly incarcerated people to fill these positions. In fact, she documents how temporary and day labor agencies form relationships with recovery homes so that they can easily access residents as a source of cheap labor. Social service organizations simply cannot keep up with the growing number of formerly incarcerated people and are stretched far too thin to be able to meet people’s needs. As a result, they rely on the criminal legal system to re-incarcerate individuals, since doing so alleviates programs’ overburdened caseloads. Bumiller (2013:73) argues, “the prison becomes a possible stopgap against the inadequacy of social services, available housing and lack of jobs. When social service clients move into correctional institutions, it either eliminates or diminishes the responsibility of the state to provide them with quality care or any care at all.” In this way, she demonstrates the importance of situating reentry within larger processes of criminalization and incarceration and of understanding reentry as a critical part of the state’s project to manage social marginality.

Overview of the Current Project

My research builds upon and bridges the typically disparate work on governance and punishment and reentry. I conceptualize women’s reentry as a state project that is an extension of criminalization and incarceration. While doing so, I foreground religion and the 12-Step logic as critical organizing principles of women’s post-incarceration

experiences. Research on women, for the most part, does not seriously take up the role of religion in their post-incarceration experiences. Despite frequent references in the literature to The Second Chance Act and how this federal legislation, signed into law in 2008, opened the door for funding to faith-based organizations working with formerly incarcerated people, they are just that, references. Edward Orozco Flores (2014) and Miller (2014) offer detailed ethnographic accounts of men's experiences with faith-based organizations post-incarceration and how religion helped to facilitate their processes of personal transformation. Nicole Kaufman's (2014) ethnographic work documents how some faith-based reentry agencies working with formerly incarcerated women in Wisconsin encourage "religious incorporation," meaning they work to facilitate formerly incarcerated women's membership in specific religious communities. Kaufman focuses on organizational practices rather than participants' experiences. Overall, we know surprisingly little about what religion means to women as they manage their experiences with incarceration and with leaving jail and prison. I build upon Flores' (2014), Miller's (2014), and Kaufman's (2014) important contributions to begin to address this gap in the literature.

Another oversight in the literature on women's incarceration is that it has not closely investigated the influence of the 12-Step approach to drug treatment in services available to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Again, Miller (2014) highlights how the 12-Step model structures "personal transformation" as a lifelong goal for the participants in his study, but all of them were men. Susan Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk's (2011) research is an important exception, as they offer a strong critique of the disconnect between the 12-Step model and the structural inequalities faced by the

formerly incarcerated women in their study. For the most part, though, scholars reference the influence of the 12-Step approach without deeply assessing what it means for criminalized women.

These oversights in the existing research on women's incarceration and post-incarceration experiences are significant. Religion and the 12-Step logic were the organizing principles of the post-incarceration world the women with whom I worked encountered. Without centering the dominant influence of 12 Steps and religion alongside gender, race, class, and sexuality, we cannot develop a full understanding of how the criminal legal system is in fact shaping the lives of socially disadvantaged women during and after incarceration.

My research addresses these oversights in the literature. I view reentry as a state project that is not a distinct phase of women's experiences with the criminal legal system but rather is intricately connected to women's experiences of criminalization and incarceration. In this project, I investigate:

- How does the state structure women's post-incarceration experiences?
- How do these post-incarceration experiences relate to women's experiences of criminalization and incarceration?
- How do women respond to criminalization, incarceration, and post-incarceration?

My research responds to Bumiller's (2013:59-60) assertion that "a fuller understanding of mass incarceration, and its current implications for women, requires examining the complex and multidimensional relationship between prisons and communities, labour markets and social services."

My use of photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI) as a research method with formerly incarcerated women is an additional contribution to the literature. To my knowledge, no other research project has utilized interviews based on participant-generated photographs with formerly incarcerated women. This research method was valuable in multiple ways. For one, the photos created opportunities for women to disrupt dominant scripts they encountered during and after incarceration about personal responsibility and the importance of continuously performing their “rehabilitated” selves. Personal transformation and rehabilitation, indeed, were dominant themes, but, while reflecting on their photos, women also offered critiques of the criminal legal system. Second, through their photos, women consistently challenged stereotypes about criminalized women with which they lived on a daily basis. Through the images they created, women reclaimed their humanity, which, as I show throughout the dissertation, the criminal legal system took from them in multiple ways. In addition to the valuable data the women provided through their photos, there was a value in the research process itself. Considering how our research methods impact the participants we engage should be a central concern for all researchers, particularly those of us who identify as feminist researchers and who work with disadvantaged groups.

Theoretical Framework

In this project, I connect criminalization, incarceration, and reentry as interrelated processes and root my analysis in poststructuralist state theories, as well as theories of governance, that recognize how the state encourages and coerces self-discipline and self-regulation in members of socially marginalized groups. Given the decentralized and devolved nature of the neoliberal state, I begin with the standpoint of formerly

incarcerated women, using in-depth qualitative and photo-elicitation interviews to ground my study. By starting with the standpoint of women, I am able to see how they experience governance across multiple sites and not just in a specific recovery home or drug treatment facility. I also can show how the discourses women encountered across sites post-incarceration built upon the discourses they encountered while incarcerated. The result is that recovery, specifically the 12-Step logic, and religion emerged as state-promoted mechanisms of personal transformation.

Overview of the Argument

The overall theoretical concept that ties my dissertation together is the post-incarceration moral order. In Chapter 3, I show that the violence women experienced through criminalization and incarceration established their identities as “criminals” above all else. Because women largely were in prison for behaviors related to their drug use, the criminal legal system linked their “criminal” identities with their “addict” identities. Through the limited services available in jail and prison, the system then presented the 12-Step logic and religion as mechanisms for women to use to overcome their “criminal” identities. These mechanisms infused a moralizing tone to women’s drug use and criminalization, as well as established “addiction” as a “disease of the will” (Tiger 2013:84) and a lifelong problem that women had to manage. In short, women always were at risk of suspicion of relapse and, by extension, of “criminality.”

In Chapter 4, I show that when women left jail and prison, they did not “reenter” or “reintegrate” to society. Rather, women encountered a distinct post-incarceration moral order where they were expected to constantly perform their recovery work. The order imposed a distinct set of expectations and norms that were rooted in the 12-Step

logic and religion and were justified by women's criminalized identities. This moral order was highly regulated. Through parole, probation, and recovery homes' rules and programming, women lived under high levels of surveillance, with the constant threat of punishment for relapsing. As such, I argue that the criminal legal system effectively "criminalized recovery" for formerly incarcerated women. I show that while recovery homes provided critical support to women and recognized the harms incarceration caused, they ultimately extended the discourses women encountered in prison about their "criminality," "addiction," and "morality." Recovery (specifically the 12-Step logic) and religion were the mechanisms through which women learned to practice regulation of their desires and discipline of their entire moral characters (Foucault 1977; Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Kaye 2012; McCorkel 2014; Tiger 2013). The post-incarceration moral order encouraged an individualistic focus on women's personal transformations.

In Chapter 5, I show how the post-incarceration moral order was raced and gendered. I examine women's use of five key areas (domesticity, appearance, romantic relationships, motherhood, and employment) to demonstrate their personal transformations from a failed femininity to a rehabilitated femininity. I highlight how the racism and classism associated with women's status as poor women and largely as women of color cut them off from accessing traditional notions of femininity; yet women drew on their personal progress to refashion a positive sense of rehabilitated femininity.

In Chapter 6, the final data chapter, I show how women experienced the post-incarceration moral order as both constraining and enabling, as well as the strategies they used to navigate the order. I discuss women's resistance of the order's individualistic

focus by highlighting moments of collectivity and critique, what I term “cracks in the moral order.” Women realized that personal transformation alone was not the answer to the problems they faced and that there was a need for broader social change.

A Note about Language

Throughout the dissertation, I strive to use language that reflects the social realities of women’s lives rather than the language of the criminal legal system and, at times, service providers. Terms used by state institutions and social service organizations reflect the standpoint of dominant actors. As part of grounding my research in the standpoint of formerly incarcerated women, I attempt to disrupt common, normative terms that often carry moralizing judgments.

Specifically, I avoid using “reentry” or “reintegration” since these terms are not accurate. Summarizing the work of various critical scholars, Bumiller (2013:58) explains that “the term ‘re-entry’ is a fundamentally inaccurate description of the experience of most ex-prisoners in that most men and women involved in the criminal justice system have never been integrated into mainstream society, even prior to their incarceration.” Furthermore, as my research shows, women encounter a moral order after incarceration that is distinct from “mainstream society” (Bumiller 2013:58). Thus, their task following incarceration is to learn and navigate this distinct post-incarceration moral order rather than “reenter” or “reintegrate” to the larger social order.

I also avoid using the terms “prisoner,” “inmate,” and “offender,” as well as the “ex” versions of these terms (i.e. “ex-prisoner”) since they are dehumanizing. As I show in the dissertation, criminalization and incarceration are incredibly dehumanizing processes. I also avoid using the terms “criminal” and “addict,” since these are terms that

the criminal legal system affixes to women as part of dehumanizing them. Furthermore, these terms reflect normative positions about whom society deems a “criminal” or an “addict.” Many people break the law without ever experiencing arrest or incarceration, and many use legal and illegal drugs without having to admit to being “addicts.” For similar reasons, I also avoid using the term “substance abuse” and instead refer to “drug use” and “drug treatment.” In an effort to constantly humanize the women who participated in this research, and to interrogate normative assumptions about who is a “criminal” or an “addict,” I refer to participants as people, women, and individuals. At times, I use the term “criminalized women,” to highlight that criminalization is a process through which the state labels certain people as “criminals.”

Finally, I use the term “criminal legal system” rather than “criminal justice system.” As the research I cite throughout this dissertation and the experiences of the women who participated in this project show, the U.S. criminal legal system has very little to do with administering justice. The way that law enforcement, courts, jails, prisons, parole, and probation presently operate reflects the United States’ reliance on criminalization to deal with a host of social inequalities. Criminalization, and the system that carries out this process, perpetuates inequalities and injustices that characterize U.S. society today. As such, I have settled on “criminal legal system” as a more accurate term to refer to these institutions that carry out surveillance, criminalization, sentencing, and incarceration.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Three central research questions guided the development of this project: (1) What are the various points of state intervention in women's lives prior to, throughout, and after incarceration? (2) How do women respond to and understand these state interventions on their lives? (3) What are the impacts of these state interventions on women's lives? Given these initial questions, I chose data collection methods – life-history interviews and photo-elicitation interviews – that would allow me to develop an in-depth understanding of women's perspectives of their varied experiences with “the state.” Additionally, I employed a feminist research approach. Marjorie L. DeVault (1996:33) outlines the commitments of feminist research methodology as: “finding women and their concerns...not only to know more about women, but to provide a fuller and more accurate account of society by including them (Nielsen 1990)”; “minimiz[ing] harm and control in the research process”; and “support[ing] research of value to women, leading to social change or action beneficial to women.” These commitments shaped my research design. In particular, I paid a great deal of attention to the inherent power differential that exists between researcher and participant and worked to level this differential as much as possible. Additionally, I considered how the social distance between researcher and participant, particularly due to race, can pose a significant barrier to researchers really hearing what women (particularly women of color and immigrant

women) communicate in interviews (Riessman 1987). Given my status as a researcher and my social privilege based on race, class, (cis)gender identity, sexual orientation, citizenship, ability, and lack of a criminal background, I began this project acutely aware of the power that I would bring into the research relationship. As Catherine Kohler Riessman (1987) cautions, I knew that “gender [would not be] not enough” to build rapport with participants. That is, I could not rely on my identity as a woman to connect with research participants and make them feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me. Thus, I developed data collection methods that would increase participants’ control of the research process and create ways to help ensure I fully recognized what was most important to them.

Below, I describe my data collection methods and detail how they evolved throughout the course of the project. I then explain my recruitment and data collection procedures, focusing on the challenges that arose during data collection and what I learned from these challenges. Next, I discuss my data analysis process and sample, followed by a reflection on the strengths and limitations of my methods. I conclude that photo-elicitation interviewing offers an effective way to pursue the aims of feminist research methodology, despite the serious constraints a traditional academic setting imposes on this participatory approach.

In-Depth Qualitative Interviews

A main objective of my research was to investigate formerly incarcerated women’s encounters with “the state” in its various manifestations, such as the social welfare system, the criminal legal system, and social service agencies. Specifically, I

investigated these encounters from the “standpoint” of formerly incarcerated women (Smith 1987). I aimed to understand from women where they encountered and how they experienced the state, and I approached them as partners in the research rather than “objects of study” (Smith 1987:105). Following Dorothy E. Smith’s (1987:106) concept of “a sociology for women,” by grounding my data in the standpoint of formerly incarcerated women, I aimed to understand “the actualities of their everyday worlds” and to thereby gain “an understanding of how those worlds are organized and determined by social relations immanent in and extending beyond them.”

In-depth, qualitative interviews were an appropriate method to elicit such information. As Robert S. Weiss (1994:10) explains, “Qualitative interviewing enables us to learn about perceptions and reactions known only to those to whom they occurred.” According to Weiss (1994), qualitative interviewing also allows researchers to understand questions of process. I conceptualize incarceration and post-incarceration experiences, two additional foci of this project, as processes that women negotiate. My research examines how women begin these processes, how women experience these processes, and whether and how these processes end.

Ethnography vs. Interviewing

Initially, I considered employing ethnographic methods, in which researchers immerse themselves in a site and through observation become intimately familiar with the underlying structures and processes that shape experiences in the site. Through the analytical work of connecting these observed local processes with larger social forces, ethnographic research can generate unparalleled understandings about how the social world works. I did not employ ethnographic methods for two reasons. First, based on my

conceptualization of the state as a series of interactions that span multiple sites, it was difficult to identify a particular site to study. I was not interested solely in how a recovery home, a particular court, or parole as an institution operates, for instance. Rather, I wanted to examine how the state, in its various and converging manifestations, enters and affects the lives of women. As surveillance becomes more pervasive (such as through the use of electronic monitoring) and less explicitly tied to a single place (like the jail or prison), the state operates as a decentralized network (Haney 2010). In this respect, formerly incarcerated women, themselves, are in fact the sites of state intervention. As such, interviews provided the best way to investigate the focus of this research project. I considered using an ethnographic approach in which I would shadow a subgroup of participants by accompanying them to various appointments and meetings, such as those at or with parole officers, DCFS caseworkers, Social Security, Public Aid, reentry programs, 12 Step meetings, drug treatment programs, support groups, and court dates. I did not think it was possible to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this type of ethnographic research, however, based on my experiences with my master's thesis research and securing IRB approval for this project. Loyola University Chicago's IRB likely would have required me to obtain informed consent from everyone present in the various observation sites as well as seek letters of cooperation from each institution or agency where observations ultimately occurred. Fulfilling this requirement would have significantly delayed my ability to begin this project and would have posed ongoing obstacles with each new meeting or appointment I attended. As a result, I decided not to pursue this ethnographic approach.

The second reason I chose interviews over a strict ethnographic approach is that observation alone can create the potential for researchers to prioritize their own experiences and insights over those of the study participants. The result can be analyses that read like “this is what people *think* is happening here, but this is what *really* is happening based on my immersion in the field.” Based on my commitment to a feminist and participatory research approach, I aimed to avoid these type of “false consciousness” arguments that subsume participants’ understandings of their own lives under the researcher’s more respected analysis based on her status and “objective” distance from the field. To that end, I used interviews as my primary data collection method. Importantly, I do not present participants’ reflections uncritically, assuming that their unique standpoints are “the truth.” Rather, I seek to strike a balance between valuing participants’ standpoints and perspectives as valid *and* offering a critical analysis that situates participants’ experiences within a larger historical understanding of how systems of punishment, surveillance, and poverty management operate in the United States.

From a Life-History to a Topic-Centered Approach

In developing my interview approach, I turned to Beth E. Richie’s (1996, 2012) influential scholarship, which has deepened understandings about the criminalization of socially marginalized women, particularly African-American women living in disadvantaged communities. I drew significantly on her research in which she conducted life-history interviews with incarcerated women awaiting trial at Rikers Island Correctional Facility (Richie 1996). Life-history interviews encourage deep reflection on the part of participants, as they reflect on significant events, times, and people in their lives. This method also is “particularly useful in gathering information about stigmatized,

uncomfortable, or difficult circumstances” (Richie 1996:16). Anticipating that many of the participants in my project would share similarities with Richie’s participants, I opted to conduct life-history interviews as my primary data collection method. Additionally, a life-history approach would allow me to ask participants to reflect on their experiences with the state throughout the course of their lives, which spoke to one of my initial research questions.

As I conducted more and more interviews, however, I began to question whether a life-history approach was the best one to take. As women shared accounts of past experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, I began to wonder to what end I was asking them to recall such painful experiences. I tried to connect women’s past experiences of abuse to my central research questions about the role of the state throughout women’s lives by asking participants whether anyone or any place helped them or intervened regarding the violence in their lives. Even in the rare cases when women recalled interacting with Child Protective Services or staying at a domestic violence shelter, though, these interactions with “the state” seemed less important than their more recent encounters with the criminal legal system and their processes of navigating life after incarceration. I recalled Kristin Bumiller’s (2008) interviews with domestic violence survivors and her methodological decision *not* to focus the interviews on women’s experiences of interpersonal violence. As Bumiller (2008) explains:

These women were not asked directly to give accounts of being battered. Instead, our conversations were focused on their interactions with social service agencies. This series of questions seemed to evoke the most relevant issues in their lives at the moment. Their stories bear a striking resemblance...in that the expression of injustice is centered on indignities perpetrated by the system rather than the individual men who battered them. (P. 109)

Similarly, for the participants in my research, their recent incarcerations and current work to move past their involvement with the criminal legal system were “the most relevant issues in their lives at the moment” (Bumiller 2008:109). When conceptualizing my research design, I underestimated how much women would want to share about these experiences and thus how long it would take to explore them fully in the interviews.

Ultimately, I decided to prioritize depth of information over breadth of interview topics covered. I thus shifted away from a life-history approach and focused on participants’ more recent experiences with the criminal legal system. I still asked women about their pasts, such as their experiences in school when they were growing up and abusive relationships with intimate partners, when it felt appropriate and relevant to do so based on how the interviews progressed. I did not take a chronological approach, however, of asking women to tell me specifically about their life histories. Asking women to do so during some of the early interviews at times felt like a fishing expedition, during which they seemed uncertain about the point or relevance of the questions, and I felt that I was being needlessly intrusive. The shift away from a life-history approach produced more focused interviews and provided participants with more direction about the purpose of the interviews. This shift also provided more focus to the overall project, as I came to see one of the main strengths of this study as documenting in extreme detail how women understand their involvement with the criminal legal system and how they work to overcome the negative consequences of this involvement. Initially employing a life-history approach confirmed much of what the groundbreaking work of scholars such as Richie already documents, namely that women have survived multiple and intersecting

types of violence prior to incarceration. This project has more to offer, however, than confirmation of existing knowledge alone. The use of photo-elicitation interviews, which I discuss next, played a critical role in co-creating new knowledge with participants about the nature of the criminal legal system, specifically, and “the state,” more broadly.

Photo-Elicitation Interviews

In thinking about how to conduct research with formerly incarcerated women in a feminist way, I was encouraged by the potential of combining the use of participant-generated images and photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI) (Frohmann 2005). This method involves providing research participants with cameras to document what is important in their lives. The participant-generated images become the basis for an interview in which the participant reflects on the photographs, explaining what they mean and why they are important to her. This type of PEI suited my project in three main ways: (1) my feminist commitment to ensuring participants have a voice in the research process, (2) the sensitive nature of my research, and (3) the depth of information photo-elicitation can generate.

Participant's Voice

One of the most significant advantages of PEI is that it helps to ensure participants have a voice in the research process, in part through breaking down the traditional power differential that exists between researcher and participant (Frohmann 2005; Harper 1998, 2002). Through the images they create and select for discussion, participants direct at least a portion of the interview process. They have the authority to decide what is important to include in the interview and actually walk the interviewer through these important points by selecting which photographs to share, in what order,

and by explaining what the images mean. Participants' voices are central, as their photographs "shape the topics of the interview, and the participant, not the interviewer, defines what is significant and interprets its meaning" (Frohmann 2005; see also Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006; Guillemin and Drew 2010; Harper 1998; Lapenta 2011). I was particularly concerned with creating this dynamic in the interviews because research participants faced a number of situations in which they possessed limited voice and control, such as court proceedings, incarceration, child custody cases with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and even the individual and group counseling sessions and drug treatment meetings many of them had to attend as conditions of their parole, probation, and/or the requirements of the recovery homes where they resided.

PEI's collaborative approach also helps the researcher to avoid overlooking or misunderstanding important points. Having participants drive the interview by using images they create helps "to reduce the researcher bias embedded in the selection of specific images, subjects, and themes used in the interviews" (Lapenta 2011:206). For instance, when I began this project, mothering was not a central research interest for me. The sheer number of photographs that participants took of their children, however, quickly necessitated that mothering become a focus of my analysis. Specifically, as I noticed how women's photographs of their children also included the people who care for their children (such as foster parents and relatives), the places where they interact with their children, and the places where their children live, I came to understand the nuanced ways the state constructs not only women's relationships with their children but also family more broadly. The participant-generated images directed my attention to this

dynamic, which I might have overlooked or not have explored fully through interviews alone.

Sensitive Nature of Research

I also decided to use PEI as a data collection method because of the sensitive nature of the research. Since I planned to ask participants to reflect on their paths to incarceration, their experiences of incarceration, the impact of incarceration, and their post-incarceration experiences, I expected that they would reflect on painful memories and experiences. Lisa Frohmann (2005) found using PEI to be a particularly useful method in her research with domestic violence survivors, who also shared traumatic and painful experiences in their interviews with her. Frohmann (2005:1398) describes her research project as empowering for some participants who, in part through taking and reflecting on photographs, experienced the benefit of “gaining a better understanding of their lives.” Frohmann (2005:1401) also notes that PEI “may facilitate the healing process” for participants who have experienced trauma, as “narrating photographs has been shown to promote self-reflection and self-understanding and to provide a means of expressing fear and trauma (Killian 2001).” Following Frohmann’s work, I incorporated PEI into my research in part because it was a responsible way to engage participants in a project that investigates trauma, disadvantage, and inequality. I intended for the collaborative and reflective nature of my research design to provide participants with an opportunity to examine and understand their own experiences in meaningful ways and thus benefit personally from the PEI process. Ideally, I imagined that at least some participants would enjoy taking photographs so much that they would continue to do so on their own and use photography as an outlet to continue to reflect on their experiences

and document what is important in their lives. In accordance with a feminist research approach, I strove to create ways for women to gain from participating in the research, at least at the micro level. I wanted the research process, in itself, to be of value to participants.

PEI also is a useful method since people sometimes can express experiences, especially painful experiences, more easily in nonverbal ways. Using photographs, drawing, painting, or other artistic endeavors can be an important form of communication and expression of ideas and emotions. PEI democratizes the research process, so to speak, by providing an alternate way for women to engage in the project. As I discuss below in the “Strengths and Limitations” section, I am certain that one participant would not have been able to handle the format of sitting one-on-one for an hour and a half to two hours while reflecting on her struggles with drug use, mental health, and the criminal legal system. By using a modified PEI approach, she was able to share her story, which she felt was an important contribution to the overall project, in a way that felt manageable. I suspect that PEI also distinguished women’s research participation from the numerous other ways they frequently “told their story” or “shared their testimony.” In support groups, 12 Step meetings, drug treatment programs, counseling sessions, public speaking engagements (such as agency fundraisers, meetings with elected officials, and rallies to support particular legislation), and other research opportunities, women routinely faced the expectation that they verbally recount their experiences of abuse, drug use, and incarceration. Thus, while participants discussed challenging experiences similar to those they shared in these other venues, the photographs offered an opportunity for them to think about and reflect on their experiences in new ways.

Depth of Information Shared

A number of sociologists advocate for the use of PEI as a research method because of the depth of information this method can produce. As Gillian Rose (2007) explains:

[P]hotographs offer ‘an opportunity to gain not just more but different insights into social phenomena, which research methods relying on oral, aural or written data cannot provide’ (Bolton et al. 2001: 503). In the case of photo-elicitation, it is argued that while ordinary interview talk can explore many issues, discussing a photograph with an interviewee can prompt much more talk about different things. (P. 240)

Douglas Harper (2002:13) suggests that the different ways the brain processes various types of information may at least partly explain why “the photo elicitation interview seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information, but rather one that evokes a different kind of information.” Simply put, “images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that [sic] do words” (Harper 2002:13). Photo-elicitation also can produce richer data by making visible what typically is taken for granted in people’s lives (Becker 1974; Harper 1998; Frohmann 2005) and by “releas[ing] vivid memories, feelings, insight, [and] thoughts...” (Collier 2001). Additionally, PEI can yield richer data than interviews alone are able to do, since participants are able to reflect on the research topics during the time that transpires between taking the photographs and discussing them in the interview (Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006). Indeed, multiple women commented that they shared information with me they had not intended to discuss or that the interviews made them think about experiences they had not thought about in a long time. I believe that the conversational nature of the interviews in conjunction with the photographs generated this richer data.

I anticipated that PEI's potential to elicit in-depth information also would help participants to conceptualize and discuss "the state." I asked participants to use the cameras to show *how* and *where* "the state" is present in their lives. I intended that the process of thinking through how to visually document the restrictions and assistance they encountered with institutions and agencies would push women to see "the state" in ways that they might have not considered previously. My goal was for the photographs to bring together the question of *how* the state is operating in marginalized women's lives (a question scholars have explored theoretically) with the question of *where* the state is operating in marginalized women's lives (a reality that participants in my research are living on a daily basis). In this way, PEI provided a new way to understand and document women's interactions with "the state."

As I discuss below in the "Strengths and Limitations" section, the degree to which "the state" was an explicit focus of participants' photographs varied a great deal. Some participants took photographs documenting the current restrictions they experienced due to parole, probation, or a recovery home's rules, as well as photographs showing the police, jail, prison, and the courts. Other participants focused on representations of their past drug use, current efforts to maintain their sobriety, various accomplishments, and supportive family members, friends, and staff members. As a result, "the state" often was not immediately apparent to me – or to the participants – in the photographs. In these cases, I did the analytical work of connecting what women depicted in their photographs with "the state" long after we concluded the interview. This tendency should not have surprised me, since "the state" is a concept that academics routinely dissect and debate but is not a concept that explicitly is discussed in everyday interactions outside of

academia or politics. I was somewhat disappointed by this tendency early on in my data collection, however, since I had entered the field with a grand vision of participants critically assessing in our interviews how “the state” continued to police and structure their lives. As I proceeded with my analysis, though, I saw that women had been far more critical than I had realized during the interviews, and the photographs often had elicited their critiques. The photographs provided an opportunity for women to break free from the dominant individualistic narrative of personal transformation they encountered in jail, prison, and recovery homes. I focus on women’s critiques and the ways they viewed their experiences as part of a collective struggle in Chapter 6: Managing the Post-Incarceration Moral Order.

Recruitment

My recruitment strategy consisted of partnering with local community-based organizations that work with formerly incarcerated women. I officially completed recruitment through three organizations: “Women Helping Women,” “Women United Against Incarceration,” and “Starting Again.”¹ Women Helping Women is a non-residential peer support and health education program for women who have been involved in the criminal justice system within the past year. Participants have up to three months to complete the program, which requires attending six sessions. The sessions include workshops and trainings on topics such as HIV and STDs, sexual health, and healthy relationships, as well as support groups. Women United Against Incarceration is a non-profit organization that provides direct legal services to incarcerated women and

¹ All organization names are pseudonyms.

² All names are pseudonyms. I gave all participants the option to choose their own

does organizing and policy work to improve jail and prison conditions, encourage alternatives to incarceration, and increase resources for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and their families. Starting Again is a recovery home for formerly incarcerated women located on Chicago's west side.

I identified these organizations through personal connections as well as my knowledge of Chicago's reentry field. I also relied on word-of-mouth referrals from interviewees to recruit new participants. Based on these word-of-mouth referrals, another recovery home, "Growing Stronger," essentially became a recruitment site. As I scheduled more and more interviews with Growing Stronger residents, the director allowed me to use office space to conduct the interviews, I became familiar with many of the staff members, and I began volunteering at Growing Stronger.

Initial Recruitment

I attended already scheduled meetings or groups at Women Helping Women, Women United Against Incarceration, and Starting Again to introduce the research project and begin recruitment. I thought very intentionally about how to approach each of these meetings or groups, and, recognizing the lasting impact of first impressions, I viewed recruitment as the first step in building rapport with potential participants. I was conscious of my social location, specifically my social privilege, as I entered each recruitment opportunity. As a white, middle-class, highly educated, married, cisgender woman, without children, in my early 30s, who is a U.S. citizen and lives in the suburbs, I was painfully aware of the social distance between the women whom I asked to share very personal aspects of their lives and me. Based on the historical use of systems of punishment to socially regulate people of color and people living in poverty, as well as

the current demographics of U.S. jails and prisons, I expected that most of the women I would meet in my research would be women of color, particularly African-American women, who were low-income or poor and resided in racially segregated and disadvantaged neighborhoods on Chicago's south and west sides. I also expected that the women I met during my recruitment efforts would be hesitant to talk with me. Why should they help me, an already incredibly privileged woman, in my endeavor to earn a PhD? How could I possibly understand their life circumstances? Despite all of my talk about decentering power, the benefits I hoped women would gain from participating in my research, and carefully developing my data collection methods, was I not just another academic seeking to conduct research with a socially marginalized group to investigate my own questions and theoretical interests? These questions carried me into every recruitment meeting, and I continue to reflect on them today.

Although I understand the importance of being continuously reflexive about my relationship to the research participants and project overall, I tried to quiet my uncertainties during my recruitment efforts. I worked to strike a casual, friendly tone when discussing the project and brought homemade chocolate chip cookies to each meeting. I attempted to present myself as someone with whom the women could see themselves feeling comfortable and sitting down to have a conversation. To begin, I handed out recruitment fliers (see Appendix A) and explained that I was a graduate student in the Sociology Department at Loyola University Chicago and was starting my dissertation research. I said that I was concerned about the increasing rates of women's incarceration and that I was interested in learning from them about their experiences that led to their involvement with the criminal justice system, as well as their experiences

leaving that system. I noted that I was focusing on the ways women receive help from different places and people before, during, and after incarceration, as well as the ways women are limited, restricted, and even harmed by various places and people before, during, and after incarceration. I shared my belief that stories are powerful and that by collecting multiple stories and thinking about them together, we can learn a lot about what incarceration means for women. I explained that participation in the project involved meeting with me two to three times to complete a life-history interview, with each session lasting about one and a half to two hours. As listed on the flier, I said that interviews would cover topics such as experiences with the criminal justice system; incarceration experiences; reentry experiences; family relationships; relationships with children; significant friendships and romantic relationships; education; employment; safety; and experiences with places that provide assistance. I noted that participants would receive a \$20 gift card to a store of their choosing as compensation for each interview.

I then explained that all participants would have the option to include photography in their interviews. For those interested in this option, I said that I would provide them with a digital camera at the end of the first interview and ask them to take photographs before our next interview that communicated their experiences of incarceration and reentry. I explained that the photographs would form the basis for the second interview, during which we would discuss the participants' photographs and what they meant to them. I stressed that participating in the research was completely voluntary and that deciding not to participate would have no effect on their relationship with or the services they received from the recruitment agency. Some women asked questions, such

as whether they were able to keep the cameras, but for the most part, women just asked how they could schedule an interview. At each of the three meetings or groups I attended, I passed around a notebook for women to write down their names and phone numbers so that I could call them to schedule an interview. Women who did not have a personal phone number typically listed the phone number for the recovery home where they resided or the phone number of a family member or friend (often another resident at the same recovery home) who could get a message to them. In two cases there was not time to schedule interviews on the spot, but in one case I did actually schedule some interviews immediately. Every woman who was in attendance at the meetings where I gave my recruitment talks indicated an interest in participating in the project at Women United Against Incarceration and Starting Again. At Women Helping Women, all but two women who were in attendance expressed their interest. I did not complete interviews with all of these women, however, as I lost contact with some before our first scheduled interview. Some moved out of the recovery homes where they had been residing at the time we scheduled the interviews, and they either did not provide a phone number other than the recovery home, their numbers no longer were in service, or they did not return my voicemails.

Given my concerns about how skeptically I anticipated potential participants would view me, the strong interest women expressed in the project pleasantly surprised me. While I talked briefly with women to schedule interviews, I tried to gauge what attracted them to the project. Some women made it clear they primarily were interested in the gift card and/or the camera. When looking at my recruitment flier, for instance, one participant told me that I should move the note that participants receive a \$20 gift card to

the top of the flyer and list it in bold font. Some women seemed excited about using photographs to document and share their stories. For instance, one participant, Nyla,² explained how the project reminded her of a documentary, “Healing Neen,” she had watched in prison. The documentary tells the story of a woman (nicknamed Neen) who had been arrested multiple times for drug-related charges and sex work; survived several instances of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in her childhood and as an adult; turned her life around; and now visits prisons throughout the country to give motivational talks and share her story, in addition to working with a national organization to raise awareness about the challenges incarcerated women face. Nyla noted that the documentary shows Neen’s mugshots from over the years and that Neen returns to locations from her past, such as places where police arrested her and she survived violent attacks. Mere minutes after I had introduced the project, Nyla started talking about what pictures she planned to take. Other women focused less on the photographs and stressed that they wanted to share their story, oftentimes to raise awareness and help others. Cathy, for example, expressed her outrage at the way the police, court system, and recovery homes have treated her. She wanted people to know what she had been through and planned to write a book about her life. She viewed the interviews as a way not only to educate me, and others, about the injustices of the legal system and how it ruins people’s lives but also to begin documenting her story for her book.

Ongoing Recruitment

² All names are pseudonyms. I gave all participants the option to choose their own pseudonym. Most did, but in a few cases, women asked me to come up with a pseudonym on their behalf.

After I completed my initial recruitment talks at the three organizations, word spread quickly among women living at Growing Stronger and Starting Again about the research opportunity. I started receiving phone calls from women whom I had not met at the meetings but who had heard about the research project from women who had been in attendance or had seen the recruitment flier. I carefully explained the project to each new woman who called to ensure she understood what participation involved. Everyone remained interested after the explanation, and I began scheduling interviews with these women whom I had not met in person. All of the women who called me were living either at Growing Stronger or Starting Again. As I went to the recovery homes to complete scheduled interviews, I continued to meet more women who also told me they wanted to participate in the project. At the two recovery homes, I came to be recognized as “the lady with the cameras.”

I had proposed to conduct interviews with 20 women for my dissertation research. Based on the strong interest I received from residents at the two recovery homes, I completed interviews with 36 women in total. Near the beginning of January 2013, about one month after I began recruitment, I began to turn interested women away since I had far exceeded the number of participants with whom I had planned to work. I worried that I was being exclusionary and acting counter to my feminist and participatory research aims when denying women’s participation in the project, but everyone I turned away was very understanding. I explained that I had exceeded my research budget and unfortunately could not enroll any more people. I offered to make a note of people’s names and contact information so that I could notify them if someone I was scheduled to interview changed their mind about participating in the project. I ultimately did not

interview any of these women whom I added to my informal “waiting list,” though.

Although some women did end their participation in the project early, by the time I created the waiting list, all did so after completing one or two interviews. Eventually, I stopped adding people to my waiting list since it seemed unlikely that I would be able to enroll any new participants. I did not want to make false promises and set women up to expect a call from me that they likely would not receive. Women experienced that lack of response from programs far too often, and I did not want to repeat that pattern.

Data Collection

I completed data collection between December 2012 and July 2013. I conducted 99 interviews with 36 participants. Twenty-six participants completed three interviews, five participants completed two interviews, three participants completed one interview, and two participants completed four interviews. All 36 participants expressed an interest in taking photographs and received a camera at the end of our first interview, but only 32 participants completed PEIs. One participant changed her mind after the first interview and informed me that she no longer wanted to participate in the project. Two participants, who were in a relationship with each other, provided conflicting accounts of what happened to their cameras. One said her partner pawned both cameras. Her partner said that both cameras “went missing,” and she thinks they were stolen, when they moved. I lost touch with another participant who actually took photographs in preparation for our second interview. I even had picked up her memory card and developed her photographs. We were in and out of touch for a few months and rescheduled the second interview multiple times but ultimately did not conduct that interview. An additional participant also reported that her camera was stolen. She had been living in her car and staying with

different family members and friends before eventually staying at an overnight shelter.

She brought a small, personal photo album that she kept in her car to our second interview, though, and discussed those photographs as part of our second interview.

Length of Interviews

Each interview typically lasted between an hour and a half and two hours. In a few cases, interviews were shorter, often due to scheduling issues.³ It was not uncommon for women to tell me when I arrived for an interview that they had to attend another meeting or appointment and so only could meet with me for a certain amount of time. In these cases, I offered to reschedule the interview if doing so would be more convenient for the participant. While some women rescheduled, others preferred to meet that day, perhaps because they were counting on the \$20 gift card. Initially, this rescheduling and condensing of interviews frustrated me, but I came to view this tendency as a way for women to claim control over their time. Perhaps the interviews were intense for women, and limiting how much time they gave me provided a way for them to manage the interview. Perhaps our interview was the only appointment of their numerous appointments they could shorten or reschedule as they saw fit.

Compensation

I provided participants with a \$20 gift card to the store of their choosing at the end of each interview session. I felt it was important to compensate participants for their time.

³ I concluded an interview with one participant after about 30 minutes when it became clear to me that she was not interested in continuing. She consistently provided very short responses to each question I asked, despite my efforts to encourage her to elaborate. I also knew her daughter's birthday party was later that day and that she planned to use the gift card to purchase a birthday gift for her before heading to the party. Despite completing three interviews, including a PEI, with this participant, I never felt like I established any type of rapport with her.

Most participants had numerous commitments and had to work to fit me into their schedules. I wanted them to know that I viewed their time, as well as the information they shared, as valuable, and I hoped the gift card communicated that intention. Additionally, all of the women who participated in this project were struggling financially. Even those who benefitted from the financial support of friends and family members had very little that they could call their own and frequently could not cover expenses that arose, such as transportation. It seemed exploitive to ask them to give so much and to receive no financial compensation. Participants put in a significant amount of work to complete the interviews with me. Beyond the actual interviews, participation in the PEI component of this project required homework. Women were very thoughtful in the photographs they took, and many made special trips to take specific pictures they had in mind. The gift card provided a small way to acknowledge the contributions participants made to the project.

The cameras served as another form of compensation, as participants kept the cameras they received for this project. As discussed above, I chose PEI as a research method in part because I wanted participants to benefit from the process of taking and reflecting on photographs that document what is important to them, specifically in relation to their experiences of incarceration and post-incarceration. Given this intent, it seemed disingenuous to take the cameras back from participants, especially if they found the process to be helpful and even healing. In fact, some participants continued to carry their cameras with them, regularly taking photographs. Oftentimes when I arrived at Growing Stronger for an interview, residents whom already had completed the PEI with me would show me new photographs they had taken at various events or family

gatherings. When I attended some Growing Stronger functions, such as their “Family Day” and “Mother’s Day Brunch,” I saw several residents using the cameras they received in this study to document the day. I particularly was touched at the high school graduation ceremony I attended for Growing Stronger’s parent organization. Some of the research participants graduated that day, and I noticed their family members and significant others using the participants’ cameras to capture the moment they walked across the stage and received their diplomas, as well as the celebrations after the ceremony. Clearly, at least some of the participants deeply valued their cameras. I could not imagine asking for them back.

Interview Settings

I met with participants at a location of their choosing, which often was the recovery home where they resided. Other locations included Women Helping Women’s office, public libraries, McDonald’s, residents’ homes, and a public park. In many cases, it was difficult to find private, quiet places to meet, but I often was more concerned about privacy than were the participants. This realization prompted me to consider just how little privacy the women experienced. Surveillance was a common part of their lives. Even after they left jail and prison, they often had to answer to parole and probation officers, judges, drug treatment counselors, and social service providers. The routine practices of urinalysis and electronic monitoring that many participants experienced exemplified how privacy was not something formerly incarcerated women can expect.

While the recovery homes were more likely to offer a private meeting space, this was not always the case. For some of these interviews, an office or other private room was not available, and we thus completed the interviews in communal areas in the home,

such as dining and living rooms. Residents and, at times, staff members were nearby and occasionally interrupted the interviews. Even when a private meeting space was available at the recovery homes, I grew to recognize this interview setting as practical but problematic. Conducting interviews at the recovery homes was practical because it was convenient for the participants. Most had no source of income and thus could not afford to take public transportation to meet me somewhere. Also, many of the participants had busy, rigid schedules based on mandatory groups and meetings at the recovery home, court dates, meetings with parole and probation officers, outpatient drug treatment, 12 Step meetings, and appointments at various reentry organizations. As my schedule began to fill up with interviews, participants and I often struggled to find a two-hour window when we both were available. Meeting at the recovery home eliminated travel time for participants who often met with me right after or right before another engagement.

On the other hand, conducting interviews at the recovery homes was problematic for a few reasons. First, I wondered, at times, whether participants felt as if they could speak freely and openly criticize the recovery home and other providers within the reentry system. While participants offered critiques, they spoke extremely positively, for the most part, about their current recovery homes, especially Growing Stronger. Additionally, while I stressed each time I interviewed a participant that I would keep all information they shared with me confidential, I often wondered whether participants felt they could share that they had relapsed or violated a condition of their parole or probation. Some participants shared such information, but most women stressed the positive changes they were making in their lives and focused on how well they were doing. As I continued to hear these positive accounts, I began to think about how

conducting the interviews in the site of the state shaped the data I collected. I cannot know whether and how much women withheld because of the interview locations, but I suspect that some women censored their responses to interview questions for this reason. Finally, conducting interviews at the recovery homes limited participants' confidentiality in the sense that staff members and other residents knew they were participating in the research project. Staff members also observed when I arrived at the recovery home for a scheduled interview and the participant was not there. After one participant "no-showed" for the third consecutive time, two staff members voiced their disapproval at length. Despite my assertions that the project was voluntary and the participant had done nothing wrong, they explained that by not showing up for the interview and by not calling me to cancel it, the participant was not acting responsibly. They added that she was too focused on things outside of the recovery home and thus did not participate fully in the program, which reflected a larger problem. While I do not know whether the staff members expressed their disapproval to this participant, I worried that the missed interview would cause trouble for her with staff. Had we planned to conduct the interview at another location, the staff members would not have known that she did not show up for our scheduled interview.

Interview Process

At the outset of data collection, I planned to meet two to three times with each participant, with the second interview being the PEI and the third interview providing the opportunity to discuss topics we did not fully cover in the first two interviews. This plan worked in most cases, and I discuss the variations below. As noted above, most participants completed three interviews. At the beginning of the first interview, I

reviewed the informed consent form with participants and obtained their signatures. At the start of each subsequent interview, I showed participants the consent form again, particularly stressing the voluntary nature of the project and reminding them of their confidentiality. With participants' permission, I recorded all interviews on a digital audio recorder.

While I used an interview guide (see Appendix B) for each interview, the interviews were semi-structured. In the non-photo-elicitation interviews, I introduced interview topics (as noted on the recruitment flier and listed above in the recruitment section), but I conducted the interviews in a conversational format. While I used the guide as a reminder of the topics I wanted to cover in each interview, I was flexible with the guide and prioritized building rapport with participants and providing the space for them to share what they wanted to share. In this way, I followed Weiss's (1994) assertion:

Permitting the respondent to talk about what the respondent wants to talk about, so long as it is anywhere near the topic of study, will always produce better data than plodding adherence to the guide...the interviewer should be prepared to concentrate attention on matters on which the respondent is especially able to report, even at the cost of skimming on other matters. (P. 48-49)

As women noted significant personal interests, events, and concerns (such as a family member's death or something about their relationship with their children), I pursued these "markers" (Weiss 1994:77), asking them to explain how they were meaningful. In the first interview session, I often did not refer to the interview guide after asking the first question, as I followed the interviewee's lead. The second interview typically was the PEI, which also was participant-driven based on the images she collected and wanted to

discuss. I tended to be more directive in the third interview in order to follow up on topics raised but not fully explored in the earlier interviews and to cover remaining interview topics. In three instances, I scheduled a fourth interview with participants because there was a significant amount of information directly related to the central research questions that we had not sufficiently covered. All of these participants were particularly engaged in the project, with two having taken even more photographs for our third interviews, to my surprise.

An Evolving Interview Guide

Ideally, I planned to transcribe each interview before completing the next interview with that participant. This goal was not possible, however, given the frequency of the interviews. Throughout data collection, I typically conducted at least one interview per day and sometimes completed two interviews in a day. I did not have enough time between interviews to fully transcribe a participant's previous interview before meeting with her again. I listened to each participant's earlier interview, however, transcribing portions of it and taking notes, before meeting with her again. I customized my interview guide for the subsequent interviews, adding questions specific to what we had discussed and still needed to cover. At the beginning of data collection, I did not anticipate how much time it would require to prepare for the second and third interviews with each participant. As I learned this lesson, I tried to schedule interviews more strategically and avoided conducting two in one day. This goal was not always attainable, however, based on the need to coordinate participants' and my busy schedules.

In addition to helping me prepare for subsequent interviews, listening to and reflecting on the interview recordings shaped the data collection process in broader ways.

Shortly into data collection, I changed my approach to how to start the first interview.

Initially, I began the first interview by asking the participant to tell me about the places where she got help. My reasoning was to start with a very open question and ask follow-up questions that gradually would focus in on “the state.” Through discussions with my advisor, we realized that I was not getting to “the state” in these early interviews. Also, it felt awkward to introduce explicitly the idea of “the state” when reviewing the photo instruction sheet at the end of the interview (I discuss this sheet in detail below) since it felt like a completely new topic with which I was asking participants to engage.

Based on conversations with my advisor and reviewing one full first interview transcript together, I modified my approach to the first interview after completing nine of these interviews. With the new approach, I introduced the “photo instruction sheet” (see Appendix C) at the beginning of the first interview and explicitly identified “the state” as a focus of my research. Following the photo instruction sheet, I offered a working definition of the state as agencies, institutions, and people that do things like set laws and policies, enforce laws, put policies in place, monitor people’s behavior, and provide social services. I then explained that in order to make the idea of “the state” more clear, I had brainstormed a list of examples of “the state,” which I listed on the photo instruction sheet. I commented that the first half of the list had to do with the criminal justice system and that the second half of the list had to do with public and social services. I then asked participants to walk me through their experiences with the various examples of “the state” that I provided on the photo instruction sheet. For participants who were on or had recently completed parole or probation, I typically asked them to walk me through their last interaction with their parole or probation officer. For participants who were not on

parole or probation, I typically asked them to tell me about their last encounter with the police. From that first question, I still pursued the conversational style described above.

Beginning with the photo instruction sheet also made it easier to explain the PEI process when I introduced the camera at the end of the interview. Participants already were familiar with the language and concept of “the state,” and thus the photo instructions connected more seamlessly to the rest of the interview. As I discussed above, the task of documenting “the state” still was challenging, but I believe the engagement with the photo instruction sheet made this task more tangible in many cases.

This shift in my interview approach facilitated more explicit conversations about “the state” with participants, which allowed me to include them more fully in the research topic. They knew exactly what I am focusing on in this project, which tempered the dynamic of me stepping in after completing the interviews and imposing a theoretical framework on participants’ narratives. In line with feminist research methods and the participatory nature of PEI, I strove to be open with participants about my research aims. Additionally, I learned that if I was not explicit about my research focus, I would miss important information. For instance, in my PEI with Mae, she shared pictures someone had taken of her children and her when they had visited her at one of the prisons where she had served her time. As Mae neared the end of her reflection on the photographs of her children, I asked her if the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) ever had been involved with her children. She responded that she had not planned to mention them in the interview but that she had two additional children (not pictured in the photographs) whom DCFS removed from her prior to her incarceration. She commented that when I asked her specifically about DCFS, she decided to tell me about that part of

her life. Exchanges such as this one with Mae helped me to realize that “the state” was so pervasive in participants’ lives that it, at times, was unremarkable. For much of their lives, women had weathered the intrusion and surveillance of state systems. For participants to know what was noteworthy, I needed to be specific with them. The photo instruction sheet became a useful tool to orient participants to the research project and provide them with adequate instruction on the interview process.

Listening to and reflecting on the interview recordings also helped me to incorporate questions about emergent themes into later interviews. Throughout the interviews, women spoke passionately about the role of religion and faith in their lives, as well as their efforts to maintain their sobriety. While I anticipated some discussion of these topics, I was surprised by how pervasive they were. Although most participants mentioned these topics on their own, in the few cases when a participant did not, I specifically asked about them. Similarly, I noticed that many participants mentioned health problems and thus began to explicitly ask women about their health concerns and needs. The ongoing practice of listening to recorded interviews and taking notes on them allowed me to collect richer data that more comprehensively reflected women’s experiences of incarceration and post-incarceration and their interactions with “the state.”

Introducing Photo-Elicitation Interviewing

At the end of the first interview, I asked participants if they were willing to meet with me again and if they were interested in including photographs in the next interview. I then reviewed the remainder of the photo instruction sheet with the participant. I began by reminding her that a main focus of this project was to understand how “the state”

impacts women's lives and asked her to use the camera between now and our next interview to take photographs that show where she sees and feels "the state" in her life.

I did not want to be too directive in what I asked participants to photograph, since doing so would counter some of PEI's most substantial benefits: to decenter power and create a way for participants to show what is important to them. To avoid constraining the scope of participants' photographs, I also provided a list of additional questions and prompts on the photo instruction sheet that I asked them to consider when taking photographs. I verbally explained these additional components, asking participants to take photographs that showed what led up to going to prison or jail, their experiences in prison or jail, and their experiences of reentry. I also asked them to think about: places they went for help; people who supported and helped them; things they could not do because they were in jail or prison; places they had to go; times when they felt limited or restricted; times when they felt powerful or in control; times when they were reminded of jail or prison; who had been affected by their being locked up; and what photos they could take to show some of the things we discussed in the first interview.

After reviewing my conceptualization of "the state" and the questions and prompts for participants to consider while taking photographs, I suggested to participants that they might write down any thoughts or feelings they had when they took photographs for this project, such as why they took a particular photo and what they wanted to say with it.⁴ I then referred to the second page of the photo instruction sheet, which included

⁴ Two participants wrote explanations to accompany their photographs. One created a cover page that listed a short descriptive title for each photograph, followed by six pages (five pages were written on the front and the back, the first page was written on the front only) of her handwritten descriptions of nine of the thirteen photographs she created.

important considerations for participants to keep in mind, such as not photographing anything that could be used against them (for example, a violation of parole or probation); not photographing any illegal activities; not taking photographs where cameras were not permitted; not posting any photographs they took for this project on social networking sites; not taking any photographs that might jeopardize their safety; and asking anyone whom they photographed for permission to take their photograph before doing so. As I discuss below in the “Strengths and Limitations” section, Loyola University Chicago’s IRB required me to list many of these directives. I strove to present them in a friendly, non-judgmental way. For instance, I clarified that I did not assume participants were doing anything in violation of their parole or probation. When discussing the importance of not photographing illegal activities, I gave the example of if they were to see a crime being committed not to photograph it in order to stress that I did not suspect them of participating in illegal activities. I actually was able to provide a concrete example of this scenario after the first participant who completed a PEI showed me a photograph of a park where she saw a drug deal transpire. She said she wanted to take a picture of the actual transaction but was afraid the buyer and seller would see her, so she held off and photographed the empty park instead. I frequently shared this example when going over the photo instruction sheet with participants. I also listed my cell phone number and email address on the photo instruction sheet and encouraged participants to call me if they had any questions or concerns.

After reviewing the photo instruction sheet, I provided each participant with a digital camera (Nikon Coolpix L26), a memory card, and two AA batteries for the camera. I showed each participant how to insert and remove the memory card, as well as

the batteries, and how to operate the camera. The camera model I selected is a “point-and-shoot” type of camera with an automatic setting that determines whether the flash is needed. I encouraged participants to keep the camera in the automatic mode. I had each participant take at least one photograph and then showed her how to review the photographs she took and delete them. Although most participants said they had not used a digital camera before, almost every participant seemed comfortable using it almost immediately. The ease of using digital cameras and the ability to view and delete photographs instantly were main reasons why I decided to use digital cameras for this project rather than disposable cameras. Additionally, I wanted participants to keep the cameras and continue to use them as they wanted to. After reviewing how to use the camera, I scheduled the next interview with the participant. I also asked participants’ for primary and secondary contact information so that I could call them the day before our next interview to confirm our meeting. Almost every participant had a personal cell phone number, although these numbers were not always still in service by the time I called to confirm our next interviews. Most participants also provided a back-up number of someone whom I could contact to get a message to them if I could not reach them directly. Participants provided numbers of family members, significant others, and other recovery home residents. These reminder calls were extremely helpful, and participants seemed to appreciate them, as they at times had forgotten about our interview or needed to reschedule. Although I still dealt with numerous “no-shows” and last minute cancellations, calling participants to confirm our interviews saved me from making some unnecessary trips across the city.

Photo-elicitation Interviews

The amount of time between the first interview and the PEI varied, but in most cases about one month elapsed. Before the scheduled PEI, I arranged a time to meet briefly with most participants in order to pick up their memory cards from them so that I could print copies of their photographs before the PEI. I usually transferred participants' photographs from their memory cards to my laptop on the spot and gave the memory card back to them immediately so that they would not be without it. When we met for the PEI, I provided participants with hard copies for them to keep of all of the photographs they took and asked them to select about 10 to 15 photographs they wanted to discuss in the interview. Following Frohmann's (2005) approach, I then asked the participant to arrange the photographs in the order in which she wanted to discuss them, creating groups of any photographs that went together. When she was done, I asked her what photograph with which she wanted to start and what she wanted to show with that photograph. We moved through each photograph in that way, and at the end, I often asked the participant what all of the photographs taken together showed or communicated overall (Guillemin and Drew 2010).

At the end of the PEI, I reviewed a photo release form (see Appendix D) with the participant and asked her to sign it in two places. The first portion of the release indicated that I own all rights to the photographs. I explained to participants that I was requesting ownership of the photographs so that there would be no copyright issues if I wanted to include their photographs in any publications on the research. Only one participant did not want to sign over the rights to the photographs because she planned to write a book about her life and might want to include some of the images she created for this project.

The second portion of the release asked participants to verify that we reviewed each photograph they created for the project and specified how I had their permission to use each photograph, such as in presentations or publications. I explained to participants that I would not publicly show any photographs that would identify them (since doing so would violate confidentiality) or any photographs that contained other people, since I did not obtain consent from those pictured individuals to show their images. For photographs that participants took of themselves or had someone else take of them, I clarified with each participant whether she would be comfortable with me showing that photograph, provided I blocked out her face and any other identifying marks. This second part of the photo release form also included an acknowledgement from participants that they were not able to make requests at a later date for additional copies of their photographs or for any photographs to be deleted.

While most of the PEIs occurred during my second interview with participants, some participants did not have photographs ready for our second interviews. They typically shared this information with me when I called them to confirm the interview. I offered to reschedule the interview so that they would have more time to take the photographs, but women usually wanted to go ahead with the scheduled second interview and reserve the PEI for the third interview. I viewed this rearranging as problematic, since the third interview provided an opportunity to tie up loose ends, so to speak. Because I did not know what participants ultimately would show in their photographs, delaying the PEI created a situation where we had to cover all remaining topics in the second interview and potentially re-cover these topics in the third interview, depending on the participant's photographs. Additionally, when the PEI was the third interview, I

did not have an opportunity to ask additional questions about the photographs that occurred to me after the interview. Although I preferred conducting the PEI as the second interview, I accommodated participants' requests to flip the order, primarily because I did not want to risk losing contact with participants if too much time elapsed between interviews.

Analysis

I audio recorded all interviews. In addition to myself, four current and former undergraduate students at Loyola University Chicago transcribed the interviews. The Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) very generously assigned two students from its Urban Studies class to assist me with transcription to fulfill their research requirement for the class. The students and I met weekly to discuss their insights on the interviews, and we began to identify emergent themes. These meetings were invaluable, as the students' contributions helped me to refine my analysis. Both students continued to do transcription work after the semester ended, for which I paid them. I hired two additional students based on colleagues' recommendations.

We began transcribing the interviews while I still was completing data collection. As such, I was able to incorporate questions about emergent themes into later interviews. This continual feedback between data collection and analysis allowed for richer data and analysis and thus well-developed findings regarding theoretical insights and practical implications. Initially, I completed open coding of the transcripts, identifying "any and all ideas, themes, or issues...no matter how varied and disparate" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995:143). Early on, religion and recovery emerged as two dominant themes, and I quickly realized that I could not talk about women's post-incarceration experiences

without discussing the interconnection between religion and recovery. Personal transformation also emerged as a strong theme early on in my coding process, as did multiple examples of state violence (such as police officers' and jail and prison guards' abuse; the overall jail and prison environment; and unfair, coercive court processes). As I conducted more focused coding, I looked for linkages among the categories that had emerged (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Through memoing, I clarified these linkages and began to conceptualize women's experiences within the context of a post-incarceration moral order, the main theoretical concept that I develop in this dissertation.

Sample

In total, 36 women participated in this project. Their demographic characteristics mirror the national profile of incarcerated women in the United States. I planned to ask about women's demographic information at the end of our third interview. Because I lost touch with some women after our first or second interview, I failed to collect demographic information for some women. Oftentimes the information had come up throughout the course of the interviews, but not always. Women's ages (n=34) ranged from 20 to 63 years old, with a mean age of 45.5 and a median age of 46.5. The vast majority of women (29) identified their race/ethnicity as Black or African American. Four women identified as white; two women identified as multi-racial; and one woman identified as Latina.⁵ Thirty-one of the women were mothers; none of the women with children under the age of 18 were living with them at the time of our interviews.

⁵ Throughout the dissertation, when I identify a participant's race or ethnicity, I use the term she provided.

I obtained educational background information from 31 women. At the time of our interviews, 12 women had not completed high school or earned a GED. Ten women had a high school diploma or a GED; notably, five of these women had earned their diploma through an adult high school connected to their recovery home. Six women had some college credits, and two had completed their bachelor's degrees. One woman had earned a Master of Social Work degree. Twenty-four women were not employed at the time of our interviews. Of the 12 employed women, only five had full-time, non-temporary positions. Five of the 12 employed women held either part-time or full-time jobs with a recovery home or an organization serving incarcerated or formerly incarcerated women. I obtained income information from 28 women. For 15 of these women, their only source of income was food stamps, totaling \$200 per month. One woman had no source of income and was not receiving food stamps. Of the remaining 12 women, seven estimated their monthly income. Five of these women earned \$700 or less per month (two of whom received SSI for a disability), one earned about \$1000 per month, and one earned about \$3300 per month.

Thirty-two women indicated how much time had passed since their last release from jail or prison. Just under half (16 women) had been out for less than one year. Two women had been out for more than 10 years; two had been out for six to nine years; two had been out for three to six years; 10 had been out for one to three years; seven had been out for six to 12 months; six had been out for three to six months; and three had been out for one to three months. All of the women indicated that their last incarceration was related to drug or alcohol use, even when the official charge was not a drug-related charge. For instance, women often were arrested for criminalized behaviors they

connected to their drug use, such as engaging in sex work in order to be able to purchase drugs.

Strengths and Limitations of Methods

In this section, I review the strengths and limitations associated with each aspect of my research design.

Multiple-Interview Design

A main strength of my methods was that I completed multiple interviews with almost every participant. At the outset of this project, I proposed conducting two to three interviews in order to ensure adequate time to cover all of the interview topics and to incorporate PEI. An unanticipated benefit of this multi-interview approach was that it provided an “extended snapshot” of participants’ lives. I met with most participants over a span of two to four months, which allowed me to see changes over the course of the interviews as participants progressed through their post-incarceration experiences. For instance, Moon had been effusive with her praise of the recovery home she recently had moved into during our first interview. She stressed how different it was from other programs that did not really care about people and only provided reentry services to make money off of the grants they received. Having been incarcerated multiple times, Moon relayed frequent experiences with organizations that had let her down and was one of the most critical participants I interviewed throughout this project. In our last interview, Moon’s demeanor was different from what I had grown accustomed to expect from her. She seemed uninterested in the interview and negative about how things were going for her at the recovery home. I finally commented that she seemed to be feeling very different from our previous interviews. She responded, “The euphoria wears off.” She

explained that she was disillusioned with the recovery home after seeing multiple instances of favoritism, receiving incorrect information from a staff person about where she could receive health care, and not being able to find a job. By completing multiple interviews with Moon over two months, I was able to see the trajectory of her relationship to the recovery home and of her experiences post-incarceration. A single interview with her would have left me with a partial, incomplete, and overly optimistic understanding of her experiences.

Completing multiple interviews with participants also alerted me to the precariousness of their housing and sobriety. By the time of our second and third interviews, some participants had moved from the recovery home or residence where they had been living. In some cases, participants said they chose to leave because they found better housing options. In other cases, women had been asked to leave, either by the recovery home staff or by the friends or family members with whom they had been staying. Drug and alcohol use was the main reason recovery home staff told participants they had to leave. Staff often learned of a participant's relapse from a "dirty drop" (a urinalysis result indicating the presence of drugs) or when a resident failed to return to the home by curfew. Friends and family members often told participants they had to leave if they could not contribute any money toward rent. As I lost touch and then regained contact with various participants, I observed how intricately housing, relapse, and re-incarceration were linked. At least two participants shared that they had relapsed since our first interview and had been arrested during that period of time when they actively were using. I learned from a recovery home staff member that another participant, with whom I lost contact and only completed two interviews, was back in

Cook County Jail. The participant had decided to move out of the recovery home, despite living there being a stipulation of her probation, and it was widely rumored among residents that she was using. According to the staff member, sheriff's officers had since come to the recovery home looking for the participant.

The multiple-interview design also helped me to build rapport with participants. Several women seemed to look forward to our subsequent interviews. When I arrived at some of the recovery homes for a scheduled interview with one participant, other participants stopped to say hello and chat with me. At times, they showed or described to me some of the photographs they had taken or planned to take. They also provided updates about various things they were doing, such as attending school and looking for employment. A few participants have remained in contact since completing their participation in the project, sending text messages or emails to say hello, tell me about a new development, or share an inspirational message. The multiple interviews, as well as the informal check-ins that occurred between interviews, helped participants to feel comfortable with me, particularly in the later interviews, which helped elicit more in-depth information.

A limitation of the multiple-interview design, however, is that I lost contact with seven participants before we completed all of our scheduled interviews. As a result, I was able only to collect partial information from them about their interactions with "the state." While some of these participants might have lost interest in the project and decided they no longer wanted to participate, it is likely that, for some, their life circumstances prevented them from completing any more interviews with me. Financial hardship that prevented women from having consistent access to a working telephone,

relapse, re-incarceration, and unstable housing likely interfered with some participants' ability or desire to continue their participation in this project. Arguably, participants in this situation are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged group of formerly incarcerated women. Not including their full stories limits the overall scope of the data I collected.

Recruitment Strategy

I recruited most of the participants in this study through recovery homes and organizations that provide services to formerly incarcerated women. At the outset of this project, I formally partnered with four organizations that differed in the types of services they provide, with regard to whether the services were residential or non-residential and faith-based or not. Initially, three organizations provided non-residential services (Women Helping Women, Women United Against Incarceration, and Building Bridges), and one was a recovery home (Starting Again). Two organizations provided faith-based services (Starting Again and Building Bridges), and two did not. The organizations through which I actually recruited changed as I began data collection, however. I ultimately did not recruit through Building Bridges, the faith-based non-residential program, since I was unable to reconnect with the program director after our initial meeting about the research project. Additionally, Growing Stronger, a faith-based recovery home, became a de facto recruitment site through the word-of-mouth referrals I received there. In the end, I effectively had four recruitment organizations: two faith-based recovery homes and two non-residential, non-faith-based recovery homes. The variation in the recruitment sites helped me to access a broad range of participants who were living in different types of housing and accessing different types of services. As a

result, my data represents a richer diversity of women's experiences with incarceration and post-incarceration than a single-site recruitment strategy would have produced.

There was considerable overlap across my recruitment sites, however. Unbeknownst to me at the start of this project, Women Helping Women regularly did outreach at Starting Again to recruit participants for its program. Two of the seven participants whom I recruited at Women Helping Women were living at Starting Again. Additionally, seven of the eight participants whom I met when I attended Women United Against Incarceration's meeting for recruitment either were currently or had been residents at Growing Stronger. Thus, the variation in participants that Women Helping Women and Women United Against Incarceration, as non-residential and non-faith-based programs, potentially could have yielded was mitigated to some extent by their relationships with Starting Again and Growing Stronger, respectively, both of which are faith-based recovery homes.

Working with any type of organization to recruit participants also poses a limitation. While the type and amount of support that participants received varied, my research only speaks to the experiences of women who at least at some point were connected to formal reentry services. This aspect of my research is a major limitation, since my recruitment procedures effectively excluded women who are disconnected from reentry services and thus likely face the greatest challenges in their post-incarceration experiences.

Participant-Generated Photographs

The use of PEI with formerly incarcerated women is one of the main strengths of my research design, as it produced a multitude of benefits. For one, PEI helped me to

realize the feminist goal of ensuring that participants had control over the research process. Women exercised this control in a number of ways. My interview experience with Veronica provided one of the clearest examples of a participant realizing this goal. I first met Veronica at one of the meetings where I formally recruited participants. She was sitting next to me, and when the sign-up sheet reached her, she added her name and whispered to me that we were going “knock it out” in one day. In other words, she did not want to meet multiple times. She added that the only reason she was going to participate was because she was the only woman in the group who was from the west side. Veronica wanted to make sure that my research included the experience of living on the west side. Despite my reservations, Veronica and I worked out a strategy for our one-time interview. First, I agreed to print out a picture from the Internet of the Chicago housing project where Veronica grew up. As part of its Plan for Transformation, the Chicago Housing Authority had torn down this development, meaning that Veronica could not take a picture of it. Second, we agreed that I would drive us around to the various places where Veronica wanted to take photographs and discuss the photographs as she took them. Veronica explained that she already had written her story for a writing group in which she participated at the recovery home where she stayed. She gave me a copy of her story (one typed, single-spaced full page), in which she recounted numerous rapes and suicide attempts and asserted that she never would be well because she of her mental illness. Veronica noted that her whole story was there, so she and I could just go take the pictures to put with her story, and then I would have everything I need. She said that she did not want to keep talking about and rehashing all of the bad things she had been through, so between her writings and the pictures, I would have her whole story, and

there was no need to meet again. In other words, Veronica refashioned the PEI process to meet her needs, as well as mine.

Following her lead, Veronica and I spent one Saturday morning driving around Chicago's west side, stopping to take photographs of places that she identified as important. After stopping by a drug treatment facility, an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting site, a recovery home, and a permanent supportive housing program where she planned to move in a few weeks, Veronica directed me to some of the painful sites of her past – places where she engaged in sex work (the “ho stroll,” as she referred to it), used drugs, lived in an abandoned building, and where the body of her friend, who also was a sex worker, had been found. While Veronica ultimately did rehash the traumatic experiences she had survived, the act of taking photographs transformed the way that she shared these experiences. With the photographs, and particularly by going to these sites, Veronica was active in her storytelling. She was not sitting across from me in a formal interview setting responding to my questions. Rather, she was in control, and I observed her voice grow stronger with each stop we made. As I wrote in my post-interview reflections, “Veronica seems comfortable and relaxed. Often, after she takes a photograph, I ask her what that image shows. She answers without hesitation: change, growth. She seems determined. She knows exactly where she wants to go and what she wants to share with me.” By setting the terms of her participation, Veronica created a way to engage in this project that was manageable for her. Without PEI, she likely would not have participated, and I would have missed the important contributions she made.

Participants also exerted control over the PEI process in less overt ways that took me longer to realize and fully understand. Regardless of how much I talked about “the

state” or how many prompts I provided that encouraged women to think about restrictions in their lives or the ways their criminal convictions follow them today, women took photographs of what they wanted to show me. In this way, women took ownership over the PEI process and directed my attention to what is important to them.

As I mentioned above, women frequently shared photographs of their children. Their first comments on the photographs typically centered on how they were involved mothers on whom their children could rely and how proud they were of their children’s accomplishments. For the most part, participants did not focus on how being incarcerated affected their children, at least not initially. The point of the photograph was not to lament the periods when they had been absent from their children’s lives or share sad stories about the negative impact their incarceration had on their children. Whereas our conversations about their relationships with their children often eventually touched on their concerns and worries about their children’s well-being, their initial intent in showing me the photographs of their children often was to warmly show how much they loved their children and had positive relationships with them today. This ability to demonstrate love and closeness through the images they created provided a way for women to subvert the damning labels of “bad” and “absent” mother that so many state agents (particularly DCFS caseworkers, police officers, and prosecutors) placed on them.

Several participants took photographs of other women with whom they lived in the recovery homes. Some of these photographs showed the women casually hanging out at the home, attending special events and group outings, and even taking public transportation to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. In these cases, women reflected on how their lives were today, now that they were in recovery. While reflecting on a

photograph she had a friend and fellow housemate take of her and a Michael Jackson impersonator who was performing at a subway station, Denise explained that the photograph showed how she could have fun while being sober. Through images such as these, participants constructed a positive story about their identities. Rather than dwell on the past, the regrettable mistakes they had made, and the obstacles they had to overcome today, participants showed how they were succeeding and, perhaps even more importantly, how they had turned their lives around. This process of personal transformation was *the* story many participants wanted me to know. Through the photographs and the interviews, one participant after another pushed me to expand my focus beyond the role of “the state” in her life to acknowledge and understand the hard work she had done and continued to do to become the person she wanted to be. In these ways, the participatory and emancipatory potential of PEI was realized, as women exerted agency over the research process, shaped my research questions, and directed a significant portion of my analysis.

There, of course, were limitations to the PEI process, as well. The most important limitation had to do with a fundamental tension in my overall research design: the tension of incorporating a participatory research method into a traditional academic research project housed at a university. Although I intentionally created a research design I hoped would amplify participants’ voices and disrupt the inherent power differential in the researcher-participant relationship, I began this project with theoretically informed research questions designed to make a contribution to the academic literature. In this way, I employed a rather traditional academic approach to this project and, through including PEI, worked a participatory research method into a traditional academic

project. Because of my feminist and participatory aims, however, I was willing to expand my research focus based on participants' interviews and photographs. In other words, throughout the project, I worked to balance my specific research focus with an openness to what participants deemed most important.

The photo instruction sheet (Appendix C) I created for participants reflects this fundamental tension between a traditional academic and a participatory approach in my project. As described above, even though I directed women to take photographs that showed where they saw and felt "the state" in their lives, I worked to avoid constraining their photography. In fact, after listing examples of "the state," I noted on the photo instruction sheet: "These are just some ideas to get you started. What really matters for this study are your ideas. I want to know what you think 'the state' is and where you see 'the state' affecting your life." Additionally, I directed participants to take photographs documenting their experiences leading up to prison or jail, with incarceration, and with reentry, and I included a list of questions for participants to consider, which further broadened the topic area. This section of the photo instruction sheet reflects a central challenge in my research: how to conceptualize the state in a way that allowed participants to engage the research topic but was not overly leading or restrictive. PEI is a method that opens up possibilities, thereby creating a wider, more expansive vision of a particular topic. My research questions prompted me to guide participants' focus, however, perhaps restricting, albeit unintentionally, what participants documented for this project.

The tension between a traditional academic and a participatory approach played out, at times, during the data collection process. In some cases, participants were

confused by my instructions for taking the photographs. This confusion became clear to me when I spoke with a couple of participants to confirm our scheduled PEIs, and they informed me that they did not know what they were supposed to do with the camera and that I needed to explain it to them again. Other participants more casually indicated their confusion. For instance, after completing an interview at Growing Stronger one night, I stopped and chatted with some of the residents and a staff member who were watching television in the living room. One of the residents, Denise, was a participant in this project. We had completed our first interview and had scheduled our PEI, but I had not yet picked up her memory card or seen any of her photographs. She commented that she had not taken any photographs yet but that she was going to get some good ones. She explained that she had been busy with a temporary job she obtained through a reentry program. The staff member told her that she should bring her camera to the job and take photographs there. Denise turned to me and said something to the effect of, “But you want pictures of our past, though. Like where we did drugs and stuff.” I replied that it was up to her what type of photographs she wanted to take, adding that she could take pictures showing her past and what led up to her trouble with the law and/or pictures that showed what she was working on today, such as her temporary job. She nodded and said ok. I reflected on this exchange during my entire drive home and several times since then. I worried that I thoroughly had confused Denise and circumvented her ownership of the photography process, since she clearly was concerned with what *I* wanted to see and perhaps was less concerned with what *she* wanted to show.

The instances when participants seemed confused by “what I was looking for” or preoccupied with creating the “correct” type of photographs deeply concerned me. Their

confusion was connected to the underlying tension in my overall project: combining participatory methods with a traditional academic research design. The tension in my project reflects a larger challenge in the field of visual sociology. Drawing on the work of Sarah Pink (2001) and of Michael Emmison and Philip Smith (2000), Josh Packard (2008) notes:

One's first priority as a researcher should be to figure out the best way to answer a particular question...Pink suggests that the method utilized should be guided by the question asked, and both should be linked to existing theory. Emmison and Smith note that this particular issue has not been especially well resolved by visual sociologists who have often had difficulty connecting theory, method and application (Emmison and Smith 2000). (P. 68)

Asking participants to document “the state” was my attempt to engage them with the theoretical questions at the center of this project – in other words, to link theory, research questions, and method. This attempt worked with some participants, but the task of documenting “the state” seemed to confuse or discourage, rather than engage, others. The idea of “the state,” likely remained too abstract for some, despite my attempt to offer a definition and examples. As a result, I think some participants gravitated toward the prompts that asked them to document their experiences of incarceration and reentry. For participants such as Denise, though, the multitude of directions I provided on the photo instruction sheet likely made them uncertain about where to direct their focus and how to begin.

Because I carried out this project as a researcher affiliated with a university, I had to go through the process of receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). While the IRB helped to ensure important safeguards were in place to protect participants' rights, the revisions I had to make in order to secure IRB approval

constrained the participatory nature of this project. A more collaborative, participatory approach would have made more room for participant input in conceptualizing the research questions and developing the research design; to the extent I tried to do so, I faced constraints from the IRB. Before beginning this project, I met with a variety of service providers in Chicago's reentry field not only to discuss possible recruitment opportunities but also to seek their input on what type of research findings would be helpful to them in their work. During one of these meetings, Brandi, the Program Specialist at Women Helping Women, suggested that I incorporate focus groups into the project. In some of her past work in one of the women's divisions at Cook County Jail, she and her colleagues had facilitated focus groups with women housed there. She described the groups as helpful to her and to the participants. The women who participated in the groups benefitted from hearing about each other's experiences, and the groups at times became a way for the women to share resources with one another. Participants' comments also reminded other participants of something related to share. Women built off of each other's contributions, so to speak, remembering important events or insights that might not have occurred to them in a one-on-one setting, which allowed the facilitators to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' situations and concerns.

Based on Brandi's encouragement and past success with this method, I attempted to incorporate focus groups at the beginning of the data collection process. In addition to the benefits Brandi described, conducting focus groups before beginning the interviews and PEIs seemed like a way to ensure my research questions and interview topics were grounded in participants' everyday realities. Through the groups, I expected to learn

about the challenges and supports women encountered in their post-incarceration processes and the language they used to refer to the rather abstract notion of “the state,” which is at the center of my research questions. I envisioned focus group participants acting almost like consultants who would inform and shape the project, which would make the research even more collaborative and engaged.

I was unable to secure approval from Loyola University Chicago’s IRB, to conduct focus groups, however. After several rounds of revisions and submitting responses to the IRB’s questions and concerns (a process that spanned five months), the IRB chair informed me that the IRB would not permit me to include any women who were on parole in the focus groups. This decision was based on the assertion of the IRB’s “prisoner advocate” that, as a condition of their parole, parolees are not able to “co-mingle” with one another. Thus, participating in the focus groups without explicit permission from their parole officers would be a violation of their parole. This claim seemed a bit unwarranted to me, since I proposed to conduct the focus groups with already existing groups at my recruitment agencies. The IRB chair suggested that I restrict participation in the focus groups to formerly incarcerated women who were not on parole. This option seemed unethical to me, since, by definition, the women participating in my study, particularly the women on parole, occupied one of the most marginalized positions in society. Systematically refusing participation to a group of women based on their parole status would stigmatize and marginalize them further, which was a potential harm that I was not willing to risk with my research. Rather than challenge the IRB’s decision and for the sake of being able finally to start my data collection, I removed focus groups from the project, despite the benefits I believed this

method would offer. Brandi and the executive director at Women United Against Incarceration shared their disappointment multiple times that I was not able to conduct focus groups.

The IRB approval process further constrained the participatory potential of this project through the limits it imposed on the PEI component. For one, the IRB prohibited me from showing any participant-generated images that included people in them, even if I blocked out or pixelated the images so that people were not identifiable, as some researchers using visual methods have done (Wiles, Clark, and Prosser 2011). This requirement essentially censored at least some of the participants' expressions, which in turn limited their voices. When completing the photo release form with participants and securing their permission about how I could use each photograph, some participants were visibly disappointed when I explained that, while I would use all of the photos they shared in my analysis, I could not show the images they created that included other people. While I have taken steps to minimize how much such restrictions limited participants' voices, such as through thoroughly describing the participant-generated images that I cannot show, I cannot completely overcome the academic institution's ability to shape the way participants and I present their stories.

The IRB also imposed limits on how participants, themselves, could use the photographs they created for this project. In the last round of feedback I received from the IRB, after I had revised and resubmitted my IRB application multiple times, the IRB required that I include an admonishment on the photo instruction sheet that participants only should use the photos they created for this project for the purpose of our interviews and specifically should not post any of these photos on any social networking sites. In

short, participants did not have control over the very images they created. This IRB requirement limited participants' voices and autonomy beyond their participation in the project and was an example of yet another institutional authority attempting to regulate their lives. In hindsight I wish I had challenged this instruction, since it blatantly was disempowering and countered the feminist and participatory research principles at the heart of this project: to decenter power and amplify participants' voices. Unfortunately, I agreed to this instruction for the sake of finally being able to start the project.

Conclusion

Although I encountered numerous challenges and limitations throughout the course of this project, the unique methodological approach I used to conduct research with formerly incarcerated women has generated rich findings that other methods would not have produced. The use of in-depth interviews, participant-generated photographs, and photo-elicitation interviews contributes to new understandings of the ways that socially marginalized women interact with, make demands upon, and resist "the state." Perhaps even more importantly, though, this innovative combination of research methods requires us to pay attention to what formerly incarcerated women want us to know about their journeys through the criminal legal system and their post-incarceration experiences. The women with whom I have had the privilege to work on this project are complicated, strong, resilient, caring, determined, and funny. They are mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, cousins, nieces, girlfriends, wives, and friends. They celebrate successes, such as earning GEDs and high school diplomas, completing drug treatment programs, and completing probation and parole. They find ways to keep moving forward after setbacks, such as relapsing, losing jobs, and being told to leave recovery homes. They have

survived multiple types of intersecting violence and employ creative strategies in their struggles to maintain sobriety, secure employment and housing, leave behind the criminal legal system for good, and ultimately turn their lives around. And they have loud voices that they want people not only to hear but also from which to learn. Scholars often write and talk about women such as the participants in this project in terms of numbers: incarceration rates, recidivism rates, percentages of those who have experienced violence, and numbers who have lost their children. Through their words and photography, the women I met while completing this project demand that we look beyond these statistics and take the time to deeply understand what it means for women to be in trouble with the law and how they work to survive that trouble.

In the next chapter, I focus on women's interactions with the criminal legal system, specifically the violence of criminalization and incarceration. I explain how the system labeled women as "criminal" and as "addicts" and introduced the 12-Step logic and religious narratives of redemption as mechanisms for women to use to overcome these stigmatized identities.

CHAPTER THREE

CREATING LIFELONG “CRIMINALS”

Tinybig was one of the participants who seemed most engaged with the photography portion of this project. She took photographs for two of our four interviews and even made special trips to make sure she captured just the right images to tell her story of incarceration and leaving prison. As a 51-year-old African-American and Native American woman, who had been imprisoned five times over the past nearly 20 years, Tinybig had many stories to tell. In particular, she wanted to take a photograph of the



Figure 1. Cook County Jail Women's Division

Bluebird bus to show the process of being shipped out of Cook County Jail after sentencing and down to one of the state's women's prisons. The buses had left before she arrived, but while walking around the jail's various buildings, she took pictures of one of the women's

divisions, where she had been jailed in the past (Figure 1). Walking back from that division, she snapped a photograph of an intersection near a ramp that police used to transport arrested people into the jail (Figure 2). Tinybig explained:

It's an opening right there where the trucks or the paddy wagons...go in...and you go down under the ground, and then you come up through

that back...Ooh! That's a spooky place...It just has an atmosphere like somebody's dead. And it makes you think...when you go through there...you're gonna be here for a while.

Entering the jail that way felt like dying. If the police did not release Tinybig from the neighborhood police station, where she first went upon arrest, and actually transported her to the county jail, she knew she faced a long pre-trial detainment that likely would end in a prison sentence. Almost instantaneously, she went from being a free citizen to a detained person with little if any rights.

It was not just the loss of freedom that troubled Tinybig when recalling her past arrests. Entering via this ramp that led under the jail gave her an “eerie feeling.” Coming in this particular entrance felt



Figure 2. Entering Cook County Jail

like “the pigs have been going to slaughter...It’s like you’re going to literally have something happen to you! And you are! Something is supposed to happen, but it’s just the way it is.” After arriving at the jail, Tinybig recalled the “horrific aura...of going through the tunnels to get over to the different divisions that you end up in...[and to] receiving. Down under there [the jail], it is just, them tunnels. They need to do something about them. They need to change them.” She also recognized that this experience was

shared by many men and women like her throughout the city. She explained that the police transported detained people from local stations to the jail: “From the 18th Street, 51st, 111th [Street police stations], you all come in to 26th and California.¹” Notably, Tinybig rattled off stations on the city’s west and south sides, located near predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods from which many of the jail’s population came.

With her photograph and description, Tinybig conjured a powerful image of Black and Brown bodies feeding the criminal legal system in an assembly line like fashion. Her phrase “pigs...going to slaughter” captured the desperation and hopelessness of this process. Tinybig and the other detained people whom the police led down the ramp were less like people and more like “pigs” that were processed by a system that had no regard for their lives. In short, Tinybig defined incarceration as a dehumanizing and terrifying process, a description that many participants shared.

In this chapter, I focus on women’s interactions with the criminal legal system. I draw upon Erving Goffman’s (1961:28) concept of the “mortification of the self” in “total institutions” to show how women’s experiences with police and their experiences with court, jail, and prison were parts of a dehumanizing process where they were viewed above all else as “criminals.” I situate this dehumanization within feminist theories of state violence (Davis and Shaylor 2001; Richie 2012) and show how police officers’, judges’, and correctional guards’ treatment of criminalized women reflected the criminal legal system’s “adversarial” (Pierce 1995:54), “us versus them” (Britton 1997:814)

¹ Cook County Jail is located at the intersection of 26th Street and California Avenue on Chicago’s southwest side. People often refer to the jail as “26th and California” or “26th and Cal.”

organizational logic. I then explain how the criminal legal system linked women's "criminal" identities with their "addict" identities (Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Kaye 2012; Leverentz 2014; McCorkel 2013). The system communicated moral judgments about women's identities, primarily through a 12-Step approach to drug treatment and religious narratives of redemption. As such, recovery and religion were the mechanisms through which women learned to practice self-regulation of their desires and self-discipline of their entire moral characters (Foucault 1977; Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Kaye 2012; McCorkel 2014; Tiger 2013). By linking "criminal" and "addict" identities, I show how the criminal legal system set women up for the lifelong task of managing "addiction" and, by extension, their "criminality" (McCorkel 2013). Post-incarceration, women faced an indefinite project of managing and performing personal transformation, as they always had to ward off the stigmatized identities of "addict" and "criminal" (Maruna 2001). I conclude the chapter with a brief overview of the services women encountered post-release to assist them with this project, noting the disparity of Chicago's re-entry field.

Criminalization and State Violence

In his classic work *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Goffman (1961) studied "total institutions"², such as mental hospitals and prisons, from the standpoint of the "inmates" to understand what happens to the self as people become institutionalized. Goffman (1961) describes a process of

² Goffman (1961:xiii) defines a "total institution" as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life."

“mortification” through which an individual’s self systematically is broken down by the institution’s procedures and environment. Upon admission, the inmate “begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of the self” (Goffman 1961:14). The institution cuts individuals off from their lives, obligations, and relationships that exist outside of the institution and, with that, their sense of identity prior to containment (Goffman 1961:14-16). Tinybig’s comments about the ramp leading detained persons underground to the tunnels and receiving area of Cook County Jail recalled this process of mortification. The people whom the police led into the jail lost their identities, as they transitioned from free citizens to inmates.

Feminist scholarship on state violence shows how this mortification process is raced, classed, and gendered. Women of color and poor women are disproportionately represented in the U.S. jail and prison populations, and incarcerated women have experienced disproportionate rates of individual and community level violence prior to incarceration (Richie 1996, 2012; Schlesinger and Lawston 2011). As Angela Y. Davis and Cassandra Shaylor (2001:7) explain, “Women’s prisons are located on a continuum of violence that extends from the official practices of the state to the spaces of intimate relationships.” The violence that women experience in prison takes gendered forms such as inadequate mental health and medical care, particularly related to reproductive justice; shackling during childbirth; sexual abuse and harassment by correctional guards, the majority of whom are men who perform body searches and have access to women when they undress, shower, and use bathroom facilities; and illegal and unauthorized strip searches, which can be particularly re-traumatizing for survivors of sexual assault

(Amnesty International 1999; Davis and Shaylor 2001; Law 2009; Sokoloff 2007; Richie 2012). This violence often compounds the inadequate services and resources available to women, as well as the harms to which they are vulnerable, in the communities where they live prior to incarceration. Using a Black Feminist framework, Beth E. Richie's (2012) violence matrix draws attention to the ways that violence against Black women living in disadvantaged communities intersects across the contexts of intimate households, communities, and the state. Richie (2012:135, emphasis in original) explains that state violence includes "abuse that women experience while they are in the custody of institutions...*as well as* abuse by people who are in positions of authority in social agencies that women are required to engage with or depend on." State violence also "includes the structural harm resulting from neoliberal public policy...that disadvantage[s] women in such a way that they cannot get help when they are harmed...[and] the rules and regulations that take away Black women's authority and self-determination and leave them dependent on hostile or ineffective state agencies" (Richie 2012:135). In short, state violence leaves Black women vulnerable to violence in their communities and intimate households. This scholarship shows that women of color and poor women face multiple forms of intersecting violence perpetrated not only by individuals, but also by the state in the form of punitive policies, the withdrawal of public resources, and overt physical and sexual abuse.

Feminist scholarship on state violence indicates an overarching organizational logic of the criminal legal system. As I discuss below, the violence that women who participated in this project survived at the hands of the state, as well as the dehumanizing

process they experienced of being reduced to nothing more than a “criminal,” did not simply result from individual motives and actions or the misfortune of coming in contact with the “wrong” police officer or prison guard. Rather, women’s experiences reflected an organizational logic that structures how the state approaches criminalized women. In developing a theory of how organizations themselves are gendered, Joan Acker (1990:147) defines organizational logic as “the assumptions and practices that construct most contemporary work organizations.” Building upon Acker’s (1990) work, Dana M. Britton (1997:797) explains that organizational logic “takes material form in work rules and policies, as well as in practices that may or may not be mandated in any formal way.” Following this definition, women’s accounts of the treatment they experienced with a range of state actors, such as police officers, state’s attorneys, judges, and jail and prison guards, indicated an “adversarial” (Pierce 1995:54), “us versus them” (Britton 1997:814) organizational logic within which these actors operated.

Scholars such as Lisa Frohmann (1991, 1997), Jennifer L. Pierce (1995), and Britton (1997, 2003) have elucidated various aspects of the criminal legal system’s organizational logic. In her research on prosecutors’ decision-making processes on whether to file charges in sexual assault cases, Frohmann (1991, 1997) stresses the importance of the “convictability standard.” Regardless of whether prosecutors believed the person who reported a sexual assault, they focused on whether the case seemed winnable. Having a low conviction rate reflected poorly on the overall state’s attorney’s office and could limit an individual prosecutor’s chances for promotion. As such, it was in the prosecutor’s interest only to accept cases that seemed likely to end in a conviction

and to do everything in their power to attain that conviction. In her research on trial lawyers' masculinized emotional labor, Pierce (1995:54) notes that the lawyers work within the context of an "adversarial model that underlies the basic structures of our legal system." The lawyers' "gamesmanship" in the courtroom, which included "control and domination of others through manipulation" and "a ritual of degradation and humiliation against other men and women who were witnesses, opposing counsel, and, in some cases, clients," aligned with hegemonic masculinity, as well as the legal system's adversarial model (Pierce 1995:59). Moving beyond litigation to incarceration, Britton (1997, 2003) studied how prisons are gendered organizations. In her interviews with men and women prison guards, they frequently voiced their frustration with the overemphasis during training on "the potentially violent nature of the job" and trainers' fixation with sharing "their 'war stories' of prison violence" (Britton 1997:802). Although guards did not experience routine violence in their work, Britton concludes (1997:803), "The discourse of training is one that creates a rhetorical picture of the prison...as a site of almost unimaginable violence, a setting in which officers are constantly in fear for their lives." She also identifies "the sense of 'us' versus 'them'...that is one of the basic components of the hegemonic officer subculture" (Britton 1997:814).

Taken together, Frohmann's (1991, 1997), Pierce's (1995), and Britton's (1997, 2003), research make clear how an "adversarial," "us versus them" organizational logic runs throughout many levels of the criminal legal system. My research shows how criminalized women experienced this logic and how it impacted their conceptions of self.

Police and Community Violence

Criminalization set the ball in motion for the state to enact particularly oppressive forms of violence that attacked women at the level of their identities. Women noted how even before incarceration, police acted in ways that were explicitly violent and put women at risk of harm in their communities. Once the police engaged a woman as a “criminal,” that ascribed identity took on a “master status” (Hughes 1984; Becker 1963) that seemed to provide justification for violent treatment by individual officers, as well as the overall punitive nature of court and incarceration experiences.

Women who engaged in sex work were particularly vulnerable to police harassment and violence. When I introduced the idea of the “state” during our first interview, Nyla, a 42-year-old Black woman, immediately began to discuss her mixed experiences with police officers: “When it comes to the police...I, me personally, haven’t had, especially with the opposite sex, the males being actually there. Especially if you’re known to use drugs and alcohol and walk the street or prostitute or solicit, um, they look down on you.” She did not see the police as a source of safety or assistance, as men officers, in particular, were not “actually there” to help women like Nyla, meaning criminalized, poor, Black women living in disadvantaged communities. Nyla recalled an incident when she was living in a public housing community that the police regularly patrolled: “This particular day I stayed in, but when I did come out, the police were on the street, and they had about five, six people on their car. And the next thing I know, they drove up on me and told me to get in the car, and I was actually locked up.” She explained that the area was known for “gang activity,” drug dealing, and sex work, and

the police routinely picked her up on “soliciting” charges as part of their sweeps, regardless of whether she was engaging in sex work at that particular time. Nyla reasoned, “A lot of times I was picked up, and I just feel like I was a victim of a quota being met.” Similar to Tinybig’s recollection, Nyla felt like just another body to be processed by the criminal legal system, as the police viewed her not as a person but as a number. Her visibility in a criminalized community made her an easy target for police.

The visibility of being a woman using drugs and/or engaging in sex work made Nyla and others especially vulnerable to violence. Nyla recalled that men police officers who picked her up for “soliciting” some times would force her to “turn a date” in order to avoid arrest. This coercion was a gendered type of state violence that women faced in the streets. Importantly, this known practice of men police officers emboldened one man in Nyla’s community to pose as a police officer and, as Nyla put it, “actually I want to say rape me.” The man wore a full uniform, picked Nyla up for “soliciting,” and acted like he was going to arrest her. Once he got her in his car, he claimed he was an officer and forced Nyla into sexual activity in order to be able to go home. It was only later that Nyla learned this man was not, in fact, an officer. Incidents such as this one illustrated the intersecting contexts of violence in Richie’s (2012) matrix. Because an actual police officer had forced Nyla to perform oral sex, it was completely believable to her and even expected that this imposter would make a similar demand. The overarching context of state violence contributed to an unsafe community in this particular area of the city for women who practiced sex work. In short, the sexual violence Nyla survived at the hands of police officers empowered this individual to sexually assault her. Furthermore, Nyla’s

known identity as a criminalized Black woman precluded her from turning to the police for assistance in this matter. How could she call on the same police department that, in the past, had mistakenly busted into her apartment (instead of a neighbor's) and "ransacked" her home in front of her children while looking for drugs, to seek protection from violent men in her community? Simply put, Nyla knew all too well that the police were not a resource for her.

Julia, a 51-year-old African-American woman, also indicated that her visibility as a Black woman who engaged in sex work and sold drugs made her vulnerable to men in her community. For our photo-elicitation interview, she took a photograph of a building where she once lived (Figure 3). Julia worked as the janitor for the building while she



Figure 3. Past home

lived there. She also sold drugs, engaged in sex work, and allowed other women to use some of the vacant apartments "to take their dates, to get high and have sexual activities."

One man, who also

helped out around the building, used his knowledge of Julia's activities against her after she refused his proposition. She commented, "It was an insult the way that he came to me... He asked me to have oral sex with him for a pack of cigarettes or five dollars. And

I told him, ‘You’ve got to be kidding. Don’t you ever in your life come to me and belittle [me], that’s totally disrespectful.’” The man retaliated by turning Julia in to the building management, who kicked her out of her apartment. She thus lost her housing and her job. While management certainly had the right to evict Julia for participating in illegal activities on the property, what is notable about this experience is that her criminalized identity as a sex worker made her vulnerable to men’s manipulation in her community.

Women’s public interactions with police officers also made them concerned for their safety. Denise, a 45-year-old Black woman, noted that during her last arrest, for instance, an officer stopped her outside of her home and told her that he wanted to talk with her about drug dealing in the area. Then, “he just handcuffed me, threw me in the car, and told me that once I answer all his questions he’ll let me go.” Denise answered his questions but worried that the higher-level dealers who supplied her with the small amounts of drugs she sold would know that she provided the police with information:

I told him more than, you know, anybody would that got sense, because the people that I was, whose stuff it was, they was watchin’, so I was kind of scared to get out the car. I was gonna ask him [the police officer], if he had of let me go, can you take me somewhere far and then let me out, and I’ll just go over to my Mom’s house or somethin’, cuz I didn’t want them to be like, “Why did he, didn’t arrest her?”...Because they always have, like, a person on each corner. And sometimes they’ll be in parked cars, and they not hustlin’, but they, they job is to just watch. So I knew it was people out there, you know, watchin’.

The officer still arrested Denise and took her into custody, despite his promise to let her go. But even if she had been able to avoid the violence of arrest and incarceration, Denise feared the retaliation she likely would have faced from the drug dealers in her

community. The police officer's public interrogation of her made her further vulnerable to community-level violence.

Ann, a 47-year-old Caucasian woman, recalled similar instances when police officers pressured her to provide information about drug dealers. A police officer caught her with an empty drug "baggie." At first Ann thought the officer could not arrest her because he did not catch her with drugs, but he pointed out that since she was on probation, he could take her in for a violation of probation (VOP). He offered to make a deal with her, though:

He said, "I'm gonna give you this twenty dollars...Go knock on the door where you're gonna get your dope from," cuz they're, all the police know [where] the dope spots are...He said, "Go to the back door and tell me who's workin'...You go get your dope, and then come back here with the bag of dope and tell me who's workin', and I'll let you do your dope and you can walk away."

When Ann refused, he offered her 40 dollars to buy two bags and said he would let her "walk away" after she used the drugs in front of him. Ann "thought about it," but refused again, because "if they [the drug dealers] knew I tricked, that'd be a gunshot wound in my head. You know, they try to kill you for that. And I'm not tryin' to die. I said, 'Uh-uh...Just take me in.'...Because I'm not gonna snitch." The officer responded angrily, calling Ann a "smartass" and threatening to "put different charges on her." She viewed this as a credible threat: "I know certain police out there that are very crooked. That will get you for nothin'. And I know cops that will set you up with somethin' for you to go down, even though you ain't got nothin' on you." Like Denise, Ann faced a choice between incarceration and fearing for her life in the community. Even though she and

Denise chose differently, they both ended up incarcerated, underscoring the constrained choices and limited agency they faced.

Taken together, these reflections illustrate multiple experiences where people showed little (if any) regard for women's safety and lives. Women described living and working in hostile street environments where the violence perpetrated by community members (often men) and police officers interacted in dangerous ways that increased women's vulnerability. It is important to note that women also recalled caring relationships with partners and friends who looked out for them and tried to keep them safe. As I discuss in later chapters, for instance, Carmel and Sharon noted that their boyfriend and husband, respectively, supplied them with drugs in an effort to protect them from having to sell drugs or engage in sex work. Rose shared a photograph of a friend with whom she used to "push the buggy," a shopping cart they would fill with materials like "cans, metal...copper, aluminum, whatever we could get our hands on to take to the junkyard" to sell. Rose commented, "He means a lot to me...he never did let anybody come around us talkin' crazy and stuff like that, far as tryin' to take somethin' off the buggy or somethin' like that...so I admire him for that. He was sort of like a protector at that time. He really was." These relationships offered critical support that helped women manage the violence they routinely faced.

Constrained by Court Processes

Women described court as a confusing process over which they had little, if any, say. Acting within the bounds of the criminal legal system's adversarial, "us versus them" organizational logic, it seemed as if the state already presumed the women were

guilty and thus “criminals” deserving of punishment. All but two participants had been arrested more than once. As women went to court for their later cases, their arrest and conviction records limited their chances of avoiding additional prison sentences. Olivia, a 49-year-old Afro-American woman, likened this practice of judges and state’s attorneys taking defendants’ backgrounds into consideration when determining guilt and sentencing to “double jeopardy.” She explained that if someone has been to prison and is arrested again for the same offense some time after her release:

Instead of your case carryin’ one to three [years], they’re gonna upgrade it to three to six [years]. That means you’re lookin’ back in my background, and in a way I feel like that’s double jeopardy, cuz I did the time for that, and you’re gonna bring it up again... You bringin’ up my old case. You tryin’ me again off of that case. I don’t think that’s fair.

Once the criminal legal system labeled a woman as a “criminal,” that identity always remained.

Corrine, a 63-year-old African-American woman, discussed a specific example of a judge reducing her identity to nothing more than a “criminal.” The last time she had been incarcerated, she had sought drug treatment on her own during the time while she was out of jail but awaiting sentencing for a shoplifting charge. Corrine explained, “It was my hopes that if I went and got in treatment that the judge... would give me a chance and not send me to prison.” At the time of her sentencing date in court, she had completed nearly six weeks of outpatient treatment. She had done so well in the program that two counselors accompanied Corrine to her court date to vouch for the progress she had made since her arrest and to legitimize her claim that she actively was working to turn her life around. The judge praised Corrine’s efforts, but they did not spare her

another trip to prison. With her voice cracking and holding back tears, Corrine recalled the judge's exact response: "She said, 'I would never be able to face society or my constituents,' as she kind of put it, 'if I were...to let you back out on the streets today. And I hereby sentence you to four to ten [years]. And I hope that when you're done that you still continue on your path.'" Despite already being on the right "path," as the judge put it, the judge determined that only a prison sentence, which would sever Corrine's relationship with a helpful treatment program and physically separate her from her young daughter, could adequately address her crime. Corrine reflected on what the judge's statement meant to her: "So here's a judge telling me that I was such a menace to society and that she would never be able to face society if she gave me a chance. And here I was goin' to prison for somethin' for thirty-seven dollars." Corrine's recognized criminality precluded any acknowledgement of her identity as a woman in recovery, as well as her identity as a mother.

Inadequate information. Women also identified lack of information and confusion about court processes as barriers that limited their voice. For instance, Chicken Wing, a 55-year-old Black woman, explained how she was tricked into making a confession. The police had arrested her on a charge of home invasion. While in custody, they informed her that the man whose home she robbed had a heart attack after she left and died. The police charged her with murder in addition to home invasion. Without her own legal representation present, the state's attorney met with Chicken Wing and asked her if she had anything to say. Chicken Wing did not realize the state's attorney's role: "You know, they trick you...It's just the way she acted, like she was on my side, but she wasn't."

Although she verbally confessed, Chicken Wing “came to my senses, I didn’t sign the confession.” Her confusion about what was happening literally was a matter of life and death. As a capital case, the state’s attorney pursued the death penalty. The judge instead handed down a 42-year prison sentence, of which Chicken Wing served 21 years. It is uncertain how a signed confession or not speaking with the state’s attorney while in custody might have altered the outcome of her case. With a signed confession, perhaps the judge would have sentenced Chicken Wing to death. Without a verbal confession, perhaps she would have received a shorter sentence. Regardless, given the criminal legal system’s adversarial, “us versus them” organizational logic that prioritizes convictability (Frohmman 1991, 1997), no one ensured that Chicken Wing had a clear understanding of the criminal legal process, as she made important initial decisions about her case.

Nyla also noted how confusion about legal representation had long-term consequences for her last case. She faced a 17-year prison sentence for possession of a firearm,³ but her public defender was confident that they could beat the case since the arresting police officers had not actually found the gun on Nyla’s person. He told Nyla that she would “just have to sit,” meaning wait out all of the continuances while he worked on her case. A friend posted Nyla’s bond, though, allowing her to be released from jail. At her next court date, the judge informed her that she no longer qualified for a public defender because of the amount of the posted bond. This news was shocking and a disappointment to Nyla, since the public defender had been so confident about her case.

³ Because Nyla had a past felony conviction, the official charge was “unlawful use of a weapon by a felon,” which carried a longer sentence. Her attorney informed her that the state’s attorney tried to “enhance [the] charges,” similar to the “double jeopardy” practice Olivia noted above.

She found a private defense attorney, but her financial resources limited how much work the attorney would do for her case. He essentially shared a pricing sheet that detailed what services he would provide for each price. Nyla explained, “I think it would have been like maybe two thousand here more, two thousand here more, two thousand here more to fight it all the way out, to go into...the police call, what happened at the night of it, gettin’ videos, all of that.” Nyla felt that the attorney did everything he could, given the money she paid him, but she did not “think it really took him any hard work.” To have fought harder on her case would have required her attorney to go above and beyond what she paid for, essentially volunteering his time. Looking back on the case, Nyla wished the public defender had represented her, even though she would have had to remain in jail while awaiting trial. Again, lack of information about the pre-trial process prevented Nyla and her friend from making an informed decision about whether to post bond and thus constrained Nyla’s agency with regard to her case.

Incomplete instructions also kept women caught up in the criminal legal system. Cathy, a 52-year-old white woman, had never been to prison but had been arrested several times, usually on charges related to drinking. Her last charge was her third driving under the influence (DUI) charge, which made it a felony. On an earlier DUI charge, the judge sentenced her to probation, and she “got the highest fines, I got the highest amount of community service, and I got the highest amount of treatment stuff.” No one explained the terms of her probation to her, though. Cathy explained:

I kept failing my treatment because I wasn’t told the rules. I was on probation. I didn’t know probation meant I couldn’t, could not while I was in probation could not drink at all...I didn’t know that! So I ended

up...violating my probation...I was like, “Why are they violating me because I just had a drink? Why? What is this?”

Cathy did not identify as an “alcoholic” and therefore did not consider it a problem to have a drink. Once her probation officer explained all of the stipulations to her, Cathy easily followed them. In fact, the judge ultimately released her from her probation nearly a year early, because she completed everything the court required of her. Cathy said, “Now if I would’ve known that [what the requirements were] in the first year, I would’ve been doin’ everything I was supposed to be doin’, but, you know, nobody was tellin’ me what I was supposed to be doin’, and I was really pissed off, because I had to do this again!” As she unknowingly violated her probation, Cathy had to stay on probation for a longer period of time. This extension increased the financial cost of case, as she had to pay for court-mandated monthly drug tests throughout her probation. In total, Cathy estimated that she spent nearly \$10,000 between court fees, fines, probation, and costs associated with eventually obtaining a driver’s license again. She concluded that the criminal legal system and the agencies to which it referred people for treatment set women up to fail: “These agencies, because they don’t disclose information all the time, they’re settin’ you up for another failure, so that you’re still in the system. So that you still need to hire a lawyer. So that you still need to go to court. So you still need to pay the government...It’s money.” Tinybig’s “pigs...to the slaughter” reference again is applicable. Cathy was yet another woman who felt that the criminal legal system did not view her as a person, but as a case to process and off of which to profit.

Lack of information also limited women’s ability to make informed decisions when correctional officers and judges did present them with treatment options,

specifically Division 17 at Cook County Jail. Division 17 is part of the Cook County Sheriff's Women's Justice Programs (SWJP). According to SWJP's website, "All SWJP programs incorporate a trauma informed integrated model of treatment that addresses the complex issues impacting women's functioning and substance use in a safe, supportive treatment environment." Located within the jail, Division 17 is a pre-trial residential treatment program that requires women to participate in mental health counseling, drug treatment services, and peer support groups. Women thus have access to a variety of services that are not available to the general jail population. The program can help women avoid a prison sentence, as positive reports of their participation can encourage a judge to sentence them to probation, with the idea that women will continue the treatment they began pre-trial in jail in the community after their release. Judges can still sentence women to prison, though, and it is unclear to women how long they will have to participate in Division 17. While remaining in jail and participating in the program, they have regular court dates so that the judge can monitor their progress for as long as the judge sees fit to make a determination about sentencing.

With just 160 beds, only a fraction of incarcerated women (about 14%)⁴ participate in this program. Rose, a 48-year-old Black American woman, was one of the few women who had the option to move from general population to Division 17. A jail guard informed her just a couple of days before her court date that she had the option to

⁴ The Cook County Jail has an average daily population of approximately 9,000 men and women. The Cook County Department of Corrections website does not break down this daily population by gender. In 2011, women accounted for about 12.8% of total admissions for the year (Olson and Taheri 2012). Based on these figures, I estimated that the average daily women's population is about 1,152 women.

move to Division 17. Rose turned down the offer because it felt like too great of a risk.

On all of her past cases, judges had sentenced Rose to prison, so she was fairly certain that her current case ultimately would end in a prison sentence, as well. She figured that if she stayed in general population, she would receive her sentence and be able to get it over with sooner. Rose reasoned, “I just went on and just took my time and did it like that, because that’s what they do in Division 17...they just send you back and forth to court, you know, and I didn’t want to be doin’ that. I didn’t want to be goin’ through that.” No one from Division 17 or the jail explained the program to her or how participating in it might impact her sentence. No one even presented the option to her face-to-face. The guard who informed Rose of the chance to go to Division 17 “got a phone call behind the glass, and she called my name and she said, ‘Do you want to go to Division 17?’ I said, ‘Well, I’m fittin’ to go to court in, in a couple more days.’ ‘So, you still can go to, uh, Division 17.’ I was like, “No, I’ll just go to court.” Rose made a split second decision based on her observations and conversations with women who had participated in the program. While this information was useful, it was partial, as jail and court officials did not provide Rose with full information about a program that might have been helpful and might have spared her from another trip to prison. Conversely, lack of information about Division 17 influenced Ann’s decision to participate in the program. The judge gave her the option between a three-year prison sentence or Division 17. Ann did not realize that the program was located within the jail: “I thought Division 17 was some place out of the County [jail]. So I took that one thinkin’ I was gettin’ outta there.” While she ultimately was glad that she moved to Division 17 and felt she benefited from

the program, like Rose, Ann made an important choice that had long-lasting consequences based on inaccurate and incomplete information.

Coercive plea deals. A troubling and common practice women discussed was feeling coerced into accepting plea deals, even when they believed, or their attorneys believed, their cases were winnable. Cathy, for instance, faced a three- to five-year prison sentence following her third DUI arrest. Because her daughter was in the car with her, she faced a child endangerment charge, in addition to the DUI and driving without a license charges. Cathy said she was not drunk at the time of the arrest, and “the only real charge I was guilty of was driving without a license.” But she “was forced to plead guilty to the DUI so that they’d drop the child endangerment charges.” Cathy felt like she had no option but to plead guilty despite her stated innocence. Although she avoided a prison sentence, the conviction was devastating, limiting her employment, education, and



Figure 4. Childhood home



Figure 5. Rented room

housing options. At the time of our interviews, she remained on probation and was renting a room in an apartment for \$400 per month.⁵ She felt that the people living in the

⁵ Cathy’s parents helped her pay her rent, a problematic arrangement since it provided her mother with “leverage” over her.

building, as well as the neighborhood, were unsafe, but she had no other options. She had moved here after being kicked out of various recovery homes, due to conflicts with other residents and allegations that she had been drinking.

Cathy used photographs to illustrate how much she had lost because of her involvement with the criminal legal system. She took a photograph of her parents' home to symbolize where she had grown up in a predominantly white, middle-class suburb (Figure 4). She contrasted this photograph with pictures of the room she rented (Figure 5) in a predominantly Black neighborhood (Figure 6) on Chicago's far south side, distant from the places with which Cathy was familiar. She captioned the neighborhood



Figure 6. "What it's like now."

photograph: "What it's like now. An hour bus ride, 30-45 [minute] red line ride, and a 20 minute walk to the church." She described feeling out of place as the only white person living "in a very bad community... Where

people get shot on the bus."⁶ She traced these problems to the unfair treatment she received from the police and the court system. While her "forced" guilty plea spared her

⁶ Throughout our interviews, I struggled with Cathy's explicitly racist comments, including her use of the N-word. It was clear that she struggled to hold onto her self-described identity as a white, educated, upper-middle class woman while being caught in

from a prison sentence, it also exacerbated problems that began several years prior with her first DUI charge.

More commonly, women described being worn down by the long pre-trial process and accepting a guilty plea because they were ready to serve their time and try to move on with their lives. Sitting in the jail, with no say over the direction of their cases, was a type of limbo that women only could end with a guilty plea. If they pushed for trial, they faced an unknown amount of time stuck in pre-trial detainment, as well as the possibility of losing their cases and receiving even longer prison sentences than the state's attorney offered as part of a plea bargain. The terrible conditions at Cook County Jail, which I discuss further below, also encouraged women to accept plea deals to get out of the jail as soon as possible. While prison conditions also were challenging, in general, they were better than those at the jail. Ann W., a 44-year-old Black woman, had been to prison three times prior to her last arrest, for retail theft, so she knew firsthand that she would rather be in prison than jail. Before meeting with her public defender, she thought, "Well I'm a cop out, cuz I ain't fittin' to sit in the County. I don't wanna sit in the County. I know that's hard time for me." Stacey, a 41-year-old African-American woman, also had been to prison three times prior to her last arrest, for drug manufacturing and escape charges. When her public defender told her that the state's attorney was offering a four-year sentence in exchange for a guilty plea, Stacey accepted the offer. She could have waited to see if the state's attorney eventually would offer her a shorter sentence, but that would

a system that she felt was designed for poor, uneducated, Black people who had drug problems. Cathy noted, "I am not, you know, the ghetto person. I am not the poor person. I am not the regular person."

require her to remain in Cook County Jail. Like Ann W., Stacey was desperate to leave the jail as soon as possible:

The County is bad! The food is terrible! It's cold in there! I had to get out of there! I didn't have no money, so I wasn't buyin' no commissary, so I had to eat what they eat...I had to get out of there. And prison is a lot better...They feed you better. You ain't got to eat all these bologna sandwiches in the County. Um, it's warmer. Um, you get to watch the TV. You can buy a TV. You know what I'm sayin'? You can have a TV in your room. You can do a lot of stuff. You can work in the kitchen. You can work and make some money, you know.

She also wanted to end the limbo of being in jail: "I was ready to go to prison and get this over with. When you go to prison, you know, you got a out date. You know when you're goin' home. In the County, you're sittin' there waitin' on court dates after court dates. You don't want to deal with that." These jail conditions, and the indefinite nature of pre-trial detainment, effectively coerced women into accepting plea deals that ultimately might not have been in their best interests.

In sum, lack of knowledge and confusion about the criminal legal system, as well as limited options, hurt women. Based on incomplete and incorrect information, they made "choices" that ultimately worked against them or cut them off from services that might have proved helpful. Of course, the lack of transparency and confusing processes could be intentional, designed to control people, keep them caught up in the criminal legal system, and maintain the status quo. Nyla suspected:

In some type of shape, form, or fashion they all work together...the PDs [public defenders], the state's attorney, the paid lawyers in some cases, especially if they're familiar with the whole court system down there at 26th and California. They know the judges, and considering how many years they have in...they know pretty much what the judge will or will not do.

She basically felt like a pawn in the court process, as her private defense attorney, the state's attorney, and the judge bargained with one another until they agreed upon a felony conviction and a prison sentence of three years. Nyla was peripheral to the process. Within the organizational logic of the criminal legal system, women's criminalized identities and presumed guilt seemed to justify dehumanizing practices that marginalized their influence over their own cases. Women's identities other than "criminal" were erased throughout court processes, as they had little voice over their cases.

The Violence of Incarceration

The dehumanizing environments of jail and prison further communicated to women that they were nothing but "criminals" who deserved the poor living conditions, as well as guards' verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. Cook County Jail is particularly notorious for its abusive environment, as evidenced by multiple consent decrees and a string of class-action lawsuits on behalf of current and former detainees. Since 1982, the jail has been under a consent decree that requires appointed monitors to file reports on the jail's conditions twice a year with federal judges. The federal government issued the decree in response to a 1974 class-action lawsuit alleging civil rights abuses at the jail (Cook County Sheriff's Office 2010; Meisner and Schmadeke 2014). As John Maki, the executive director of the John Howard Association of Illinois, pointed out at the Illinois Academy of Criminology's Spring Institute on May 2, 2014, the decree indicates that Cook County Jail has been in violation of the U.S. Constitution for nearly 40 years, and this situation has become the status quo.

More recently, in 2008, the United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division released findings from its 17-month investigation into Cook County Jail. Citing physical abuse by correctional officers, inadequate healthcare, medical neglect, withholding of mental health medication, and poor physical conditions, the report concluded "that the jail had systematically violated the constitutional rights of inmates" (Davey 2008). In November 2010, men and women who had been subjected to illegal strip searches at the jail won a \$55 million settlement.⁷ In February 2014, the MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University filed a proposed class-action lawsuit alleging a culture of "sadistic violence and brutality" at Cook County Jail (Meisner and Schmadeke 2014). Based on sworn statements from nearly 90 people incarcerated at the jail, the Center alleged that physical abuse by jail guards is a significant factor contributing to the overall culture of violence. As the *Chicago Tribune* reported, the lawsuit states that "a violent, sadistic, cruel and sometimes racist and homophobic bravado pervades the ranks' of correctional officers," reflecting "systemic problems that have remained unchecked at the highest levels of Cook County government" (Meisner and Schmadeke 2014). This well-documented history of pervasive and persistent abuse at Cook County Jail reflects an organizational logic in which intimidation and violence are common. As such, it was not surprising that women recalled similar experiences.

As Davis and Shaylor's (2001) continuum of violence and Richie's (2012) violence matrix predict, women encountered a similar disregard for their lives in Cook County Jail as they faced on the streets from police officers and community members

⁷ As I note in a later chapter, one participant was a beneficiary of this settlement.

who tried to take advantage of them. For one, women noted how guards' intimidating and abusive behavior contributed to an overall unsafe environment in the jail. The Lioness, a 49-year-old African-American woman, recalled how an altercation with a guard turned a violation of probation (VOP) charge into a conviction for a violent felony. Shortly after The Lioness arrived at Cook County Jail on the VOP charge, she got into an argument with another detained woman. The guard who intervened "was irritated, it was a holiday, and she didn't want to be there or whatever. And she kept cussin' me out." The guard ultimately choked The Lioness, who fought back. She explained, "She choked me. That was enough...because...I had been raped and brutally sodomized before, and so I was very on the defensive...I'm a little laid back, but I still have bad memories, things that happened that's not too pleasant, so, of course, I might react defensive at times." Given The Lioness's history of sexual violence, which began in her childhood and continued throughout adulthood, the officer's choking and physical restraint was a particularly gendered form of violence. The guard's actions recalled the multiple times The Lioness had been vulnerable to violence throughout her life. Although the guard was a woman, in contrast to the men had been the perpetrators of The Lioness's past violence, the guard's actions reflected the jail's hypermasculine, violent organizational culture. As an authority figure within that culture, she had the power to exert force over The Lioness in a way that evoked the powerlessness she experienced during past sexual assaults by men. The re-traumatizing physical assault perpetrated by the woman guard linked The Lioness's current situation as an incarcerated woman, with no recognized rights to safety and bodily

integrity and with severely curtailed power, to past assaults rooted in the same power dynamics.

Once the guard subdued The Lioness, she handcuffed her in a chair, such that The Lioness was bent forward at the waist, with her hands cuffed beneath her knees, behind her calves. She remained this way in a holding cell for about an hour and a half. During that time, other guards stopped by and “taunted” her, saying things like, ““If that had of been me, I would have beat you!”” The Lioness described these taunts as typical of the behavior she was accustomed to seeing from the guards: “They’re very mean at Cook County. I mean, seriously...they talk to you and calls us bitches and whores...It happens. I mean, you have people that’s in high places, in authority, like Cook County Sheriffs, that just have bad attitudes.”

Beyond the immediate physical harm the assault caused, it had long-lasting consequences with which The Lioness still was dealing at the time of our interviews. The state charged her with aggravated battery, which is classified as a violent felony, and she served two years in prison. The felony conviction remained on her record and eliminated certain employment options, such as working in the medical field or with children. She thus enrolled in a building maintenance program rather than pursue training in a field she ultimately would not be able to enter. The conviction also prevented her from qualifying for a housing program since her release. This rejection hit The Lioness particularly hard: “They said my, my background was unacceptable. You know, and when I first got it [the rejection notice], it was like they were sayin’ I was unacceptable. Because the mistakes that I’ve made.” She anticipated that she never would be able to completely rid herself of

the stigma associated with having a violent felony conviction on her background. She explained that the conviction “impacts my life a lot today, because it makes a statement that is not positive. It’s negative. I’m always going to receive some negativity, some judgmental people.” In other words, The Lioness would pay for defending herself against a violent jail guard for the rest of her life.

Ann also discussed how guards contributed to an overall hostile environment in Cook County Jail. She recalled how one guard, in particular, repeatedly harassed her: “She always threatened she was gonna handcuff me to the gate and beat the shit outta me. And if I tried to run she’d get me for an escape.” The guard would tell Ann that she had to take the garbage to an outside dumpster. Ann would refuse out of fear that the officer was using the work assignment as an excuse to get her alone outside, where Ann would be particularly vulnerable out of sight from the other detained women. As Ann pointed out, if she tried to run, the officer could say she tried to escape, which could result in a seven-year prison sentence. The officer also tried to coax Ann onto elevators, saying Ann had to clean them as part of her work assignment. Again, Ann refused because “she had me scared, I wasn’t goin’ in that elevator with her.”⁸ Ann also worried that if she entered the elevator first, the guard would push the button so that Ann would be on the moving elevator alone, allowing the guard to allege that Ann had tried to escape. In addition to these direct threats, guards also created an unsafe environment through their responses to

⁸ Ann’s comments about feeling threatened when the guard tried to isolate her in the elevator echoed allegations included in the MacArthur Justice Center’s February 2014 proposed class-action lawsuit. The lawsuit alleged that “correctional officers take inmates on ‘elevator rides’ – code for beatings out of view of security cameras” (Meisner and Schmadeke 2014).

women's interpersonal conflicts. As Ann explained, "A lot of fights break out, and the guards say they break it up quick, [but] they don't...if they like you, and you're in a fight, they'll protect you. But if...you're getting the best of the other one, they will back up and let you just dog walk that person. Beat 'em down bad before they break it up." The guards' absolute power contributed to women's overall vulnerability to and experiences of violence in the jail, which often mirrored the past violence women had survived, largely at the hands of men partners and community members. Regardless of the guard's gender, their actions within the bounds of the jail's organizational logic paralleled the gendered power dynamics women experienced in past abusive relationships and situations.

Jail guards used abusive language and behavior in a larger context of deprivation that further dehumanized the women. Women's comments about food, mice, and cockroaches painted a picture of the degrading jail environment. Cold, thick bologna sandwiches that basically were inedible were a staple of the Cook County Jail diet, and other menu items were not much better. According to Ann, "They feed you garbage, basically. The food is horrible...The one meal is basically like cat food...I told them that, 'I ain't eatin' that...It's cat food. I won't even touch it.'" Women relied on family members and friends to add money to their accounts so that they could purchase food from commissary. As Nyla explained, "If you didn't make commissary, you were hungry." Commissary presented its own problems, though, as the high cost of food items depleted women's accounts, and the nutritional quality took a toll on women's health. Susan, a 59-year-old Black woman, already had high blood pressure when she arrived at

the jail. The amount of chips she ate from commissary raised her blood pressure even further, such that she had to go to the medical services division, where she learned that she also had a clogged artery. In short, the quality of the available food, as well as women's limited control over what they ate, were part of the routine "abasements" and "degradations" women endured (Goffman 1961:14).

While women typically noted that prison conditions were better than those at Cook County Jail, they still reported routine instances of violence and neglect, particularly related to guards' behavior, healthcare, and lack of services and programming. Chunky, a 56-year-old Black woman who had been imprisoned nine times, talked about prison guards' racism as particularly troubling. She noted that many of the guards came from central and southern parts of the state and interacted with the women based on racist and sexist stereotypes of the urban poor. Chunky observed this behavior grow worse over the years:

Those people [the guards], when I first went to prison, treated you like human beings...those people treated you better...if one of those officers cursed you and you wrote them up, they got talked to about that! Time off maybe. Now, they don't do nothin'. I heard 'em call 'em [women] niggers down there. I heard 'em call 'em bitches. "Oh you Black bitch!" Oh wow!

Beyond the guards' troubling behavior, Chunky drew attention to the lack of recourse women had when guards treated them inappropriately.

Tinybig also focused on this powerlessness when recounting a problem she had with a prison guard during her last incarceration. When I introduced the idea of "the state" at the beginning of our first interview, Tinybig interjected, "Let me talk about Illinois Department of Corrections, then." She specified that she wanted to talk about "the

people that have authorization over our lives when we're incarcerated." She recounted a time when a guard punished her by placing her in segregation after catching Tinybig "stealing" laundry detergent from the kitchen. After strip searching Tinybig and finding the detergent, the guard publicly announced medical information about her, explaining she had suspected Tinybig of stealing because Tinybig requested sanitary napkins daily due to a medical condition, for which she was receiving treatment. Tinybig was furious and humiliated:

The two don't go together. Why would you put my medical history out there like that? So that's what my grievance was about, for you to say in front of everybody about me askin' for pads every day. Ok, granted I got caught stealin', I own that! I'll take that bad 'cause that's mine. But there was nobody's business about me askin' you for pads everyday, because of my medical history. It doesn't bother me that I have it, but it wasn't nobody else's business to know that I spot and bleed every day...She didn't have no reason to do that.

Tinybig filed three separate grievances against the officer for disclosing her medical history, in which she requested not to have to work under this officer's supervision again. Prison administrators denied each one. During our interview, Tinybig pulled out a folder that contained all of her paperwork related to the grievances. She read the response to the first one: "According to Food Supervisor [officer's name], your shakedown was a result of reasonable suspicion, which turned out to be true. Professionalism was maintained during and after this time. Also please be advised that offenders are unable to dictate the placement of staff." Tinybig was frustrated that the response ignored her central request that the officer be reprimanded and instructed to "not discuss offender's medical history with others." She filed two more grievances to stress this point, but the authorities

dismissed both as “repeat grievances.” Tinybig realized that the unfair treatment was just a part of her sentence that she had to accept:

When I allowed myself to enter that institution, I opened myself up for the possibility of anything. And that’s just what that is. Once we’re inside that institution, even though there are laws, rules, rulebooks, regulations, all this stuff in order, everybody don’t follow them. Inmates, officers, majors, any of them. It’s not always to the T, and we’re subjected to that...Anybody havin’ a bad day, guess what, when they come to work, you gonna suffer the repercussions of it.

The guard’s behavior coupled with the lack of response from prison administrators silenced Tinybig and sent a message to her about the limited nature of her rights in prison.

Guards’ inattentiveness to women’s health needs created further harms. Even when women could afford the cost of a healthcare visit, which had increased from \$2 to \$5 per visit,⁹ guards could facilitate or hinder their ability to get an appointment. Chunky recalled having to wait to receive treatment for a stomach ulcer because her supervisor in the kitchen claimed that she was faking being sick in order to get out of work. It felt “like razor blades was in my stomach, my stomach hurt me so bad,” and by the time she saw a doctor, her “stool was completely black.” Chunky connected her experience of neglect to other women she knew who did not receive the care they needed while imprisoned and died shortly after their releases. Sharon, a 44-year-old African-American woman who had been incarcerated six times, also discussed the hardship of watching other women suffer from medical neglect and noted that she had seen many women die in prison, including a

⁹ The John Howard Association’s report on Decatur Correctional Center confirms that Illinois legislation (Public Act 097-0562) went into effect on January 1, 2012, raising the cost of visits from \$2 to \$5, and critiques the financial hardship it places on incarcerated women.

close friend who had asthma. Sharon suspected the guards assumed her friend was “faking” being ill:

She was tryin’ to tell the officer that she wasn’t feelin’ well, and they just ignored her and just left the door, and when they came back to her door, she was dead. So, in prison they is so cruel to you. They just look at us like we ain’t nobody and we don’t have rights. And it’s, it’s sad to say when you get incarcerated how they treat you. Because we human, too, we just made a mistake, and I’m pretty sure y’all made mistakes, too. So it’s sad when especially with the sick people, they do them so wrong.

Similar to Tinybig’s conclusion, Sharon understood that she and all of the women with whom she was incarcerated could expect to be treated as disposable because of their “criminality.” As Davis and Shaylor (2001:9) note, medical neglect is part of the “habitual violence” of prison that impacts more than the individual woman who is denied treatment. They explain that “all women are subjected to [punishment] in an environment in which medical neglect is rampant. Many women are forced to watch other women deteriorate and sometimes die, and as a result must live in fear that they or someone they care about will be next” (Davis and Shaylor 2001:10).

Women also were sexually vulnerable in prison. For instance, New Life, a 30-year-old Black woman, discussed how one of the men guards flirted with her, commenting on how nice her hair looked and the tightness of her pants. She knew the risks of welcoming his advances, as women who were caught having sexual relations with officers faced a host of punishments – a transfer to the maximum-security prison, an increased sentence, time in segregation, loss of her job, and denial of visits with her family – and referred to his behavior as falling somewhere on the continuum of the “sexual harassment” she observed in prison. She commented, “I did see preying on the

weak.” Specifically, she referred to a different guard who began a “relationship” with one of the women and ultimately impregnated her. New Life viewed this woman as an easy target because of her long prison sentence and young age, and because she was “starving for attention...and she used to always talk about how she was so addicted to sex.” Ann W. also noted the imbalance of power that characterized guards’ sexual advances toward and involvement with incarcerated women: “I don’t think that’s right... it was sad because these are authority figures, these people were over us, and they was being grimy like that.” New Life’s and Ann W.’s assessments of these situations echoed what federal law stipulates: “all sexual contact between prison staff and an inmate is abuse; ‘consent’ is an irrelevant concept when one person holds tremendous power over the other’s life, including the power to reward or retaliate” (Flavin 2009:130). Rooted in a deep history of racist and sexist assumptions about women of color’s hypersexuality and thus sexual availability, sexual harassment and abuse were yet additional forms of racialized and gendered violence with which women contended and that stripped women of their identities as human beings deserving of rights, while labeling them as “criminals,” deserving of punishment and abuse.

Giving birth on the inside. Some of the most graphic recollections of violence women described centered on their experiences of giving birth while incarcerated. Four women talked about this experience in detail, two of whom (Lynn and Corrine) had been shackled during labor. In 1999, Illinois became the first state in the country to ban the shackling of women during labor, but officials have routinely violated the ban since its passage (CLAIM 2011). In 2012, a federal court approved a \$4.1 million settlement for a

class-action lawsuit filed on behalf of women who had been shackled during childbirth while detained at Cook County Jail (Fettig 2012). Lynn, a 33-year-old Caucasian woman, was a member of this lawsuit and began receiving payments from the settlement at the time of our interviews. Corrine had given birth prior to 1999, meaning that her experience of giving birth while in shackles was not illegal.

Ranisha, a 34-year-old Black woman, gave birth to her youngest daughter after the 1999 ban went into effect and was not shackled during labor. Yet, her account shows how traumatic her labor experience still was, despite the protection this important legislation offered. While correctional officers and hospital staff members did not technically violate any laws, they still managed to treat her in punitive ways that reasserted “criminal” as her master status, even when becoming a mother. This treatment began in jail, when Ranisha went into labor while in a cell in the jail’s medical unit:

When I went into labor, the officer had left and went on a whole other unit. So my water bag busts, so I’m in the room panickin’, beatin’ on the door, the nurse don’t have a key, and by the time I got downstairs blood is everywhere and my water bag is busted. It was just, it was a mess...I panicked a lot. Because it was like...I didn’t know if she was gonna come out right then, cuz the pain was like that strong...and then my water bag had bust, and...I didn’t wanna have a dry birth. So, then you had to wait for the ambulance to come to the jail. Then you have to wait for them to check you, and I’m like, “Why do you wanna stick your fingers in me if my water bag is bust?” So I, I went through a lot, I went through, oh, it was crazy.

Her status as an incarcerated pregnant woman contributed to the substandard, punitive medical treatment she received once she finally reached the hospital:

By us comin’ from jail, they [hospital staff] treat us different. You know, the care is way different...if I would’ve been comin’ from outside I wouldn’t have to ask...“Could you change my bed?” You know, cuz I, like, bled all over everything. You know, I just had a baby. Um, I would

have to wait hours or next shift, you know, so the care is very different. Very different...Um, food. You know, you like, um, “Did they,” you can see the cart go past, so you like, “Oh, okay, maybe,” so like 30 to 40 minutes later you have to ask, um, “Did my?” “Oh, we forgot to order you.” How did you forget to order my food? You know, or if I needed sanitary napkins. I’m steady, “Can someone please bring me sanitary napkins?” Three, four, five nurses then walk past.

The hospital staff members also delayed giving Ranisha an epidural. According to Ranisha, “It was like I laid there in pain for like, almost three full hours. I had to start like actually knockin’ stuff over. You know, in order to like, I’m like, ‘Are you serious?’ So, it was like, it was painful.” Ranisha’s descriptions of medical neglect and outright cruelty showed how, despite protective legislation, correctional officers’ and healthcare professionals’ behavior ensured she gave birth as a “criminal” and not as a mother.

Ranisha already had an open case with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) when she gave birth to her youngest daughter. While she was detained at Cook County Jail, DCFS removed her other two children from their father’s care and placed them with a foster family. Although Ranisha’s DCFS caseworker initially told her that she and her newborn daughter would move from the hospital to a residential drug treatment program for women and infants, DCFS ultimately placed her newborn with another foster family. Ranisha returned to jail less than 24 hours after giving birth, struggling with the depression of losing her daughter:

Actually, I had like detached myself because I knew that I was going back to jail...when I went to the nursery before I left, I...remember seeing her laying there and I’m like, you know, “This is a bunch of bullshit.” And, you know, having to go back to jail and just sit around and look, and you know, mind wandering, and it’s crazy.

Ranisha's case shows how the criminal legal system's organizational logic can follow women across institutional spaces. Public institutions (i.e. Cook County Jail, the public hospital, and DCFS) converged to punish Ranisha in various ways for her explicit "crimes" of theft and drug use, and for her implicit crime of being a "bad mother."¹⁰

As Goffman (1961:28) showed with his concept of the "mortification of the self," the violence and oppressive control women experienced in jail and prison broke down their very identities, regularly reminding them that, in the eyes of the state, they were nothing more than "criminals" and that they had no guaranteed rights. Chicken Wing perhaps most clearly summarized this aspect of imprisonment. She took a photograph of



Figure 7. Bus ride to work

a bus (Figure 7) to represent her long ride to work, which she thoroughly enjoyed: "I love lookin' out the window...at people. I just enjoy life...The long ride...Freedom. Can't take that, you can't buy

that." Her reflections led her to consider how she still was learning how to interact with people:

¹⁰ I further discuss the ways women experienced judgment specifically as mothers in Ch. 5 "A Raced and Gendered Moral Order."

I'm learnin' how to talk to people, because I'm just gettin' out. I been had a guard up for 20 years...I had to keep a false flag up all the time, you know what I'm sayin'? I had to pretend all the time...I had to put a mask up. I couldn't be myself, you know, 'cause I don't want to get hurt...I keep people away from me. I keep a guard up at all time. And now I'm just...tryin' to let that guard go down, you know what I'm sayin'? I'm tryin' to trust people more. I'm tryin' to talk to people more gentler. You know what I'm sayin'? 'Cause ...you got to survive in prison. You can't be no punk. You know. You can't be cryin' and all that. You know, you got to hold them emotions inside, you know, you can't let that side of you show!

Chicken Wing described a challenging process of having to deinstitutionalize herself after surviving 21 years in prison. Her reflection spoke to the harmful nature of incarceration and its undercurrent of violence. The daily work she did to survive potentially dangerous situations forced her to become someone else (“I couldn't be myself”). Now on the outside, she embraced learning how to be her “self.” In short, she was working to shed the “criminal” label under which she had lived for the past two decades.

Turning “Addicts” into “Criminals”

As the first part of this chapter shows, the violence of criminalization and incarceration attacked women at the level of their identity. In this part of the chapter, I show how the criminal legal system took the additional step of linking women's “criminal” identities with their “addict” identities (Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Kaye 2012; Leverentz 2014; McCorkel 2013). Through the services available in jails and prisons, the system presented sobriety and faith as ways for women to overcome the “criminal” label and move beyond the painful experiences they faced on the streets and within the system. I argue that by linking the “criminal” and “addict” identities and

through the services it offered, the system effectively labeled women as lifelong “criminals” (Leverentz 2014; McCorkel 2013).

Every woman who participated in this project had spent time in jail or prison on charges stemming from their drug or alcohol use. Even when their charges were not explicitly drug charges (such as possession, manufacturing of a controlled substance, intent to distribute), women were charged for behaviors in which they engaged to be able to access drugs (such as retail theft, burglary, sex work). Thus, upon arrest, women knew that their criminalization stemmed from their drug use. As they moved through the criminal legal system, the comments they heard from officials within the system, as well as the available programs and services they encountered, reinforced this linking of “criminality” and “addiction.” Women spent much of their incarcerated time learning how not just to control their drug use, but to end it for good. The key to avoiding the “revolving door” of jail and prison was to stop using drugs.

The Dominant 12-Step Logic

While women encountered limited services during their imprisonment, at a minimum, they had access to 12 Step meetings, most commonly Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Even when women participated in more comprehensive drug treatment programming that incorporated group and individual therapy, such as Division 17 at Cook County Jail, 12 Step meetings were a fundamental part of the treatment. The 12-Step approach is *the* dominant drug treatment model within the criminal legal system (Dodes and Dodes 2014; Petersilia 2003; Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011; Tiger 2013). Joan Petersilia (2003:97) notes, “The vast majority (nearly 75

percent) of drug treatment in prisons consists of inmate self-help groups, specifically Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).” Susan Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk (2011:308, 312) point out that 12-Step principles “hold a uniquely institutionalized status within the correctional system” and that the “model so permeates the entire U.S. correctional-therapeutic system that it is not possible to untangle its impact.” The 12-Step approach established its dominant position despite a lack of rigorous scientific research documenting its effectiveness (Dodes and Dodes 2014; Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011). In fact, based on their review of available research studies, Lance Dodes and Zachary Dodes (2014) argue that AA’s success rate is surprisingly low: between five and eight percent. Furthermore, they point out that the “rate of spontaneous remission,” meaning the “percentage of alcoholics [who] get better without any treatment at all,” is between 3.7 and 7.4 percent, suggesting that some of AA’s documented success might have little to do with AA itself (Dodes and Dodes 2014:53).

One reason for 12 Step’s dominance within the criminal legal system is that it is “a low-cost approach to drug treatment” (Leverentz 2014:13). The model explicitly rejects professionalism and is rooted in self-help and peer support (Dodes and Dodes 2014; Leverentz 2014; Tiger 2013). Longer-term members, who have established significant amounts of “clean” time and have worked through the 12 Steps, take on the role of sponsor as they mentor newer members who are just beginning their recovery processes. Members, not licensed drug treatment specialists, facilitate 12 Step meetings, where people share their personal stories of drug use and recovery. The idea is that

people learn from and support one another, through sharing their experiences and how they have persevered to overcome “the wreckage of their pasts.” In this voluntary, peer-support model, no one is paid for the work they do as sponsors or meeting facilitators. AA and NA meetings essentially are a free service that jails and prisons can offer by allowing facilitators to come in and run meetings for those who are incarcerated. When state and local money runs out for contracted programming, 12 Step meetings can continue.

Twelve Step’s dominance within the criminal legal system also stems from its dominance within the larger U.S. culture (Dodes and Dodes 2014; Tiger 2013). Its approach, what I refer to as the “12-Step logic,” thoroughly resonates with larger U.S. cultural ideals of individualism and personal responsibility (Leverentz 2014; Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011; Tiger 2013). The 12-Step logic provides a roadmap for how to do this recovery work: following the 12 Steps as outlined in the *Big Book*, AA’s foundational text. In sum, individuals must admit that they are powerless over their addiction and turn “our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*” (A.A. World Services 2002, emphasis in original). They also must make “a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves,” followed by admitting their wrongs, being ready for God to remove all “defects of character,” and asking God to do so (A.A. World Services 2002). Individuals then must make a list of everyone whom they have harmed and make amends to these people. Finally, they must continue the ongoing work of taking personal inventory, seeking “to improve our conscious contact with God *as we*

understood Him,” and “carrying this [the 12-Step] message” to others (A.A. World Services 2002, emphasis in original).

The steps indicate how the 12-Step logic defines addiction as a “disease of the will” (Tiger 2013:84). To overcome addiction, individuals must fix the personal flaws and inadequacies that contribute to their excessive drug and alcohol use. Per 12-Step logic, looking to external causes, like poverty, trauma, or loss, is a way to make excuses for one’s behavior and to avoid dealing with the *real* source of the disease – the self (Hoffman 2006; McCorkel 2013; Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011). The real work of recovery requires monitoring and changing one’s thinking and behavior, through the rigorous and continuous practice of the 12 Steps.

Numerous scholars note that the 12-Step logic is inadequate because it “obscures the structural conditions” that lead to addiction and criminalization, particularly for women (Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011:326, see also Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Leverentz 2014; McCorkel 2013; Tallen 1990). Yet the logic is so entrenched in American institutions, particularly the criminal legal system, precisely because it obscures structural inequality and promotes personal responsibility through a depoliticized discourse. Drawing on the work of Nikolas Rose (1999) and Barbara Cruikshank (1999), Lynne A. Haney (2010:117-118) makes a similar point:

As Nikolas Rose suggests, therapeutics is now less preoccupied with managing social problems and more concerned with governing the ‘passions of self-identified individuals’ – those who have fallen out of ‘citizen-forming’ networks and into excessive lifestyles...As political theorist Barbara Cruikshank argues, therapeutics now aims at self-governance – forming the route to self-esteem, self-realization, and self-mastery. So freedom from vice is equated with self-determination, while the refashioning of the self becomes a mode of empowerment.

Kerwin Kaye (2012) also explains how court-mandated drug treatment programs, rooted in AA principles, focus on behavior modification to disabuse participants of all signs of their association with the “drugs lifestyle.” Kaye (2012) argues that these programs are the latest attempt of public institutions to coerce self-discipline of poor people and people of color to bring them in line with the low-wage labor market, as he draws striking parallels between dominant descriptions of addiction and the “culture of poverty.” In short, the 12-Step logic offers a mechanism to instill “self-discipline” while maintaining the status quo (Foucault 1977; Kaye 2012). It is an effective form of therapeutic governance.

Importantly, the 12-Step logic also defines recovery from addiction as a moral and spiritual project, in part through the religious tone infused throughout the 12 Steps. Although proponents of the 12 Steps stress that references to “a Power greater than ourselves” and “God” do not necessarily refer to a Christian god or even a religious being, a wealth of research traces AA’s roots to the Oxford Group, an early 20th century fundamentalist religious organization (Dodes and Dodes 2014; Rudy and Greil 1988; Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011; Tallen 1990). More importantly for my research, the women who participated in this project identified deepening their relationships with God as a fundamental part of working through the 12 Steps. In contrast to the criminalized women in Sered and Norton-Hawk’s (2011:310) research who described AA/NA as unhelpful because it failed to address their real needs (i.e. housing, healthcare, reconnecting with children, safety from abusive partners) and the “structural violence” in

their lives, the women with whom I worked largely embraced the 12-Step logic, particularly its religious focus.

Embracing the 12 Steps. As women discussed their last incarcerations in jail and prison, they often noted how it was a time when they were ready to stop using drugs and were open to learning how to do so. All but three women embraced the 12-Step logic as a helpful tool to manage their recovery from drugs or alcohol.¹¹ When discussing the 12 Steps, it was almost impossible to disentangle the religious components that resonated

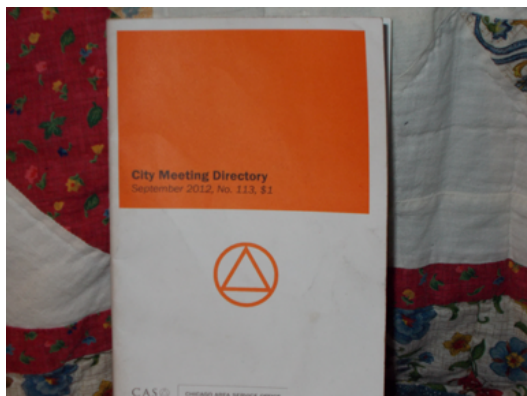


Figure 8. 12 Step meeting directory



Figure 9. Religious books

with them. Tinybig used photographs to illustrate the connection between the 12 Steps and her faith. When arranging her photos for our photo-elicitation interview, she explained that the photo of her 12 Step Meeting City Directory (Figure 8) went along with her photo of her religious books, specifically *The Life Recovery Bible*, the Holy Bible, and an “Our Daily Bread” booklet (Figure 9):

I put these two [photos] together...because, like I said...it’s a format that some kind of way goes hand in hand...I admitted there was problems with my addiction, that my life had become a mess, but...once I got the manageability right, I still gotta admit that I’m powerless. And without a

¹¹ In Ch. 6 “Managing the Moral Order,” I explain how women who did not identify as drug “addicts” negotiated available recovery scripts to suit their needs.

God of my understanding, I'm gon' remain powerless. Where as now I have some deliverance that I see...[I] came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity...all it is, is havin' had the spiritual awakening as a result of these steps. It all reverts back to the Bible to me.

For Tinybig, working the 12 Steps and deepening her faith were completely intertwined, as she could not reference one without the other. In accordance with the first two of the 12 Steps, admitting that she was powerless and that her life had become unmanageable, as well as believing that God could “restore” her, marked the beginning of Tinybig’s recovery process, which began in prison. She ordered *The Life Recovery Bible*, a book that connects each of the 12 Steps to corresponding Scriptures, during her last incarceration and continued to use it as a helpful resource to guide her recovery.

Like Tinybig, other women drew explicit connections between the 12 Steps and the Bible. While explaining why AA is such an effective model, Cathy said, “Rules and regulations. What do you think the Ten Commandments are? They’re rules of how you should live your life! Just like the steps of AA, they’re rules of how you should live your life.” Ms. Fields, a 47-year-old African-American woman and an avid supporter of the 12 Steps, noted, “the Big Book tells us that, you know, either God is everything or He’s nothing.” Even Jean, a 20-year-old African-American woman who did not identify as having a problem with drugs or alcohol, valued the religious aspects of the 12 Steps and the structure they provided: “I like the 12 Steps. Out of any program, I thoroughly enjoy the 12 Steps. I think everybody should live the 12 Steps ’cause they’re just good for you...They come outta the Bible. You know, how you should live your life, you know?...Good stuff! Everybody should do it.”

Susan also made an explicit connection between her relationship with God and her recovery work. She participated in the drug treatment program in Division 17 at Cook County Jail and explained, “that’s where I learned, you know, in your addiction...that you cannot fight no addiction without God first.” Each morning in the program, Susan recalled the other participants and her reciting the mission statement and “giving thanks to God, you know, for waking me up...and help me stay sober, you know, during the day. Although we knew we was gonna be sober because we was locked up, but, you know, we always would...thank God for just, you know, keeping us alive.” Similarly, Denise, who also participated in Division 17, described her recovery as a partnership with God in which He would keep her sober if she did her part:

I know that I didn’t have no control [over my drug use] at all. And I still don’t have none. I still don’t have no control...It’s a daily reprieve. I always ask God to keep me sober, help me. Yeah, because I can’t do it without Him, and He told me, “As long as you trust that I will keep you sober, I’m gonna keep you sober. As long as you don’t go back and do what you was doin’, because then you’re takin’ your will back. I can’t keep you sober if you’re steady runnin’ in the crackhouse.” You know what I’m sayin’? So...I got work to do, too.

Denise’s partnership with God followed what the first three of the 12 Steps prescribe: admitting powerlessness and turning her will and life over to God. It also required that she change her behavior and avoid the “people, places, and things,” a common 12-Step phrase, associated with her past drug use. Embracing the 12-Step logic, women again and again rooted their recovery in their relationships with God.

Religious Narratives of Redemption

In addition to AA and NA meetings, women commonly identified church services and Bible study classes as two of the limited services that consistently were available

during their incarcerations. Similar to 12 Step meetings, these religious offerings are volunteer-based services that jails and prisons can continue to offer, even as state and local funding for programming dries up. Beyond simply providing women with something to do and breaking up the monotony of imprisonment, religious services gave women further opportunities to deepen their relationships with God. Moon, a 40-year-old African-American woman who was last incarcerated for a violation of parole, explained how different churches from throughout the state would come in to the prison to offer the weekly church service. While she liked some churches more than others, she “got a message” out of every service:

I made myself go because I needed that to help me get through the week, some spiritual food. I needed to be like spiritually fed, you know? And it seemed like it just didn't make it so hard to get through that week, and before you knew it another week would come and then here come the church I really like, and here come the other church I really like, you know?

New Life limited her attendance of weekly church services during her last incarceration.

The chaplain who ran most of the services discriminated against women whom she suspected were lesbian or bi-sexual and often made anti-gay comments. According to New Life, “Every service, she makes sure she says somethin’ about that. ‘And before we close, just let me say this is not the place to be meeting your girlfriend or you boo boo.’ Baby, we just got through praisin’ the Lord! Who are, you know?” While New Life thought being gay or bi-sexual was a sin, she felt it was wrong to judge or discriminate against anyone based on their sexual orientation. She commented, “Baby, we all are sinners. No sin is greater than the other.” To avoid what she viewed as the chaplain’s hypocrisy, New Life only attended church services that an outside reverend offered once

a month, as well as weekly Bible study classes. She recalled, “I was deep in my Bible, prayed, and read the Bible.”

As I discussed in the first half of this chapter, the violence of criminalization and incarceration made imprisonment a dehumanizing experience for women. Jail- and prison-based religious services provided a humanizing discourse that women could use to make sense of their circumstances and that instilled hope for their futures. As such, women frequently noted that God had saved their lives through arrest and incarceration.¹² Prior to her last arrest, Rose was homeless and using drugs again. She recalled, “I really felt like I wanted to die...but, I also knew that, that ain’t how God sees everything. You know. It’s, it’s not up to me to say that I want to die, so. And I walked around like that feelin’ like that for a while.” She asked God to help her, and He did:

Well, actually it was the police. It was the police because...I got arrested for these certain amount of bags that I had on me. And...if it was [not] for them, you know, who knows where I’d be today?...I think that God sent them, you know, for that to happen. All the time that I was tellin’ Him that I was tired, you know, didn’t have nowhere to go, I didn’t want to live my life like this, so, He just put me in a situation and a place to think about all of it. You know.

CR: And where was that?

Rose: Prison. Prison. From the County [jail] to the prison...by the grace of God, He gave me these amount of months, you know, to think about it. And, and I thought about it strongly...I thought about it real, real strongly after I got in jail and a couple of weeks went by and stuff, and I started gettin’ my strength back and stuff, and, and the fog startin’ to clear up.

¹² Kaye (2012), Leverentz (2014), and McCorkel (2013) also note hearing similar comments from the criminalized men and women who participated in their research projects.

Faye, a 46-year-old Black woman, described a similar process of growing tired in her addiction and turning to God for relief. She commented, “You get tired of that pain...Tired of goin’ to jail...Tired of people tellin’ you what to do, what you can’t do, and how to eat and all that. Tired of being homeless and, you know, all that. Out there, you get tired of that. Nuh-uh. I’m through, I’m done. God help me.” Like Rose, she felt that God answered her call for help through arrest: “I looked in the mirror and said, ‘God help me.’ And that night I was in jail.” Ann W. recalled the same progression of growing tired of using drugs and “tired [of] the pain. The things that I did in my life, the pain...bein’ homeless with my kids, by myself, sleepin’ on the train, sleepin’ under Wacker Drive.” After her last arrest, she “felt like I was rescued...God saved me from myself, because the stuff that I was doin’ out there, you know, and to me that’s why I said I felt like I was rescued ’cause it, I got another chance.” Even The Lioness, who was choked by a jail guard and then convicted of a violent felony for defending herself, shared the religious narrative of redemption:

Really today I can say it was a foolish thing that happened, but it saved my life, because...when I was incarcerated, I lost a lot of people. People died, and I probably still would’ve been active in my addiction...it was a possibility that I might’ve died. So I look at the bad and think of it as good, because God saved me and gave me a chance. And today I’m a better person.

Rather than view this incident solely as an injustice that limited her housing and employment options, The Lioness worked to understand how these negative circumstances ultimately reflected God’s concern for her life.

Taken together, these recollections show the immense pain and overwhelming hopelessness that emerged from the intersection of drug use and structural violence. For

these women, the alternative to incarceration was death, either as a result of drug use or the routine violence they faced. Their limited life chances reflect the social reality of living in disadvantaged communities in the U.S. “prison nation,” the result of “ideological and policy shifts that have led to the increased criminalization of disenfranchised communities of color, more aggressive law enforcement strategies for norm-violating behavior, and an undermining of civil and human rights of marginalized groups” (Richie 2012:3). In the wake of disinvestment from public institutions and social welfare programs, jails and prisons have stepped in to fill the gaps (Davis 1988; Hays 2003; Richie 2012; Wacquant 2009). As a result, women were caught up in a hostile system that demanded they stop using drugs. Religious discourses provided them with a tool to take ownership of their recovery, without justifying the criminal legal system’s violent and unfair treatment. Although the system judged and punished them for their drug use and mandated that they get “clean,” it was God who offered a way for them to save their lives. While the state labeled women as “criminals” and “addicts,” religious discourses, accessed via 12 Step meetings and religious services, provided women with an opportunity to move beyond these stigmatized identities.

Lifelong Personal Transformation

The overarching task women faced was one of personal transformation, as they tried to distance themselves from their past “criminal” and “addict” identities. In the context of jails and prisons, this transformation was intensely individualistic. Lynne Haney and András Tapolcai (2010:197) explain in their comparative reflection of

facilitating creative writing classes in an alternative-to-incarceration program for mothers and children in California and in a maximum-security women's prison in Hungary:

[P]rison cultures...have a profound influence on inmates' imaginations, shaping how female inmates envision their past and future. They provide narratives through which inmates filter their experiences, hopes, and dreams. And they structure the frames available for inmates to interpret who they are and who they might want to become.

Haney and Tapolcai (2010) observed that women in the United States only were able to use the "I" voice and tell their personal stories in the narratives they wrote, whereas women in Hungary did not write about their personal experiences but rather used the third person voice. Haney and Tapolcai (2010:200) connected these patterns to the distinct prison cultures of the two sites and thus the "available scripts." In the United States, women participated in a therapeutic program that focused on "self-talk" and introspection to overcome their personal failings, and "[t]heir stories focused on the emergence of new selves freed from old pathologies and ways of being" (Haney and Tapolcai 2010:197). In Hungary, women did not have access to therapeutic programming; rather their days consisted of long, hard labor. As such, their writing became a form of "escape," as they used their available prison scripts, which "emphasized the social and relational...[and] gave rise to an imagining of alternative relationships and experiences that bypassed the individual" (Haney and Tapolcai 2010:197). The Hungarian women were "adept at imagining the other and constructing story lines" in which the main characters were fictionalized "others" rather than the women themselves (Haney and Tapolcai 2010:201). For instance, one woman wrote a novel in which "an underpaid computer programmer becomes entangled with the

Budapest mob when he accepts a friend's offer to 'make extra money on the side'"

(Haney and Tapolcai 2010:202).

The women who participated in this project shared "self-talk" narratives, which grew out of the individualistic 12-Step logic and religious discourses that shaped the jail and prison cultures they encountered. The moralizing messages that undergird the 12-Step logic and religious discourses also made the task of personal transformation a moral project. Women had to transform not only from "criminal" "addicts" to "non-criminal," "recovering addicts," but also from women who had strayed from God's path, to women who had turned their will over to God. Jail and prison cultures encouraged an individualistic, depoliticized understanding of the causes of women's imprisonment and their possibilities after release. Although women were critical of the criminal legal system and the punitive, unfair treatment they experienced, most seemed ultimately to embrace the system's discourse of personal transformation achieved through the mechanisms of 12-Step logic and religious redemption.

The recovery and personal transformation work that women began in jail and prison was just the beginning of a lifelong project. The 12-Step logic taught women that they never would be former addicts or ex-addicts. As "recovering addicts" (never recovered "addicts"), they always would be at risk of becoming active drug users once again. One slip-up could lead them back to being a practicing or active "addict." Thus, they could never casually drink alcohol or use drugs. Doing so would wake up the "phenomenal craving," meaning the uncontrollable desire to continue drinking and using, over which they were powerless. Because the criminal legal system so thoroughly linked

women's "criminality" with their drug use, the implicit message was that women always would be at risk of also becoming "criminals" once again. As such, post-incarceration, women faced the lifelong task of not only performing their recovery, but also of performing their "non-criminality."

Andrea Leverentz (2014) points out that there is a parallel between the way society views "addicts" and "prisoners and offenders":

[Just as] being an alcoholic...is an identity that is not reversible or removable...once one has gone to prison, one can be an ex-prisoner or an ex-offender and one can stop offending, but one cannot return to a pre-prisoner identity (Ebaugh 1988; Maruna 2011). In both tangible and intangible ways, those convicted of criminal offenses continue to experience the invisible punishments or collateral consequences of their convictions (Travis 2002).

Based on my research, I argue that this relationship between "addict" and "offender" is more than a parallel. These identities are interconnected because of political choices to criminalize drugs as a strategy to contain poor people and people of color whom the dominant economic order views as a threat because they are surplus labor (Bumiller 2008; Davis 2003; Wacquant 2009, 2012a, 2012b). They are further connected through jail and prison services that offer the 12-Step logic as a tool for women to "reform" their drug use and thus their "criminal" ways. Thus, more than just a noteworthy parallel exists between addiction and criminalization when women talk about never becoming ex-"addicts." Their comments indicate that they never will be ex-"offenders." I take up this relationship among recovery and "criminality" in the next chapter.

Disparity of Post-Incarceration Services

As women approached the end of their sentences, they prepared to continue their recovery and personal transformation work on the outside. While not all women had to move to a recovery home or some type of residential facility, all but two women who participated in this project had done so after their last incarceration. Women who voluntarily moved into recovery homes explained that they did so in order to stay on the right track. They were concerned that moving in with family members, partners, or friends would be a distraction and make them complacent or lead them back to their old behaviors. Women worked with the prison's field services unit to be connected to a recovery home that had an opening in the city or town to which they were moving.

There was a great deal of disparity among the recovery homes, and it seemed like the luck of the draw in terms of where women ended up. One recovery home, Growing Stronger, was extremely well-resourced and, through a number of organizational partnerships, provided comprehensive services to women, including an adult high school; pre-high school classes; job training that offered certification in fields such as culinary arts, sanitation, and building maintenance; intensive outpatient drug treatment; individual and group therapy; case management; housing assistance; and job leads, even though these jobs often were temporary. Volunteers frequently came to the home to drop off donations, facilitate computer classes, provide tutoring, facilitate AA and NA meetings on-site, and offer "spa days." Residents also had the option to participate in daylong and overnight spiritual retreats. The home was in good physical condition and located in a relatively safe neighborhood. There was no limit to how long women could reside at the

home, and a few women I met had resided there for over a year. Additionally, women did not have to pay rent or turn over their LINK cards (i.e. food stamps).

Women had to take some initiative to get into Growing Stronger. Every woman I interviewed who had lived there heard about the home from another incarcerated woman, family member, or friend who recommended the program. No one identified the prison field services unit as making the placement. A woman had to contact Growing Stronger on her own to express her interest, complete a seven-page written application, and complete a telephone interview with the director. If the director approved her and if there was an available bed at the time of her release, she could move into Growing Stronger.

Growing Stronger was a bit of an outlier, though, as most of the recovery homes I heard about and visited seemed to have far fewer resources and did not offer residents as wide a range of services. Some homes were in need of physical repairs, and women reported problems with rodents. Many homes were located in neighborhoods where drug deals were carried out regularly in the open. As a standard practice, recovery homes required women to turn over their LINK cards at the beginning of each month so that staff could use women's food stamps to purchase food for the entire house. Many homes also required women to begin paying rent (in the \$300-\$400 range) after the first 90 days of their stays. Residents and staff members explained that the Illinois Department of Corrections pays for someone who is on parole to reside at a recovery home or treatment facility for 90 days. Once that time runs out, many recovery homes hold residents responsible to fill the funding gap. This rent requirement contributed to women's housing instability and pressured them to quickly secure some type of income in order to pay the

recovery home, rent a room somewhere else, pay family members or friends to allow them to stay with them, or pay for their own apartment. Despite turning over their LINK cards and paying rent, the homes did not provide women with personal hygiene items and toiletries.

The stark disparity among recovery homes became apparent to me when I was meeting briefly with Red at Starting Again to collect her memory card in preparation for our photo-elicitation interview the next day. Red shyly asked if I could provide her with the \$20 gift card participants received as compensation for each interview right then instead of during our interview tomorrow. She was out of toilet paper and did not have any money at the moment to buy more, as the recovery home did not provide toilet paper beyond the one roll residents received when they first arrived. I told Red I was sorry but that I did not have the gift card with me. I internally debated for a second whether I should offer her the small packet of tissue that I carried in my bag. I did not want to insult her, but if her situation was as desperate as it seemed, I thought she might appreciate the tissue. I made the offer, and she accepted the tissue. I was stunned. It seemed inconceivable to me that Red was struggling to meet a need as basic as having toilet paper. "This would never happen at Growing Stronger," I thought to myself. A couple of months later, a similar incident occurred when I arrived at the same recovery home to pick up a memory card from Stacey. When I walked upstairs, I overheard her heated telephone conversation with someone at the Social Security office. Stacey's application was pending, and she had no income. When she ended the call, she apologized for keeping me waiting and explained that she was frustrated because she had no money to

buy the things she needed, like toilet paper. Like Red, she explained that toilet paper was not something the recovery home provided. The lack of toilet paper made sense to me some time later during an informal conversation with Starting Again's director. After discussing a recent fundraiser for the recovery home, she causally mentioned that IDOC was six months behind on paying her. "No wonder residents have to supply their own toilet paper," I thought to myself.

In short, women faced similar challenges regarding recovery and personal transformation once they left prison but encountered widely different resources while trying to move beyond the "criminal and "addict" labels the criminal legal system imposed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that women's experiences with arrest, courts, and incarceration were parts of a dehumanizing and violent process that reduced women's identities to that of "criminal." I also argued that the criminal legal system linked women's "criminal" identities with their "addict" identities through the dominance of the 12-Step logic and religious narratives of redemption. Recovery and religion were the mechanisms available to women to begin their personal transformation processes, which were lifelong projects. As the 12-Step logic dictates, women always would be at risk of resuming drug use. Thus, as recovering "addicts," they always would have to guard against a return to their "addict" and, by extension, their "criminal" identities.

In the next chapter, I turn to how women continued their projects of personal transformation post-incarceration. The focus on recovery and religion persisted beyond

jail and prison walls, as women interacted with faith-based recovery homes and re-entry programs and continued to attend 12 Step meetings. I show how women encountered a distinct “post-incarceration moral order” after leaving jail and prison.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POST-INCARCERATION MORAL ORDER

When I sat down for my second interview with Red, a 41-year-old Puerto Rican woman who had been living at Starting Again since her release from prison about five months earlier, I was anxious to hear what she had to say about the photographs she took for this project. I had picked up her memory card the previous day and printed her photographs in advance. Many were dark and blurry, and most showed scenes at Starting Again. The pictures did not communicate any obvious messages to me, and I wondered what they meant to Red. As she explained each image, I realized that they vividly captured what it felt like for her to adjust to life after prison, particularly life at the recovery home.

Two photographs, in particular, highlighted how religion and recovery structured Red's post-incarceration experiences. When reflecting on a photograph she took of Starting Again's exterior (Figure 10), Red commented: "It looks like a castle. So it reveals a second chance in life, to be honest with you...And, um, and just thinking of a castle just reminds me of God, you know. I mean...like His mother, she's the queen, and it just reminds me of just a castle. It just looks like a castle." Her explanation of how the building's architecture reminded her of a castle quickly revealed a religious association as she connected the royal figures associated with a castle with the Virgin Mary. As I learned throughout our interviews, God was so central to Red's experience at Starting

Again that the building, itself, embodied God's presence. Red also took photos of the inside of Starting Again, including the staircase that led to the second floor (Figure 11).



Figure 10. Starting Again exterior



Figure 11. Starting Again staircase

She explained that the picture showed, “Climbing the ladder, like 12 Steps, ’cause this is a place, you know, that provides 12-Step routines and helps you through them. So that’s our ladder... 12 Steps of recovery.” Like her relationship with God, recovery from drug use was such a focus in Red’s life that Starting Again’s building also embodied the 12-Step logic. What to me initially seemed like generic images of the outside and inside of a building, to Red were representations of the organizing principles in her life. Her photos helped me to recognize a critical theme that was emerging across the interviews: how recovery homes and reentry programs extended the discourses women encountered in jail and prison by presenting religion and recovery (specifically the 12-Step logic) as mechanisms to manage their lives after incarceration.

In the previous chapter, I explained how the criminal legal system creates lifelong criminals by labeling “addicts” as “criminals.” As many scholars have shown, the War on Drugs effectively has operated as a War on Women, particularly low-income and poor women of color living in disadvantaged communities (Bush-Baskette 1998; Chesney-

Lind 2003; Covington and Bloom 2003; Gaskins 2004; Richie 1996, 2001, 2012; Sokoloff 2007). The experiences of the women who participated in this project mirrored this national story in many respects. Because they were incarcerated for offenses stemming from their drug use, the criminal legal system linked women's drug use with their "criminality." The proliferation of 12 Step meetings in jail and prison contributed to this lifelong label of "criminal." Based on the 12-Step logic, an individual with drug issues never becomes a former "addict." She always will be a "recovering addict." In other words, the process of recovery never is complete, and "addicts" always are at risk of using again. In the previous chapter, I argued that because their incarceration is connected to their drug use, formerly incarcerated women always are subject to suspicion not only of relapse but also of "criminality."

In addition to the lifelong nature of addiction, the 12-Step logic also infuses a religious tone to recovery. According to this logic, people must accept that they are powerless over their addiction and give themselves over to a higher power. Although proponents of AA/NA stress that this higher power does not have to be a Christian god or even religious in any way, women consistently indicated a religious component to their recovery, as they linked their work to maintain sobriety with their work to develop a relationship with God. In the previous chapter, I argued that the availability of religious services and the prominence of 12 Step meetings in jail and prison provided a discourse that women used to make sense of both their drug use and incarceration. The discourse also provided women with a roadmap to follow upon their release. As multiple women explained, the real test to sobriety did not occur while a woman was in prison but started

once she was on the outside. As Ann W. commented, “You know how you can talk about somethin’ on the inside [while in prison], but you gotta really be about it on the outside, too. Cuz...on the inside it can be a illusion, a...fantasy. But the reality is really livin’ it, walkin’ it.” In order to avoid further trouble with the law, women knew that they had to continue to “do the footwork” of recovery after their release. The criminal legal system reinforced this lesson in a number of ways, such as by making regular attendance at 12 Step meetings a stipulation of women’s parole.

In this chapter, I examine the nature and impact of state interventions on women’s lives post-incarceration. Specifically, I focus on how recovery homes and reentry programs encouraged women’s use of the 12-Step logic and religion as mechanisms of personal transformation and on women’s assessments of these services. These organizations represented a softer arm of the state in comparison to the overtly hostile and punitive environment of jails and prisons. Yet, in many ways, these organizations extended the dominant discourses that women encountered while incarcerated. I argue that reentry programming advanced a more lasting version of the criminal legal system’s framework that linked women’s drug use, “criminality,” and moral worth. This programming aided women in their efforts to achieve personal transformation and did the ongoing work of teaching women a raced and gendered moral order. In developing this argument, I delineate the “three R’s” of the post-incarceration moral order: religion, recovery (from drug use), and rehabilitated femininity. I discuss the first two R’s (religion and recovery) in this chapter and the third R (rehabilitated femininity) in the next chapter. In examining women’s recovery experiences, I show how the criminal legal

system effectively criminalized recovery through intense monitoring and surveillance, threat of punishment, and actual punishment. The process of criminalizing recovery included a moral component, which shaped participants' understandings of their moral worth as connected to their sobriety and, by extension, to their "non-criminality." The relationship among moral worth, sobriety, and "non-criminality" shaped how women understood their very identities. I then focus on women's interpretations of their personal transformations out of drug use and "criminal" behavior. I conclude by highlighting the varied rituals within women's accounts of their personal transformations that signified their adaptation to this moral order.

The Post-Incarceration Moral Order

According to Robert Wuthnow (1987:14), moral order is "a set of definitions about what is proper to do and what is reasonable to expect." In other words, moral order represents the social norms and shared agreements and expectations between members of a group about how to act in and on the world. The concept of moral order was central in the work of Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology. Durkheim studied what mechanisms brought people together and kept them connected to one another. He also studied how groups responded to violations of the moral order, or acts of deviance. Deviant behavior represents a breach of the moral order and can create uncertainty about the strength of social bonds that hold a collective together. Groups use punishment to quell this uncertainty and reaffirm social solidarity (Durkheim 1893/1964). As Shadd Maruna (2011:5-6) explains:

Durkheim (1895/1966) argued that punishment...was not really directed at the individual being deterred or reformed, but rather was a public ritual

designed to restore a sense of social order to the wider community...Rather than being a *product* of collective morality, then, the reaction to crime is itself said to be the *source* of that morality, suggesting crime plays a key part in maintaining social order. (P. 5-6)

In short, punishment of the individual who violates the moral order reaffirms the “collective consciousness” (Durkheim 1912/1995) of the larger group that still abides by social norms, agreements, and expectations.

Applying Durkheim’s arguments about moral order to the experiences of formerly incarcerated women sheds light on the distinct experiences and challenges women faced upon leaving jail and prison. Prior to their incarceration, women had violated the wider, official moral order (i.e. social norms and conventions codified in laws and enforced through policing) through their drug use, although not the local order of drug users. While use of illicit drugs in itself was a breach of the wider moral order, women at times committed additional offenses, such as shoplifting or selling drugs. Often, these additional offenses were rooted in women’s drug use, as they tried to find ways to be able to purchase or acquire drugs. Arrest, pre-trial detention, and incarceration were typical punishments women experienced as consequences for violating this order. As detailed in the previous chapter, a host of additional punishments, such as removal of one’s children by the Department of Children and Family Services, physical violence at the hands of jail and prison guards, and poor medical care, accompanied the formal punishment of incarceration.

Upon completing their jail or prison sentences, women did not simply rejoin the moral order. Despite the criminal legal system’s and reentry industry’s focus on “reintegration,” women were not, in fact, reintegrating to the larger moral order, from

which they already had been locked out through racial and economic segregation (Bumiller 2013; Wacquant 2010). Beth E. Richie (2001) notes that part of the challenge women face post-incarceration is that they often return to the same disadvantaged communities where they lived prior to incarceration and thus encounter the same lack of resources while having the additional burdens that come with a criminal record. Specifically in Chicago, LaVigne et al. (2003) found that over half of the people leaving Illinois's prisons returned to Chicago, and of those individuals, 34% were concentrated in just six socially and economically disadvantaged communities on the city's south and west sides. In addition to these longstanding structural disadvantages, I argue that women encountered a distinct post-incarceration moral order. Probation and parole stipulations (such as wearing an electronic monitoring device on one's ankle at all times) and the rules and requirements of recovery homes and reentry programs (such as participation in meetings, support groups, individual counseling, vocational programs, remedial/high school/GED classes, and drug treatment) imposed high levels of surveillance and regulation on formerly incarcerated women. The task these women faced was not social reintegration. Rather, women had to learn the landscape of the post-incarceration moral order, that is, what the state and service providers required of them. They had to adapt to this moral order to avoid re-incarceration, access resources, and enjoy the support, camaraderie, and friendship that service providers and other formerly incarcerated women provided. In short, women lived in a post-incarceration moral order that was distinct from the moral order of larger society and faced distinct expectations and social norms. How and whether women were able to transition out of this post-incarceration

moral order to the moral order of larger society was unclear and is a point I return to in the final chapter.

Women leaving prison encountered a softer form of surveillance in recovery homes and reentry programs. These supportive programs stood in opposition to the explicitly punitive arms of the criminal legal system (Haney 1996, 2010). Most staff members at these programs recognized the criminal legal system as unfairly targeting low-income and poor women of color and prison as a traumatic experience that further disadvantaged women. Yet, these programs worked alongside the criminal legal system. As the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) paid for some residents' rent at recovery homes and through on-site meetings with parole officers and information sharing between recovery home staff and parole officers, these homes became sites of state surveillance.¹ The criminal legal system shaped the recovery homes in indirect ways, as well. For instance, during a conversation with an executive director of a non-profit organization that works with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, I mentioned the potential value of using a harm-reduction, rather than an abstinence-based, approach to drug use. She explained that such an approach actually would be a disservice to criminalized women. Women had to navigate and respond to a variety of institutions that imposed an abstinence-based model of recovery, such as the Department of Children

¹ I could not determine how much or how regularly recovery home staff members shared information with IDOC, specifically women's parole and probation officers. It seemed that recovery homes kept some information confidential but shared other information. For instance, if a woman had a positive drug test at a recovery home, it was not guaranteed that staff would inform her parole or probation officer. On the other hand, one woman discussed how a recovery home staff member notified her parole officer about a verbal disagreement they had, which resulted in the officer restricting the woman's curfew. Thus, it seemed uncertain to the women what information might be shared and when.

and Family Services (DCFS), probation, and parole. Thus, using a harm-reduction approach actually could set women up to fail with DCFS and IDOC, which could result in detrimental consequences, such as loss of parental rights and re-incarceration. Although the recovery homes and reentry programs operated independently of the criminal legal system and could set their own agendas, they were constrained by what the system demanded of women.

The compassion that recovery home staff members showed for women, as well as the helpful services they provided, encouraged many women to grow comfortable at the homes and willing to trust staff members with extremely personal information about their past traumas and current challenges. Many participants took photographs² of staff members and volunteers who had been especially supportive since their release from prison. This compassion was incredibly powerful, particularly for women who had not felt cared for and supported for some time.

Moon reflected on a photograph she asked someone to take of her and two volunteers who regularly came to the recovery home where she resided. When I asked her why the picture was important, she explained:

Because these two ladies always be tryin' to help me. They always try to help me, and she's so encouragin'. She always got positive words to say to me, and I like that. That's somethin' I always wanted was somebody to believe in me, or like care...And this lady do. She really do. I don't know whether she get paid or not, but I know she always come, she'll help you with your homework and just whatever she can do. She even buys food and stuff. But she always have encouraging words. She told me she believe in me.

² I cannot show these photographs due to confidentiality restrictions.

Many women echoed Moon's sentiments about the importance of caring, compassionate people who believed they could establish new lives after jail and prison. Women often looked to these staff members and volunteers as people who knew what they were talking about and thus could offer critical information and resources. Recovery homes routinely hired alumnae, meaning women who once lived at the recovery homes and successfully completed their programs. As women who had made it, these alumnae-turned-staff spoke from personal experience and modeled for women how to turn their lives around. This process of turning one's life around, or personal transformation, was one of the strongest themes that emerged from women's interviews and photographs. Women explained in great detail what their lives were like when they were "in their addiction" and living "the lifestyle" and the constant work they were doing to ensure they would not return to that previous self. Recovery home staff members helped women to leave behind their past, "criminal," "addicted" selves and develop "non-criminal," "sober," "rehabilitated" selves (Wyse 2013). One alumna-turned-staff-member identified staff members' genuine concern for residents as a key part of the personal transformation women undergo through engaging with the program:

I love welcomin' the ladies when they come and then continuin' on to show them that you are loved. You know. People need to know that. People need people...Some of 'em will tell ya, "I don't need nobody!" You know, but it start changin' somewhere down the line, and it really gets to me like when they don't even realize they have changed, but then one day they'll see it and be like, "Oooh! I remember!" Or like when another lady come in, and they used to be in a bad way, and they greet them, too, you know. "Ooh. You'll love Growing Stronger!... Welcome to Growing Stronger!" And I'll be like, "Mm. This the same one that was kickin' and screamin'. Now, 'Welcome to Growing Stronger! You're gonna love it. What room you in? You need a big sister? I'll be your.'"

And I'll be like, "Oh, wow." You know. So, yeah, Growing Stronger helps.

She identified the first moment a new resident entered the recovery home as a crucial moment that welcomed her into the environment and let her know what to expect. It set the tone for the woman's stay.

Staff members, as well as residents, are part of the community that a new resident encounters upon her arrival. Ongoing interactions with staff members and residents help her learn the ropes and acclimate to the re-entry experience. In other words, staff members and residents help women understand and adapt to the post-incarceration moral order.

Religion, recovery (from drug use), and rehabilitated femininity, were salient components of the post-incarceration moral order, making it a specifically raced and gendered moral order that formerly incarcerated women must navigate. Women's experiences with staff members at recovery homes and reentry programs, social welfare and social service providers, and parole and probation officers draw attention to how women become aware of and adapt to the post-incarceration moral order. Recovery homes, specifically, provided women with a narrative that not only explained their incarceration but also made sense of their successes and failures after their release from jail or prison. While the context of the message was quite different, the content of the discourse that recovery homes advanced built upon the religious tone and 12-Step orientation of the services that women encountered while incarcerated.

Religion

Whether they were larger organizations formally connected to specific church ministries or smaller organizations started by a single person who operated independent of outside oversight, every recovery home that women discussed throughout our interviews were faith-based programs that required women to participate in Bible study classes, church services, spiritual retreats, and/or various events in which prayer and religious songs were central. While the homes did not discriminate based on religious beliefs or require women to subscribe to a particular religion, they grounded their services and programming in faith and encouraged women to strengthen their personal relationships with God. In short, religiosity was a cornerstone of establishing a life that was free from drug use and involvement with the criminal legal system. Staff members communicated this message in formal and informal ways.

Recovery homes' rules formalized the idea that embracing faith and religion was a key step women should take to overcome their involvement with the criminal legal system. Women recalled experiences at multiple recovery homes where weekly church attendance was a mandatory part of their stay. At Starting Again, the director required women to accompany her each Sunday to the church she attended. While some women expressed outright disapproval of this rule and stressed the importance of being able to attend a church of their choosing, others were more accepting of the rule. Red commented, "I think it's cool how, how [the director] loves, loves to, I, I almost want to use the, the word manipulate, in a, in a, in a funny and a loving way, us to go to church. And it is, I think it's cute how, you know, we just like her little ducklings and, uh, yeah,

it's, it's adorable to me.” While her choice of words implied some ambivalence about the mandatory church attendance, overall Red described attendance at this church as a helpful experience. Red took a photograph at one of the church services (Figure 12) and



Figure 12. Church service

explained that the photograph showed how she and other residents were

“...recovering...changing from bad to good. God giving us a chance, chance in life instead of keepin’ us in prison...Or keeping us sick,

addicted to the wrong thing.” For Red, God was an integral part of her experience at the recovery home and of her overall transition from prison to society. Her weekly church attendance, which she described as a new practice in her life since moving into Starting Again, served as a constant reminder of God’s presence.

Ms. Fields, who lived at Starting Again a few years ago, also stressed the lasting impact the required weekly church attendance had on her. When recalling what she gained from her time at Starting Again, she explained:

It taught me, you know, to keep going to church ’cause we had to go every Sunday. You know?

CR: Yeah.

Ms. Fields: And then it taught me to just kinda keep the, you know, make a, a plan and just keep with that regimen, you know, because of the structure she [Starting Again’s director] had. So it really taught me a lot of

structure, how to follow directions. I mean how to follow, yeah, take suggestions, follow directions, you know, um, get up in the morning, make your bed up, you know...

CR: Yeah.

Ms. Fields: ...eat, you know, clean, wash the dish. It taught me a lot of structure.

For Ms. Fields, learning to practice religion was an inseparable part of her overall experience at Starting Again. She valued the overall “structure” and daily “regimen” the program taught her, and she viewed these routines as part of living a rehabilitated life that was free not just of the criminal legal system, but also of her past behaviors that led to her involvement with this system. Regular church attendance was a fundamental part of this disciplined lifestyle that Ms. Fields continued to cultivate long after moving out of Starting Again and into her own apartment.

In less formal ways, staff members wove lessons about the importance of faith into individual conversations with residents and various events and programs. On one occasion when I was waiting in a recovery home’s front room for an interview participant to arrive for our scheduled interview, Iris, a 49-year-old white woman who also was a research participant, returned home from another long day of submitting job applications. Iris looked distressed as she signed the residents’ logbook to indicate she was back at the recovery home and her arrival time. She explained to the staff member working at the front desk that she did not have enough money to purchase another bus card, which meant she would be unable to go out the next day to continue to look for employment. A senior staff member overheard her comments and sternly told her that she needed to “sit still” and “let God do His work.” She admonished Iris for “moving too fast” and running

all over the city, when what she really needed to do was focus on working on herself.

Noticing my presence, the staff member apologized to Iris for talking about her issues in the open and had Iris follow her to her office so they could continue the conversation in private. The message was clear, though. The staff member had drawn a connection between Iris's regular absence from the house, because she was looking for jobs daily, and her unsuccessful job search. Presumably, if Iris would just "sit still," meaning spend more time at the recovery home participating in the groups and activities it offered, God would "do His work," helping her to strengthen her inner self and thus be more successful in her employment search.

Like Iris, New Life spent a lot of time away from this recovery home early on in her stay. When reflecting on one of her best experiences at the recovery home, she described a weekend event for residents and their family members. New Life had planned to skip the event until one of the senior staff members personally reached out to her to encourage her to attend with her two daughters. New Life described her experience at the event:

It was some women singing, they was all recovering addicts. Um, and they just sounded like angels... And up there [the senior staff member] was singing and, and, I don't know why she pinpointed me, but she was like, "There's a very special young lady who came, and I'm so grateful she came." Cuz she thought I wasn't coming, but I was. And um, she said, "God has a calling on your life." She say, "You're here for a reason." And at first I didn't know she was talking to me, but I got tears coming down because I know God saved me. And He does have a calling for my life, you know. And all my kids, you know, they, "Mom, you okay?" I'm like "Yeah, yeah." She's like, "New Life, come on up here, so I can let them know who I'm talkin' about." And I said, "Me?!" And I got up there and everything. And um, and she was like, "Sing that song I always hear you sing." And I'm like, "You always hear me singing?" I said, "I don't sing no song!" She said, "Yes, you do. Yes, you do." And it's "Grateful." You

know, in the song say [*singing*], “Grateful, grateful.” Cuz I am so grateful, you know, I never used that word so much in my life until I was released. And um, I sung that song, and my kids sung it with me, and everybody just started singing, cuz it’s a very popular song, and you know it was just hugs and kisses and it was just, I don’t know, I don’t know. I could honestly say I think that was one of my breakthroughs. I think I really loosened up and, um, started getting more out of the meetings and the groups that we have.

As New Life noted, this event was a turning point in her relationship with the recovery home staff, as well as in her overall reentry experience. She described feeling “a connection” when the senior staff member told her, “God has a calling on your life,” and how this connection helped her to “know God has something more for me to do.” New Life realized the importance of committing to the recovery home’s program and fully participating in its services and events. By joining the “recovering addicts” at the front of the room who were singing “like angels” and proclaiming her gratitude for how God had saved her, she symbolically became a part of the recovery home’s community. The audience members joined in, supporting her decision to embrace the recovery home’s religious teachings and invest in its offerings.

New Life underscored the importance of this event and her decision to join the recovery home’s community by sharing an example of a time when she contemplated leaving the recovery home. She recalled a weekend early on in her stay when, without explanation, the recovery home staff revoked all residents’ weekend passes, meaning she could not stay out overnight as she had planned. New Life decided to pack her bags and move out of the home. As she waited for a family member to pick her up, the staff member working at the front desk called a senior staff member at home and told her that New Life was preparing to leave. The senior staff member came back to the recovery

home to try to change New Life's mind. When she asked New Life what was going on,

New Life replied:

"I'm, I'm fittin' to go, because you know, I don't get my weekend pass, I didn't do anything." She [the senior staff member] said, "Stop right there. It's much more than just a weekend pass. Just say you don't wanna be here." I say, "It's not that." She said, "Yes it is. You know how bad the devil wants you back?" And it was like, when she said that, it was like, "Oh my God!" Cuz if I leave here, what is my plans? You know, I mean, seriously what is gonna be my plans? To get back in contact with the same old people. And she was just breaking it down to me, and I was like, "Wow."

The staff member presented New Life's decision to leave the recovery home as a choice between staying with God's plan or succumbing to the devil's wishes. In the process, she dismissed New Life's concern about an arbitrary rule change that limited her freedom. She reframed New Life's frustration as an excuse to go back not just to her old ways but to a lifestyle that the devil wanted for her. Within this framework, New Life recognized her contemplation over possibly leaving the recovery home as a moral decision between good and evil. New Life appreciated this reframing. She explained that, at that time, she likely would have resumed selling and using drugs. She agreed with the staff member's assessment: "It's you battling with yourself because you really want that freedom but you know the consequence of that." Based on this staff member's intervention, New Life realized that she was not ready for the freedom she would encounter living outside of the recovery home. The staff member's willingness to leave her own home and return to work to catch New Life before she left underscored the gravity of the situation. As New Life explained, "that's like one of my major moments I had here, when I really felt that that lady cared about me." Indeed, from the staff member's and New Life's perspectives,

the staff member did not just convince New Life to stay at the recovery home; she helped her to fight the devil's temptations and avoid making a decision that would have led her away from the path God had laid out for her.

Feeling a religious connection was an important experience that Ann W. also highlighted. She took a series of photographs during a day when she and other Starting Again residents enjoyed free services at a local beauty salon. A young African-American couple that attended the same church as Starting Again's director owned the salon. Through their church relationship, the owners "adopted" the recovery home and offered to provide free salon services monthly to the residents. Ann W. explained that she benefitted from the salon day in a number of ways. The visit cheered her up after she had had an argument with her "guy friend," and she loved how "pretty" she looked after having spiral curls put in her hair. Additionally, she valued the connection she felt with the salon owners: "They were beautiful people! They are so nice...I'm gettin' connected around all these positive people. And they're very strong, you know what I'm sayin', church people." Ann W. found the couple to be particularly inspiring because the husband had spent time in prison. She implied that becoming part of a church community was an important step in accomplishing her own goals. She stressed that the beauty salon owners were "positive people" because they were "church people." Her participation in services at the church of Starting Again's director already had helped her to move forward, in part through connecting her with "positive people," meaning people who had a relationship with God, did not use drugs, and were doing something with their lives, unlike the people with whom Ann W. associated when she was homeless, using drugs,

and going back and forth to prison. She believed that these positive connections would help her to continue to move forward and improve herself. Referring to the photograph of the couple, she explained, “That’s hope. That right there, and to hear they story, what they said they came from the same life from me. The same lifestyle, and look where they at today, own business, everything.” The couple’s ability to overcome similar obstacles, in part because of their faith, encouraged Ann W. that, with “perseverance,” she also would be able to one day give back “to the community” and “help somebody else.”

Religious messages permeated nearly every aspect of recovery homes’ services, events, and programs. From formal Bible study classes and mandatory attendance at church services to less formal everyday conversations and family events, staff members and volunteers continuously reinforced the importance of faith and recovery. These religious messages resonated with women in part because the programs offered critical help and emotional support. People who they felt genuinely cared about them encouraged them to see how God was at work in their lives, nurturing the positive changes they were trying to accomplish. Frequently in interviews, women were careful not to take too much credit for or show too much pride about their accomplishments and followed up mentions of positive developments by giving praise to God. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, the emphasis on faith and religion recalled an earlier time in women’s lives when they were not “in their addiction” and when church provided a strong foundation for their lives. Getting right with God was a central part of developing a rehabilitated self that did not participate in criminalized behavior or drug use.

Recovery

Similar to the way that religion permeated the recovery homes' programming, so did an emphasis on recovery from drug use, specifically sobriety. This emphasis was evident even in the name "recovery home." Throughout data collection and preparations to begin this project, the women and staff members I consulted consistently referred to these programs as recovery homes rather than halfway houses. Broadly, the term "recovery" implies that these homes were places where women could recover from their past traumas, including the trauma of incarceration. Specifically, the term revealed a recognition that most of the women leaving jail and prison had used illegal drugs and would engage in services to help maintain their sobriety post-incarceration. As such, drug treatment services were a fundamental component of the recovery homes' overall programs. For instance, one recovery home had a partnership with a nearby drug treatment facility that provided inpatient and outpatient services. All recovery home residents had to participate in the facility's intensive outpatient treatment program (IOP) for the first 30 days of their stay at the recovery home, which meant they attended groups three days a week for three hours a day at the facility. Another recovery home partnered with a program that made a recovery coach available to meet regularly with the women living at the home. The recovery coach provided individual support for women working to maintain their sobriety and referrals to outside drug treatment and 12 Step meetings, as well as job training, GED classes, and housing programs. While she served as a de facto case manager, her primary tie to the recovery home was to provide residents with additional support around drug use.

Within this larger recovery focus, the recovery homes specifically focused on a 12-Step orientation to drug treatment. The 12-Step logic was diffused throughout the recovery homes, and many required women to attend a minimum number of 12 Step meetings each month and to provide proof of their attendance in the form of a sign-in sheet signed by meeting facilitators. Many homes also offered 12 Step meetings on-site and wove lessons about drug use and recovery throughout various types of gatherings. As Jean commented about a recent recovery home event that residents' family members were encouraged to attend, "We just had a 12 Step meeting with family members." The event included a group of residents performing a skit in which each one represented a different member of a family. One resident performed the role of an alcoholic, while the remaining residents performed typical roles, such as the enabler, the class clown, and the perfect child, to demonstrate how family members impact and are impacted by one member's drug use. At least one recovery home offered a weekly "Emotions Anonymous" group on-site, demonstrating how thoroughly the 12-Step orientation permeated services. Participating regularly in 12 Step meetings became a routine part of women's lives, similar to the way that church attendance became part of their weekly regimens.

In general, women welcomed the emphasis on drug treatment. All but two participants identified as having a drug problem and as needing help with managing this problem.³ For women who had been incarcerated multiple times, they often attributed

³ As I note in the next chapter, participants who did not identify as having a drug or alcohol problem still found ways to engage the "recovery script" that the criminal legal system and recovery homes presented.

their ongoing trouble with the law to their continued drug use. Although Ella, a 46-year-old African-American woman, reported that she had nine years of “clean time,” she also reflected on how difficult it was for her to stop using drugs. She had been incarcerated three separate times, each time on charges related to illegal drug use. She explained that during her first two incarcerations, she knew she was not ready to stop using:

I mean, um, it was like you had my body, but you didn't have my mind...My mind was still gettin' high. My body just needed to be there to physically do it, to catch up with it...I already had planned exactly like down to the letter...I already knew, “Man, when I leave, I'm goin' straight to the spot...I'm goin', you know, I'm goin' to this person I know they're sellin'. And I'ma do this and I'ma do that. Then I'm goin' over here to my buddy and I'm smokin' and,” you know, all this was planned out, so and that's what I did. You know...Not sayin' that that's cool or nothin', but I already had planned it.

As Ella explained it, her involvement with the criminal legal system persisted over a number of years because she was not able, and at times did not want, to stop using drugs. Nothing was strong enough to overcome her desire to use. She pointed out, “But just to let you know, too [sniffs], how strong that, um, drugs can be [pause] goin' to prison, waitin' to go to boot camp, goin' to boot camp, completin' boot camp, all of that still didn't take me to my kids. It took me back out there to use. And I love my kids and always have.” Despite the risk of incarceration and being separated from her children, Ella simply was not ready to stop using drugs.

Lynn described a similar challenge when reflecting on her drug use. She explained that she had been in and out of recovery homes and drug treatment facilities over the past 10 months since her release from prison. Shortly after our first interview, Lynn's stay was terminated at the recovery home where she had been residing due to a

rule infraction.⁴ After spending several weeks on the streets, she was able to rent a kitchenette when she received the first installment of her payment for being part of a class action lawsuit. Her money quickly ran out, though, in part because the kitchenette cost about \$650 per month and in part because she began using drugs again. She explained, “When...I knew I was getting the money...it’s like I had planned to relapse. I knew, I knew I was gonna drink. I’m like, ‘Man, I’m gonna go party and live it up.’” Like Ella, Lynn described knowing she would begin using again and even planning exactly how she would do so, despite knowing the harsh consequences she could face, primarily becoming homeless again and facing arrest for illegal drug use and violating probation. These consequences in fact played out. After spending time in jail, a mental health institution, and an inpatient drug treatment facility, Lynn moved in to a different recovery home, where we completed our second and third interviews. After being at this recovery home for only a week, Lynn noted her concern that she would use again, particularly because she was expecting the next installment of her payment from the class action lawsuit. She explained, “I’m scared! I’m nervous. You know what I’m saying?...That’s a lot of money, you know. And money’s a trigger for me. You know, money is the root of all evils.” She added that her plans to find a job and rent her own apartment depended on her ability not to relapse. “I do plan on stayin’ clean. It’s just so hard for me to say I’m not gonna drink again.” Lynn described a cycle where one drink would lead to getting drunk, which would lead to using drugs. As she put it:

⁴ I discuss the circumstances of Lynn’s departure from this recovery home in greater detail in Ch. 6 Managing the Post-incarceration Moral Order.

It's, it's not like I can just drink one and be happy. If I drink, I want to be drunk. I, I want to be out of my mind. I don't, I'm not gonna drink and just, [uses a mocking high-pitched tone] "Oh, I'm gonna have a cocktail with the girls." I'm goin' to get smashed. If I drink, I'm going to drink for a reason. I feel like there's a reason for everything and if, if like if I'm gonna get high, I'm gonna go get high. I'm gonna do it up. I'm not gonna just, [same mocking high-pitched tone] "Oh, I'm gonna take me one little hit." No, I'm gonna do a whole bag. I'm gonna do a whole fifth. You know, I'm gonna just do it up, you know. And I'm big like that. Like and I think I'm an addict.

Many women echoed Lynn's feeling of not being able to control their drinking and drug use and, based on this lack of control, identified as "addicts." This connection is the root of the 12-Step logic. The first of the 12 Steps is "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable" (A.A. World Services 2002). Like many women, Lynn indicated that she was "powerless" over alcohol and drugs and directly connected the "unmanageable" quality of her life, such as not being able to keep an apartment or a job, to being an "addict." Lynn and others also connected their loss of control over alcohol and drugs with their ongoing involvement with the criminal legal system. Following the 12-Step logic and what the criminal legal system taught, they linked their "addict" identity with their "criminality." Even when they maintained a certain amount of clean time, obtained their own apartments, and found jobs, women noted that one slip-up could undo all of their progress. Repeatedly, they noted the need for guidance and structure in maintaining their sobriety. Across the board, they welcomed the 12-Step model that was so embedded in the recovery homes, as it was a familiar continuation of the program they started in jail or prison and offered a concrete plan to follow.

Monitoring and surveillance. Women's current and past involvement with the criminal legal system complicated their recovery experiences, as they attempted to maintain their sobriety while living under high levels of surveillance. Sometimes this surveillance came from representatives of the criminal legal system, such as parole and probation agents, judges, and police officers. Other times, this surveillance took the form of recovery home staff members and social service providers. At times, representatives of Child Protective Services monitored whether women relapsed or abstained from drugs and alcohol. In some cases, these regulatory institutions converged, and women had to answer to and meet the requirements of multiple authority figures. Due to the decentralized nature of the state and its expanded reach throughout communities, women worked on their recovery under the watchful eyes of many state agents (Haney 2010). In this section I argue that, given the severe consequences women faced when they relapsed, the criminal legal system and broader reentry field structured women's experiences of recovery by effectively criminalizing recovery. The system primarily did so through intense monitoring and surveillance, threat of punishment, and actual punishment.

Women indicated a number of ways that correctional officers and service providers monitored their recovery from drug use. Documentation, in the form of certificates of completion for drug treatment programs and 12 Step meeting sign-in sheets, served as proof that women were "working" their recovery program. Women often described their parole and probation requirements as a checklist of tasks they had to complete. Once they turned in formal certificates of completion to their agents, women

could mark that requirement off of their lists. The documentation symbolized that they had moved one step closer to ending their formal correctional supervision.

Building upon Dorothy E. Smith's theories of knowledge and power, the documents women noted were influential "texts" that shaped how they engaged the post-incarceration moral order and how people in positions of authority assessed their progress. Smith (1987, 1990) cautions against recognizing texts as objective facts that provide unbiased data. She stresses the importance of studying how texts are produced and used in institutions and what impact they have over the social context in which they exist. Smith (1990:14) explains that texts are a critical component of the "relations of ruling," which she defines as "that total complex of activities, differentiated into many spheres, by which our kind of society is ruled, managed, and administered." She also notes, "'Relations of ruling' is a concept that grasps power, organization, direction, and regulation as more pervasively structured than can be expressed in traditional concepts provided by the discourses of power" (Smith 1987:3). Texts structure "power, organization, direction, and regulation" (Smith 1987:3). In other words, texts "mediate" the relations of ruling; they "are the primary medium (though not the substance) of power" (Smith 1987:17). They organize how institutions connect with one another, how individuals connect to institutions, and how individuals connect to one another within and across institutions. According to Smith (1987:3):

We are ruled by forms of organization vested in and mediated by texts and documents...The practice of ruling...involves the construction of the world as texts...and the creation of a world in texts as a site of action. Forms of consciousness are created that are properties of organization or discourse rather than of individual subjects. (P. 3)

Women's attention to documents indicated how texts organized the post-incarceration moral order and both enabled and constrained their ability to maneuver through it.

In line with the 12-Step logic, women frequently commented that they always would be “recovering addicts,” never “ex-addicts.” As Cathy explained, “But you’ve got to remember, once you’ve crossed the line and become addicted to this, it’s always inside of you, and it can be woken up at any time.” Women often noted that they always would have to work on their recovery. This perpetual work took the form of regular attendance

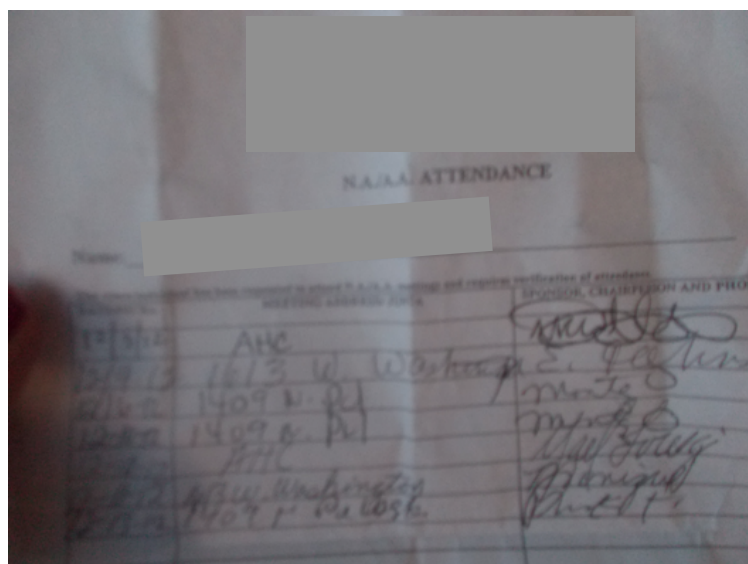


Figure 13. 12 Step meeting attendance sheet

at 12 Step meetings. All of the recovery homes that women discussed had institutionalized 12 Step meetings into their programming by requiring women to attend a minimum number of meetings each week or

month. Women had to provide proof of their attendance by turning in attendance sheets signed by the meeting facilitator. Red took a photograph of her sheet (Figure 13) and explained that she had to submit the sheet to Starting Again's director weekly.

She indicated that this process could be stressful, particularly during the three separate occasions when she had lost her sign-in sheet. I asked her what she did the last time she lost her sheet. She replied:

I make, I make it up real quick and go to the person that was chairing...

CR: The meeting?

Red: Yeah. And I'm like, "You remember my face? Right? I was here and I lost my sheet." And they'll re-sign it. So I always, I always got saved, I always saved my life. But if the person, like, doesn't want to do it or all of a sudden that person's not chairing anymore...she [Starting Again's director] could take us out for it, too.

CR: Really?

Red: Yeah. Because you never know what people are fed up with.

Red's choice of words indicated the critical importance this document exerted over her life. She described her ability to convince meeting chairs to verify her attendance at past meetings after losing her original sheet as being "saved...[it] saved my life." This expression underscored the severe consequences she could face for not complying with the 12 Step meeting attendance rule. Depending on how "fed up" the recovery home director was feeling, she "could take us out." The phrases "saved my life" and "could take us out" reveal how much Red needed the recovery home. She equated losing her spot in this home with death. Her comments were not hyperbolic given the hardships Red had faced; a partial list included: drug use, domestic violence, mental illness, her mother's death, losing her children to Child Protective Services, and incarceration. Red described Starting Again as a beautiful place where she felt that people cared for her and were concerned about her wellbeing. Losing this support and shelter would have been devastating to Red. She had nowhere else to turn. Thus, the NA sign-in sheet was imbued with a tremendous amount of importance. Without it, Red would not have been able to prove to the director that she was abiding by the recovery home's rules and deserved to

be able to continue to live there. She also would not be able to show that she actively was working on her recovery. Additionally, regular meeting attendance was a condition of Red's parole. Losing the document could have negatively impacted her progress with her parole agent, as well as her standing at the recovery home.

Red explained that the document also carried a very personal meaning for her.

When I asked her what she felt when she looked at the photo of the NA sign-in sheet, she



Figure 14. Certificates

replied, “I’m proud of myself, because it’s something that I’m constant with, and, um, I always quit everything. I’m a quitter.” Julia offered a similar reflection of a photograph she took that showed a

number of framed certificates she kept on the windowsill next to her bed at the recovery home where she lived (Figure 14). She earned the certificates for completing a 90-day residential program at a drug treatment facility and for completing a “Self-Improvement” class at the same facility. Julia explained that she had accumulated a number of certificates over the years but stressed that these certificates were unique. When I asked her what the photograph revealed, she responded, “It’s a reminder of the achievements

that I made and that it could be more if I keep goin'. And I'm proud of it." Elaborating on her answer, she added:

Um, they [the certificates] mean a lot to me, cuz I feel as though I worked for 'em, you know. And it's accomplishment. Somethin' that I'm not used to doing. Yeah. Uh, sometimes I used to get certificates only because I was mandated to be in a place, so I just did what I had to do, but then after I did, I didn't think about it. I couldn't remember anything, cuz my mind wasn't in it, but I remember, I remember these. What I did here.

CR: So these certificates are different than ones you've gotten in the past.

Julia: Yeah. That's why they, I got 'em in frames, cuz, you know.

As was the case in Red's situation, these certificates operated as texts that not only organized Julia's life but also testified to her organized life. She proved to the satisfaction of the treatment facility staff members that she was serious about her recovery by actively participating in groups and earning multiple certificates. In return, the staff members worked with Julia's parole officer to help her secure a spot at the recovery home where she resided at the time of our interviews. Similar to Red, Julia stressed the care and support she felt from the people who worked and volunteered at this recovery home and noted that it was unlike any program she had experienced. She explained:

I don't like rejection. 'Cause a lot of doors been shut in my face, a lot of people done turned me down. It's the way they look at me, but none of that's happened here [at Growing Stronger], none of that's happened here, so I feel a little more confident, but still sometime I get scared, you know.

For both Red and Julia, the documents they showed in their photographs were sources of pride and personal reminders of the progress they already had made, as well as their ability to continue on the right path. For both, being recognized and knowing others at their respective recovery homes was a critical part of being able to continue on that path.

Additionally, the photographs showed that Red and Julia used the same standards to assess and monitor their own progress as those that parole officers, drug treatment specialists, and recovery home staff members imposed on them. Both women noted that the documentation represented different ways they were engaging with programs and working on their recovery now than they had in the past. They no longer thought of themselves as “quitter[s].”

In addition to written documentation, recovery homes also monitored how well women were working on their recovery through administering random urine tests to detect whether residents had used drugs recently. Jean vividly captured this surveillance with her photograph of a box of “drop cups” on the counter at the recovery home where she stayed (Figure 15). Staff members at the recovery home used the cups to collect a urine sample and conduct a drug test. Jean explained that if a resident tested positive, the staff members might terminate her stay. Even though she did not worry about testing positive, she noted that just seeing the box of drop cups on the counter affected her in a negative way. Reflecting on the picture, Jean explained:

These, these are the, uh, drop cups, um, like randomly, you know, they’ll just be sittin’ out there on the desk, and, you know, word’ll pass that we’re being dropped today. And...it’s like if I’ve made it this far into the recovery process, why do you have to drop me? Like, do you not trust me? Well, you know, I guess not cuz you have to drop me. And I don’t, I don’t really like that, because I don’t identify with being an addict, but it’s one of the stipulations to stay here, so...I don’t, I don’t like how it looks. I don’t like how they present it. I don’t like how it makes me feel.

Jean pointed out that although she did not identify as an “addict,” by virtue of living at the recovery home, she had to participate in the regulatory practices the home deemed necessary for “addicts.”

These requirements deeply impacted Jean. She recalled one instance when she “dropped dirty” for cocaine even though she had never used cocaine in her life. She had



Figure 15. Drop cups

been hanging out with friends, and someone who either was selling or using cocaine spilled it on her. Jean later learned from her sponsor that cocaine “gets into your skin,” so the spill likely caused the dirty drop. Jean was so

upset when the staff member informed her that her drop was dirty that she became physically ill, vomiting for nearly 20 minutes. Jean explained that she never had used cocaine, but her contestation could not challenge the definitive results from the urine test. The staff member revoked Jean’s weekend pass and would not allow her to sleep in her bedroom that night. Jean instead had to sleep on a couch downstairs, because, as the staff member told her, she was “toxic.” Jean explained the word choice: “When somebody’s toxic, it’s like you can like see ’em or some of their behaviors or what they’re gonna be talkin’ about, it’ll like affect you in a negative way that’ll make you want to go get high.” In other words, Jean’s dirty drop (whether or not it was a false positive) marked her as an “addict” who had relapsed and thus was contagious to the other “recovering addicts” in

the house. The staff member effectively quarantined Jean so that her mistake would not infect the other residents.

Jean also learned that even if she had not ingested cocaine, she deserved the punishment she received. In talking with another resident about her “dirty drop,” the resident explained to Jean, ““You got in trouble cuz you were hangin’, cuz of the crowd you were hangin’ with, so they figured you should be in trouble for that.”” Rather than validate Jean’s frustration with wrongly being accused of using cocaine, the resident reinforced that Jean should expect to be monitored and to face consequences for acting in ways that contradicted how a “recovering addict” should act. According to the 12-Step logic, recovery work requires that individuals stay away from the “people, places, and things” associated with their alcohol or drug use, because these things are “triggers” for people to use again. By hanging out with people who were using or selling cocaine, Jean was not avoiding “people, places, and things” that encouraged drug use. Jean did not see hanging out with these people as a problem, because she did not identify as an “addict” and thus was not concerned that they would be a “trigger” for her to use. Because she lived at the recovery home, however, she had to submit to the 12-Step logic in order to avoid problems.

The intense monitoring Jean experienced took a toll on her. When talking about her photograph of the drop cups, she commented, “It just makes me feel really untrustworthy. Like, it makes me feel like I’m not workin’ on anything, like, especially cuz it’s random, like, I don’t know. I just don’t like it. It makes me not feel good.” The random drug tests served as a reminder to Jean that she was under the surveillance of the

recovery home. Because of her conviction for burglary and her past use of marijuana, her word was not sufficient. Rather, she had to subject her body to a physical test to prove her continued worthiness to stay at the recovery home. Similar to AA/NA sign-in sheets and certificates of completion, the urinalysis results operated as texts that governed women's lives. "Clean" drops attested to women's rehabilitative progress and commitment to working their recovery, while "dirty" drops marked women as failing to adhere to a rehabilitated, sober lifestyle.

Monitoring was especially intrusive for women who had to answer to multiple people who were in positions of authority and thus exerted extraordinary influence over the women's lives. Women might be on parole or probation and thus must meet regularly with their parole or probation officers. They might have open cases with the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and thus must follow DCFS service plans. They might live in recovery homes and thus must participate in the home's programming (ex. on-site groups and meetings) and abide by its rules (ex. curfew, daily chores, attend outside 12 Step meetings). They also might participate in intensive outpatient drug treatment programs and thus must meet those programs' requirements. In these situations, women lived under multiple layers of surveillance.

Jean captured these multiple layers of surveillance with her photographs for this project. In addition to following the regulations of the recovery home, she also had to follow the stipulations of her probation. One stipulation was to meet monthly with her probation officer. Jean reflected on how these monthly check-ins served as further reminders of her limited freedom. In our final interview, Jean shared photographs from

her last visit to the probation office and stressed that the overall experience filled her with negativity, starting with the walk to the probation office. Jean commented on a photograph of her route to the office (Figure 16):

This picture, I was on my way to the probation office, like it just, it just sucks. Yeah, it sucks that I'm on probation but just how the area, the general area looks, it's garbage everywhere and it's graffiti everywhere, like it doesn't give me a really good vibe. Like I could be havin' a really great day and then like, "Oh, I gotta go see my probation officer." And then just walk past all that stuff and it's not, you know, yeah, that's the scenery.

She added that these negative vibes remained strong when she entered the office. Because cameras were one of several items that probationers were prohibited from bringing into the building, she had to sneak a photograph of the probation office's waiting area (Figure 17). Jean explained why it was so important to get this picture:

I guess just I wanted to show like how uncomfortable and like just untrustworthy that the setting made me feel. Like I can't have a pen. I can't have a lighter. And even when you take those things away from me, I still can't have a chair with a cushion in it. Like I can see the beam work. I know where the heat's goin', I know where it's not goin'. You know, metal detector...you guys are police officers with guns...I really wanted to get that picture.



Figure 16. Route to the probation office

Jean noted how the physical space, coupled with what felt like excessive restrictions on what she was allowed to carry into the building, let her know that those who worked in the office viewed her as untrustworthy – the same message that the drop cups at the recovery home communicated. These complementary messages made Jean recognize that the state viewed her as an untrustworthy person who must be monitored continuously.



Figure 17. Probation office waiting area

Monthly meetings with her probation officer and the random urine tests at the recovery home became regular rituals that reminded Jean of her past mistakes and their continued influence over her daily life, despite whatever progress she made. They also created multiple opportunities for Jean to slip up. Jean described the stress associated with her last meeting with her probation officer:

I was really late, I completely forgot about it, and I was late, and I called, and I was like, “Are you still there, can I come see you?” And he was like, he said, “Yeah.” So you know, I walked up there and he was like, “You know, you’re lucky that I was still here,” and I’m like, “You hadn’t even called my name, there were like five, 10 people still before me,” so, even though I was late he still was nowhere near calling me, you know, so, he saw me when I came in, he was like, “Okay,” but, yeah, it’s terrible.

Jean's officer agreed to meet with her even though she was late, but he made it clear that he easily could have not met with her, which could have resulted in a violation of her probation. He reinforced his authority and reminded Jean that he was monitoring her. Showing up for the meeting was not enough; Jean needed to make sure she was on time, regardless of whether that meant wasting her time sitting in the waiting room and regardless of whether her probation officer helped her in any way. She described the sterile conditions of his office and his cluttered desk, which gave her the distinct impression that he did not care about his job. She also noted the lack of any meaningful assistance, such as job leads, that he provided. The point of these probation meetings was not to facilitate Jean's rehabilitation; rather, the meetings were exercises in submitting to the state's regulation.

Like Jean, many participants had to answer to multiple regulatory agents, which meant that the chances of being caught when they made a misstep were much higher. Additionally, a misstep in one area could have a domino effect that jeopardized multiple aspects of a participant's life. A dirty drop at the recovery home could lead to termination from the home and staff members notifying the parole or probation agent of these developments, which in turn could lead to a violation of parole or probation. Thus, the consequences of a misstep were multiplied by multiple layers of surveillance. This intense policing of recovery impacted the very nature of women's recovery. For the remainder of this section, I focus on how intense monitoring of women's recovery led to actual punishment, as well as the moral tone of these monitoring and punishment practices.

Criminalizing recovery. Whereas drug treatment specialists routinely note that relapse is a common part of the recovery process (Tiger 2013), women who are on parole and probation faced severe consequences when they did relapse, such as loss of their housing and re-incarceration. The criminal legal system effectively criminalized recovery for women living on the margins of society, as formerly incarcerated women did not have the luxury to relapse. That luxury was reserved for more privileged groups for whom criminalization, drug use, and recovery are not intricately intertwined. As Teresa Gowan and Sarah Whetstone (2012:87) observe in their ethnographic study of a treatment community, “While whiter and richer drug offenders are filtered out to non-custodial community care, the ‘criminal addict’ is held to strict accountability within the quasi-incarceration of the strong-arm rehab.” In my interviews, women indicated that this “strict accountability” persisted even beyond completion of formal correctional supervision and even for women who had “re-entered” society successfully by most traditional markers (i.e. employment, GED or high school diploma, their own apartment).

Rose’s experience highlighted this tendency of persistent vulnerability. When I interviewed her at the recovery home where she was residing, she shared that this stay was her second time at this recovery home. Following her last stay, she had moved into her own apartment, found a job, and had turned her life around. When her boyfriend cheated on her, she did not know how to cope, and Rose described becoming increasingly isolated. She began using drugs again and eventually lost her job and apartment. As she succinctly explained, “I gave up. It’s like I gave up on life.” She began staying again at an emergency overnight homeless shelter where she had stayed off and on for many

years. This shelter served as a type of safety net that repeatedly caught Rose when she had nowhere else to turn. She included a photograph (Figure 18) of the inside of the shelter as part of our second interview “to show how, um, how they line up the beds and, um, actually how we have to keep our clothes like right there.” I asked, “In the tub



Figure 18. Homeless shelter

there?” Rose responded, “Yeah. It’s like a little, a little bin. You know, and, and but you have to be a regular to have, you know, a bin with some clothes.” Rose explained that sometimes she was a regular at the shelter and

had a bin to hold her belongings during the daytime hours when the shelter was closed and all residents had to leave. At other times, she stayed at the shelter more sporadically and would not return every night, instead staying at a nearby park (Figure 19) or in an abandoned truck (Figure 20). Rose noted that the shelter remained an important place for her even today. She still used the shelter as her mailing address and planned to continue to do so until she moved out of the recovery home and into her own apartment. In response to my question about what she valued about the shelter, Rose explained:

Um, it was warm. Um, they treated us with respect. You know. They gave us clothes, food, and stuff like that. Um, I, I still value it because, um, it’s one of those shelters that if your mail is comin’ there, the only way your

mail will stop comin' there if you go and get your mailin' address changed. They will always keep your mail.

Amidst the instability and frequent moves in Rose's life, the shelter was a constant, though limited, source of support.



Figure 19. Public park



Figure 20. Abandoned truck

Before her last arrest, Rose was residing at the homeless shelter again. On the night of her last arrest, though, she had failed to get into the shelter because she arrived too late, after the shelter staff had stopped accepting people for that night. She then was out on the street with two friends. They had purchased a couple of bags of crack that they planned to use together. Rose was holding the bags when the police stopped them. The police let her friends go, but they arrested Rose for possession of a controlled substance. A comment that the arresting police officer made is particularly relevant here. Rose explained that she had told the officer she was staying at a homeless shelter. She continued, "Um, and so, you know they, they [police] like to make jokes and, uh, talk down on a person. Uh, so as I was gettin' in the car, he was like, 'Well, you need a place to stay anyways. So.' I remember those various words." I asked her how his comment affected her, and she replied:

Um, it, it hurted. It hurted because the way he said it was like, you know, 'Well, you livin' on the streets anyway, so, um, at least you'll have a place to stay, uh, and, and, and to take a bath and all that but you'll just be locked up.' You know. You know, he, he just said it in a way like that.

With the insult, the officer linked Rose's "criminality" with her poverty. His comments also had the effect of dehumanizing and passing judgment on her, reflective of the criminal legal system's organizational logic, discussed in the last chapter. The implicit message in his comment was that Rose was not worthy of a home and that by locking her up, he was doing Rose a favor. Because Rose had nothing to lose (i.e. a job, house, or apartment), the officer minimized the severe impact that an arrest would have on her. He framed her arrest as a routine and even welcome event in her life that, as his comment implied, held little value.

Rose's experience in court reinforced the arresting officer's implicit message that she was not a valued person. When she eventually met with a public defender, he explained the state's offer: if Rose pled guilty, she would receive a sentence of 18 months in prison. As Rose recalled, "I guess this PD must have told, um, well they had already seen my file, so, when he came out and talked to me, he was like, um, 'This is what they offerin' you. Probation is not an option.' So. Which was 18 months." Importantly, Rose made the connection between her background, which included two prior incarcerations, and the state's refusal to offer probation and treatment. Because of her record, and the subsequent long-lasting "criminal addict" (Gowan and Whetstone 2012) label, the consequence for Rose's relapse was an 18-month prison sentence – in other words, a severe form of punishment with no treatment.

The process of criminalizing recovery also carried a powerful moral component that shaped the women's sense of self. A growing body of ethnographic research examines the racialized and gendered ways that prisons and therapeutic drug treatment programs attempt to govern primarily poor individuals and people of color who are under correctional supervision as a result of drug-related charges (Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Kaye 2012; McCorkel 2013; McKim 2008). Gowan and Whetstone (2012:70, emphasis in original), for instance, coin the term "strong-arm rehab" to refer to "a particular *type* of court-mandated rehabilitation emphasizing long residential stays, high structure, mutual surveillance, and an intense process of character reform." They argue that this type of program "tends to be a highly racialized form, consistently linked to poor African American drug offenders." Similar to Gowan and Whetstone (2012), Jill A. McCorkel (2013) argues in her ethnographic study of a drug treatment program in a women's prison that "habilitation" treatment took root as the demographics of the prison's population shifted from majority white to majority African American. She argues that privatization and race were key reasons why the prison she studied adapted a habilitative approach to women. In contrast to rehabilitation, which "presumes an otherwise complete self in need of a fix," habilitation "begins with the premise that the self is incomplete, flawed, and disordered...this is not a self that is regarded as capable of self-regulation. Nor is it a self that the state hopes to normalize. Rather, it is a self that must be 'surrendered' to a lifelong process of external management and control" (McCorkel 2013:12). While targeting primarily poor people and people of color convicted of low-level drug offenses, such treatment programs are "in the business of

constructing...brand-new people” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:80). That is, participants must completely reject their past selves, who were “criminal addicts,” and prove their new selves by demonstrating they have internalized the programs’ rules. McCorkel (2013) and Gowan and Whetstone (2012) also show that moral judgment is a central part of how court-mandated treatment operates. The strong-arm rehab’s “minute and constant behavioral modification make it an old-fashioned disciplinary institution *par excellence*. It is simultaneously an essentially *moral* project, promoting explicitly normative orthodoxies through highly dramatized binaries of good and evil” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:87, emphasis in original).

These studies produce detailed accounts of how governance operates in a single site and how treatment interventions, in fact, are moral projects that seek to replace the “criminal” “addicted” self with a new self that is “sober [and] disciplined” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012:80). My research indicates that this moral project, achieved through the convergence of the punitive responses to drug use; the intense monitoring of women’s recovery and harsh responses to slip-ups; the religious tone of re-entry programs; and the 12-Step logic, which is infused with religious and moral tones, extended beyond “the strong-arm rehab” and programs rooted in the tradition of therapeutic communities. This moral project pervaded the recovery and reentry programming women encountered and was communicated in softer forms than the routine degradation practices documented by scholars like Gowan and Whetstone (2012), Haney (2010), Kaye (2012), McCorkel (2013), and McKim (2008) in their research sites. Once women left the “strong-arm” (Gowan and Whetstone 2012) of the prison or residential treatment facility, they

encountered a host of service providers and formerly incarcerated women who reinforced lessons about faith, sobriety, and morality. These providers and peers were more like a “tough-love arm” of reentry, introducing women to and regulating the unique post-incarceration moral order.

The post-incarceration moral order shaped participants’ understandings of their moral worth as connected to their sobriety and, by extension, to their “non-criminality.” The relationship among moral worth, sobriety, and non-criminality emerged as a strong theme throughout the interviews, and women indicated how this relationship influenced how they understood their very identities. Repeatedly, women explained the personal transformations they had undergone and stressed ways they had distanced themselves from their past lifestyles. Women commonly described themselves today as different people from the women they once were who “lived the lifestyle,” “were in the streets,” and “were in their addictions.” A moral transformation was central to this process of developing a rehabilitated identity.

Nyla, for instance, shared how prior to her most recent incarceration, she had experienced a period of two to three years when she was doing quite well. She had sought drug treatment, stopped using drugs, and moved out of Chicago. When she returned to Chicago, she began a relationship with a man who became physically abusive. Nyla recalled an assault where he choked her to the point that her eyes became bloodshot and she feared he would kill her. She began using heroin again, which led to her most recent arrest and incarceration. At the time of our interviews, Nyla was living in a faith-based recovery home and regularly attending NA meetings. She described her long-term

struggle to stop using drugs as more than just an effort to maintain her sobriety and to stay out of trouble with the law. For Nyla, it reflected a painful personal battle to save her own morality. When she recalled the period of time before her most recent arrest, when she was using heroin again, she explained how she would think about how God had brought her out of her addiction and now she was back in it. She said:

And now I'm going dark, light, light, dark. Do you understand what I'm sayin'?

CR: What do you mean, what do you mean about that?

Nyla: Meanin' I know how it feels to be on the light side versus bein' on the dark. The dark I'm familiar with, meanin' the sexual immorality, the, the activity, the doin' everything that God would have me not do. The dark side. And yet know what it feels like to be in the light.

CR: And what does that feel like, to be in the light?

Nyla: Meanin' I'm being obedient. I'm doin' all the right things for the right reasons. I'm helpin' others. I'm helpin' myself. I'm bein' a mother to my children. And I'm havin', I have first and foremost a relationship with my Father. And I've, I'm, I'm protected. I'm covered. Unlike on the other side, you know, anything goes. Because I've put myself out there, and I'm not, I don't feel like I'm under my Father's, um, um, the umbrella of His protection because I'm doin' everything outside of what He would have me do.

The light versus dark imagery that Nyla used to describe her periods of sobriety versus her periods of drug use echoed New Life's recollection of the senior staff member at her recovery home asking her, "You know how bad the devil wants you back?" when New Life contemplated leaving the structured program. For Nyla, using heroin did not just mean that she had relapsed or broken the law. It meant that she had stepped out from under the "protection" of God's "umbrella" and that she was participating in behaviors that were "immoral." This turning away from God contradicted the 12-Step logic,

particularly Step Three, which states: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*” (A.A. World Services 2002). Nyla explained that when she had turned her life over to God, she lived “on the light side” and was “obedient.” Resuming her heroin use meant that she exerted her will over God’s will, as she did “everything that God would have [her] not to do.”

Like Nyla, Ella reflected on a similar process of personal transformation when discussing a

photograph she took of her rap sheet, or arrest record (Figure 21). The first page of the rap sheet included her mug shot from 1995 in the upper right-hand corner.⁵

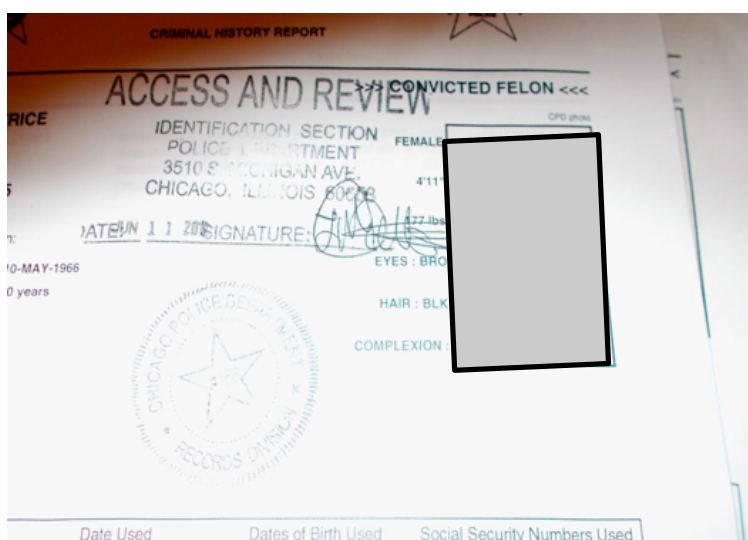


Figure 21. Rap sheet

While talking about the mug shot, Ella said:

I know physically I look different. Mentally I was different, too. I was much smaller. Right now, um, hm, hm, hm, I’m in a size 20. Right there, I was in a size three. So it’s a big difference. Um, I don’t think I look, what you would say, happy here, which most people don’t goin’ to jail. But I’m just sayin’ sometime you can, like, tell if a person have a inner peace. I’ve always been, um, I think, uh, well people say I have a kind spirit and, um, a lot of people tell me it’s like I have a aura, uh, about me. Um, that I come off nice. I, I’m sure I still have that, but you can see, at least I can, um, the trauma and stuff in my face, in my eyes. Um, I don’t look happy. And it’s not just from goin’ to jail. Um, my spirit was damaged in a lot of

⁵ I have blocked out the mug shot photo for confidentiality purposes.

areas, and, um, I used to try to cover that up with drugs instead of dealin' with it.

Ella described a comprehensive transformation she had gone through – one that encompassed her body, mind, and spirit. She viewed herself as a completely different person from the woman in the mug shot, which had been taken nearly 20 years ago. Ella had been arrested multiple times since that mug shot, and, as discussed above, she was not ready to stop using drugs for many years. At the time of our interviews, Ella had nine years of clean time as was generally regarded as one of the greatest success stories at the recovery home where she resided following her last incarceration and where she presently worked. She was one of many alumnae-turned-staff members who, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, modeled personal transformation on a daily basis for newly released women and helped them acclimate to the post-incarceration moral order. In fact, Julia took a photograph of Ella for this project. She identified Ella as a crucial part of why the recovery home felt like such a safe, helpful environment. Julia explained:

And this is Miss Ella. She is a sweetheart, you know, and she will sit down and she will tell you her stories. And she don't glorify them. She tells you what she did and how she did it to make points, you know what I'm sayin'? To let you see how dumb or crazy or insane it was and then she'll give you the logical part about, you know, and how she overcame and how, she just so happy all the time, you know.

Ella's success offered women an example of what was possible if they engaged the recovery home's programming, as well as concrete examples of how they also could achieve a similar type of personal transformation.

Ritual and Moral Order

The theoretical framework of a post-incarceration moral order draws attention to elements of ritual that characterized women's processes of personal transformation. Starting with Durkheim, a long list of scholars (Collins 2004; Maruna 2011; Wuthnow 1987) has examined the role of ritual in producing and sustaining moral order. Through participating in rituals, members of a group develop a sense of belonging, connection, and shared understanding. According to Wuthnow (1987:123), "In ritual a bond is established between the person and the moral community on which he or she depends. It is in this sense that ritual reinforces the moral order." Rituals are "stylized or embellished patterns of behavior" (Wuthnow 1987:109), such as weddings, baptisms, and other rites of passage that stand out from routine activities. They also can be more mundane, everyday actions, such as reading a bedtime story to a child or attending an AA meeting. As Wuthnow (1987:101, emphasis in original) explains, ritual "is a *dimension* of all social activity. The study of ritual, therefore, is not distinguished by its concern with certain types of activity, but by the perspective it brings to bear on all activity, namely, emphasis on the symbolic or expressive dimension of behavior." In other words, the specific action is less important than the message it communicates, namely that an individual, through participating in a ritual, expresses her commitment and belonging to a group. It is the communicative nature of rituals that makes the action meaningful, particularly the "social messages that rituals convey" (Wuthnow 1986:106). According to Wuthnow (1986):

Ritual regulates and defines social relations. It may do so by sharpening the boundary between two social statuses governed by different relations

and expectations (rites of passage), or by reminding people of the relations they share and the principles underlying these relations (collective ceremonies), or by simply sending signals concerning the definition of positions and relations in ongoing social activities (etiquette, protocol, etc.). (P. 107)

Many of the experiences that the women recalled in their interviews and documented with their photographs revealed important rituals. Shadd Maruna (2001, 2011) argues that the role of ritual has been under-theorized in scholarship on desistance and reentry and under-utilized in reentry policies. Drawing on neo-Durkheimians' theories of ritual, Maruna (2011:5) urges scholars and policymakers to consider how meaningful "rituals of reintegration" could aid formerly incarcerated people in their transitions out of prison and back into their communities. While I disagree with Maruna's premise that formerly incarcerated people are reintegrating to society, I take up his urging to consider the role of ritual in women's acclimation to the specific post-incarceration moral order (as distinct from the larger moral order that governs society). Ritual was one way that women became aware of and gained entry to the post-incarceration moral order. Supportive recovery home staff members and service providers, as well as other formerly incarcerated women who were residents at and participants in these programs, guided women through the rituals they encountered.

New Life's experience, discussed above, at the recovery home's family day event where she sang the song about being "grateful" essentially was a public ritual that symbolized her membership within the recovery home's community, as well as her acceptance of the staff members' prescriptions for how to better her life. New Life made a conscious choice to give up her initial weekend plans and spend her free time with the

home's staff members, residents, and alumnae, participating in activities that sharply contrasted with her old lifestyle of selling drugs. She publicly joined the recovery home's community, which was represented by the "recovering addicts" who made up the choir that sounded like "angels" and the supportive audience of staff, residents, and residents' family members. This step communicated that New Life was serious about turning her life around and willing to do the work of personal transformation.

Similarly, women's accounts of regular church attendance, 12 Step meeting attendance, submitting signed AA/NA meeting attendance sheets, random urine drops, and meetings with parole and probation officers all represented rituals that cemented their participation in the post-incarceration moral order. Through their ongoing participation in

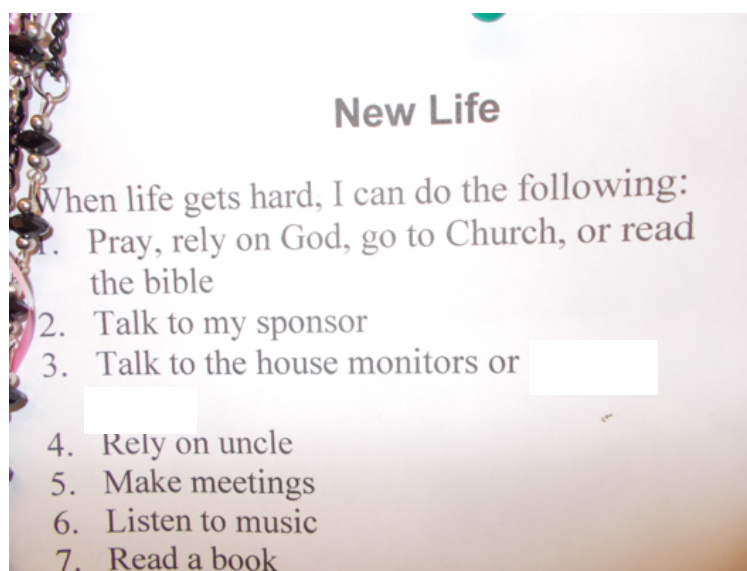


Figure 22. Carmel's New Life

rituals, women learned that religion and recovery were the two cornerstones of successful reentry.

Women often spoke about reentry, religion, and recovery simultaneously, as if they could not

discuss their experiences

leaving jail and prison without also discussing their efforts to maintain their sobriety and commenting on their faith. Carmel, a 44-year-old Black woman, took a photograph that captured this intermingling (Figure 22). The photograph showed a document she created

that listed a number of things she could do “when life gets hard,” under the heading “Carmel’s New Life.” This “new life” referred to her life following her most recent incarceration. The list of things she could do centered on activities related to AA/NA (“Talk to my sponsor,” “Make meetings”) and religion (“Pray, rely on God, go to Church, or read the bible”). The list also referenced the recovery home staff members as supportive resources (“Talk to the house monitors”). Each behavior she included on her list was a small, individual step she could take to reaffirm her commitment to her recovery and faith, which in turn would help her avoid any future involvement with the criminal legal system.

Considering the ritualistic nature of women’s experiences with correctional supervision and in recovery homes further explains how morality becomes embedded in women’s post-incarceration experiences. Maruna (2011:9) explains:

Rituals engender solidarity and social cohesion by bringing people together in common cause; this community bonding is then thought to serve the purpose of generating beliefs about standards of morality (Durkheim, 1912/1995). We come to ‘know’ right and wrong through the enactment of ritual behaviors, according to Durkheim. Indeed, Marshall (2002:370) argues that rituals can produce ‘a quasireligious hardening’ of beliefs: ‘This lets us make sense of why social movements involving voluntary abstinence...so often and easily become moralized’ (2002:370). (P. 9)

In addition to the recovery homes’ faith-based programming and the explicit religious tone of the 12-Step logic, the practice of ritual reinforced the moral meanings embedded in the post-incarceration moral order. New Life’s reflection about choosing between following God’s paths or the devil’s paths and Nyla’s account of moving between the light side and the dark side are not exaggerations. In the context of the post-incarceration

moral order, seemingly mundane decisions about where to live and whether to attend a meeting took on a moral character that shaped women's identities as "criminal" "addicts" or "rehabilitated" selves. As I discuss in the next chapter, women at times contested these rituals. Throughout the interviews, however, they consistently pointed to their participation in these rituals as evidence of their moral transformation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began to explain the post-incarceration moral order that women encountered following their release from jail and prison. I argued that religion and recovery were foundational components of this distinct moral order that were communicated through faith-based programming and the 12-Step logic. I also examined how the criminal legal system structured women's experiences of recovery from drug use. In particular, it raised the stakes of recovery by extending an ongoing threat of punishment through intensive monitoring and surveillance practices. It also effectively criminalized the recovery process for women who were living on the margins of society by punishing relapse, which is a routine part of recovery. Finally, it linked moral worth with sobriety and non-criminality in ways that shaped participants' sense of their own identities.

What is particularly noteworthy is that the women I interviewed were not living in therapeutic treatment communities known for their harsh confrontational approaches and practices that degrade participants. These are the programs on which much of the current punishment scholarship focuses. My research suggests that the moral and punitive nature of recovery for people caught up in the criminal legal system extends far beyond the

walls of the “strong-arm rehab” and similar court-mandated treatment programs (Gowan and Whetstone 2012). The narratives women shared reflected a deep linking of addiction, criminality, and morality that has taken hold throughout the criminal legal system and treatment programs more broadly. This framework minimized acknowledgement of structural impediments that hindered women’s post-incarceration experiences in favor of stressing women’s personal responsibility for transforming not only their behavior but also their identities.

In the next chapter, I further analyze the post-incarceration moral order by focusing on its raced and gendered dynamics. I argue that the process of personal transformation women described was a raced and gendered process. As women demonstrated their reformed identities through the reflections and photographs they shared, themes of domesticity, appearance, romantic relationships, motherhood, and employment emerged. I examine how these themes reveal a rehabilitated femininity that represents a balance between independence and nurturing others and is grounded in sobriety and faith. In short, I show how women adapted to a raced and gendered post-incarceration moral order.

CHAPTER FIVE

A RACED AND GENDERED POST-INCARCERATION MORAL ORDER

Of all the photos that women created for this project, I found myself frequently thinking of a photo that Rose took of an alley (Figure 23). The image and the complexity of all that it represented haunted me. For weeks, I carried it around in my notebook. I looked at it frequently and reflected on what was so compelling about the image. Visually, it was striking. The deep blue of the early evening sky seemed to glow against the long, narrow, empty alley. The streetlights at the far end of the alley reflected off of a single puddle in the middle of the alley. The alley seemed to stretch on forever, inviting questions about where it led. Rose had created a beautiful image.

Rose's explanation of what this image meant to her made the photograph even more powerful. She explained that this alley was located behind a homeless shelter where she had stayed off and on for several years. She had gotten high there frequently. It was a known spot, even by the shelter staff and police, for drug use. The police often drove through and completed sweeps of the alley, arresting anyone they caught with drugs. The photograph also was meaningful to Rose because someone had sexually assaulted her in that alley. The alley was uncharacteristically empty that night, which still puzzled Rose. As far as she knew, nothing ever happened to the man who raped her. She did not seek medical treatment or notify the police, because she knew they would not offer her assistance. She never met with a rape crisis counselor, because she figured it would not

do any good. Rose was left to deal with the trauma of this assault on her own. These mainstream responses to sexual assault did not have a place in her world. These supposed resources were neither safe nor viable options (Richie 2012).

As disturbing as Rose's recollection of this assault was to me, when I looked at her photograph of the alley, I often thought of an awkward exchange she and I had when I tried to reassure her that the



Figure 23. Rose's alley

rape was not her fault. She recalled that she had told an acquaintance about the assault, who responded, “Well, what you doin’ up in here in this alley cold as it was? Why didn’t you go in the shelter?’ You know. Why? Cuz I was tryin’ to get drugs.” The response concerned me, because I worried that Rose had taken it to heart. I stepped out of my researcher role and said, “Well, and I, I hope you know, Rose, that it’s not your fault and that it’s not because you were getting high or because you were in an alley.” Rose replied, “I thought it was.” When I asked her if she still felt that way today, she explained:

Um, it’s kind of, I don’t know. Cuz I figure if I wasn’t gettin’ high or wasn’t there in that alley, that wouldn’t of never happened to me. So, I can’t blame nobody, you know, but myself. But, you know...if I was doin’ somethin’ else, it, it wouldn’t of never happened. So I did blame myself

for a long time, you know, um. I did. But, um, I just will say...that will never happen again. Only thing what really, really hurt me was that the person that did it didn't get caught or somethin' like that. That's, that's the main part that hurt me. You know. Um, I been raped a lot of times, uh, due to my addiction or jumpin' in people cars and stuff. And with the grace of God, I don't have AIDS or anything. You know, that's, that ain't nobody but God.

Rose's response deeply troubled me. She did not view the man who had raped her as the ultimate cause of this violence. Rather, Rose held herself responsible because, as she reasoned, if she had not been getting high, she would not have been in that alley, and thus would not have met the man who raped her. For Rose, her addiction was the ultimate cause of the assault, and she could not blame anybody other than herself, not even her rapist.

Rose pointed out another important aspect of this photograph that stuck with me. She explained that when taking the photograph, she had stood at "the very beginning of the alley." Rose stressed that she "will never go down that alley again. Um, and if I do go past it, only thing I can do is just look down there, you know, and be like, 'Wow. Thank you, God.' Yeah." She added, "I just couldn't see myself walkin' through there no more. I mean for what? For what?" How Rose positioned herself when taking the photograph indicated how precarious her recovery felt to her. One false step could lead her back to her old lifestyle, and make her vulnerable to more violence and even to death.

Rose's comments about her photograph of the alley reflected the first two "R's" of what I argued in the previous chapter was a distinct moral order that women encountered after leaving jail and prison: religion and recovery from drug use. In the previous chapter, I examined how the religious foundation of recovery homes and the 12-

Step logic structured women's experiences post-incarceration. Through "criminalizing recovery," the criminal legal system and recovery homes advanced a moral project that shaped women's understandings of their own identities. Women drew on religious and recovery discourses to accomplish personal transformations, in which they left behind "criminal," "addicted" selves and developed "non-criminal," "sober," "rehabilitated" selves (Wyse 2013). Women earned recognition of their progress through documentation and rituals that signified their adaptation to the post-incarceration moral order.

Rose's reflections also highlighted the third "R" of this moral order: rehabilitated femininity, which is the focus of this chapter. When talking about how she blamed herself and her drug use for the multiple sexual assaults she endured, Rose explained that the streets were no place for a woman. The risks she encountered while getting high and trying to get drugs were forms of gendered violence. The threat of sexual assault, the many rapes, and the risk of AIDS were the costs she bore as a homeless woman struggling to maintain her drug use. Additionally, Rose's behavior violated conventional norms of femininity, specifically attachment to and responsibility for the domestic sphere and responsibility for monogamous, heterosexual relationships. Rose's comments on the difference between how she used to live her life and how she was living her life today reflected a larger theme that emerged throughout the interviews: how women's accomplishment of personal transformation as they navigated the post-incarceration moral order were raced and gendered processes.

In this chapter, I show how the post-incarceration moral order is raced and gendered. I examine women's accounts of their personal transformations, from failed

femininity to rehabilitated femininity in five key areas: domesticity, appearance, romantic relationships, motherhood, and employment.¹ Throughout each area, I draw attention to the “clean/dirty dichotomy” (Harris and McElrath 2012:84) that reflected women’s shifting sense of self from past “addicted” and “criminal” selves to current “sober,” “rehabilitated” selves. The rehabilitated femininity that women worked to achieve reflected the individualistic orientation of the post-incarceration moral order (described in the previous chapter) in which women became “good” women by accepting personal responsibility for their failings and progress.

From Failed to Rehabilitated Femininity

The process of personal and moral transformation that women described was a gendered and raced process. Studies of women and crime document how incarcerated women have violated not only the law, but also gendered expectations (Lawston 2009; Leverentz 2014; McCorkel 2013). In addition to serving their sentences, women faced the task of accomplishing a rehabilitated femininity, which was a central part of the new selves they worked to develop. This particular type of rehabilitated femininity did not

¹ I developed the concept of women’s movement from a “failed” to a “rehabilitated” femininity based on Edward Orozco Flores’s (2014) argument about gang recovery as a process in which men reoriented from a “Chicano gang masculinity” to a “reformed barrio masculinity.” Like the men in Flores’s (2014:10) research, women wanted to re-establish relationship with their children and family members and develop fulfilling romantic relationships, and they focused on “the transition away from street life and into domesticity.” What is distinct about the women’s trajectories, though, is that they largely did not describe their involvement with street life in ways that indicated it was part of a resistant, rebellious, or oppositional gender expression. Rather, their accounts of their past experiences often highlighted their vulnerability and a multitude of risks they regularly faced. In contrast to the men in Flores’s (2014) research, the women who participated in this project reoriented from a *failed*, not a resistant, femininity to a rehabilitated femininity.

reflect a universal idea of femininity. As Black feminist scholars have documented, the “true womanhood” ideal historically has been inaccessible to poor women and women of color as a result of race- and class-based oppressions (Collins 2000; Hill 2005; Roberts 1997). Women of color, particularly Black women, have been stereotyped as “dirty” and “impure,” thus precluding access to the benefits associated with pure femininity, such as support for mothering and protection from violence.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and Andrea Smith (2005) argue, respectively, that the disproportionate sexual violence that Black women and Native American women experience is rooted in the historical violence and dehumanization of chattel slavery and genocide. Both systems of oppression were state projects that used sexual violence as a tool to socially control people of color. Smith (2005:10) argues, “In the colonial imagination, Native bodies are also immanently polluted with sexual sin...Because Indian bodies are ‘dirty,’ they are considered sexually violable and ‘rapable,’ and the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count.” Similarly, Collins (2005:146) argues, “Rape has been one fundamental tool of sexual violence directed against African-American women.” She explains that racist, sexist stereotypes about Black women’s inherent sexual promiscuity, particularly “the controlling image of the jezebel” and “the myth of the Black prostitute” have provided “ideological justification” for sexual violence against Black women (Collins 2000:147; see also Roberts 1997).

In the United States today, mass incarceration operates as a system of racialized social control that increasingly has targeted women of color (Davis 2003; Richie 2012).

The War on Drugs has been the primary mechanism through which the state has implemented this project. As a result, the strict “clean/dirty dichotomy” (Harris and McElrath 2012) that pervades the 12-Step logic and most drug treatment programs today adds another layer to women’s raced and gendered identities. This all-or-nothing framework labels individuals as either “clean” when in recovery and abstaining from drug use or “dirty” when engaging in drug use. In addition to the “dirty,” “impure” controlling images poor women and women of color encounter on the basis of race and class, criminalized women encounter the further “dirty,” “impure” label of “addict.” As Julie Harris and Karen McElrath (2012:815) argue, “Recovery from drug dependence is a process. However, as a means of social control, the clean/dirty distinction served to dichotomize recovery and reinforced spoiled identities. In turn, the dichotomy restricted opportunities for developing client identities that incorporated incremental steps of the self in recovery.”

Women who participated in the present research project also lived under the pressure of the rigid “clean/dirty distinction” and the specter of “spoiled identities” (Harris and McElrath 2012). They worked explicitly to prove their cleanliness with regard to drug use. Participants could not overcome the racism and sexism that shaped their pasts and colored their futures. But they worked to manage their recovery from drug use and thus demonstrate “clean,” rehabilitated, feminine identities. Reflecting the “clean/dirty dichotomy” almost every participant contrasted their current identities with

their past identities as evidence of their personal transformations.² They viewed their own identities as shifting from “dirty” (drug using, immoral, and distant from God) to “clean” (not drug using, moral, and close to God). Although the women were closed off from attaining a fully rehabilitated femininity in the eyes of the larger social order due to racism and classism, they drew on gendered markers of their clean identities, thus indicating a particular type of rehabilitated femininity, albeit not a universal notion of femininity. The “clean/dirty dichotomy” infused women’s accounts of reorienting from a failed to a rehabilitated femininity in domesticity, appearance, romantic relationships, motherhood, and employment. I discuss each area in detail below.

“It Ain’t Nothin’ Like Havin’ Your Own”

Themes related to domesticity permeated women’s narratives and photographs about their personal transformations. Women stressed that being able to take care of their own living space, whether it was a bedroom at a recovery home, a rented room, an apartment, or a house, was a critical part of leaving behind their past, “criminal” selves.

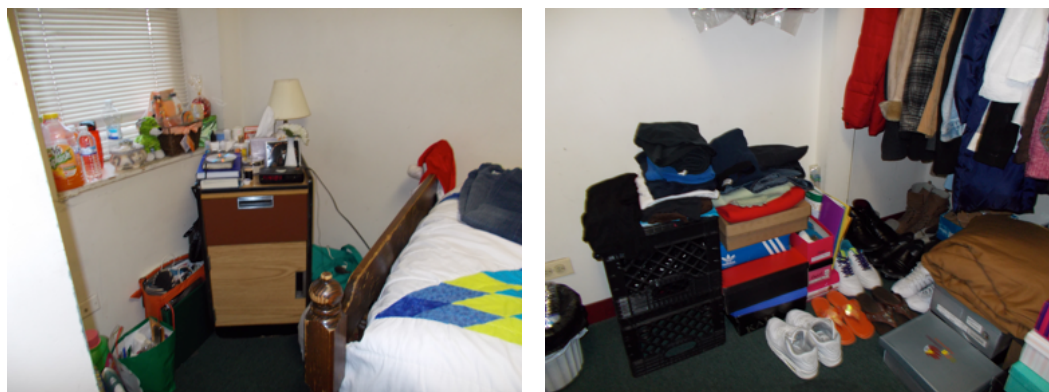


Figure 24. Rose’s room

² Two notable exceptions were Jean and Cathy, both of whom did not identify as having a problem with drugs or alcohol.

Rose, the alley photographer, also took a series of photographs of her bedroom at the recovery home where she lived (Figure 24). This was Rose's second time at the recovery home. After leaving the home for her own apartment the first time, she eventually started using drugs again and lost her apartment and job. Homeless and on the street again, she was arrested for possession, and received an 18-month prison sentence. Rose explained the meaning of the bedroom photographs:

I could look at these now and say, "Well, I got all, I'm getting most of my stuff back." So I will know how to appreciate it, you know. 'Cause last time, last time, I had all this stuff, I got rid of it. Due to me going back out there...just looking at, it, it just, it just make me feel good to know that, uh, I'm trying to live life. I mean, I'm trying to live like, a person's supposed to live...this is just how I wanna live.

The bedroom provided Rose with a safe place, in contrast to the dangers she faced in the alley. The items that filled her bedroom showed her progress away from drug use, homelessness, and vulnerability to sexual assault and toward a proper, sober woman able

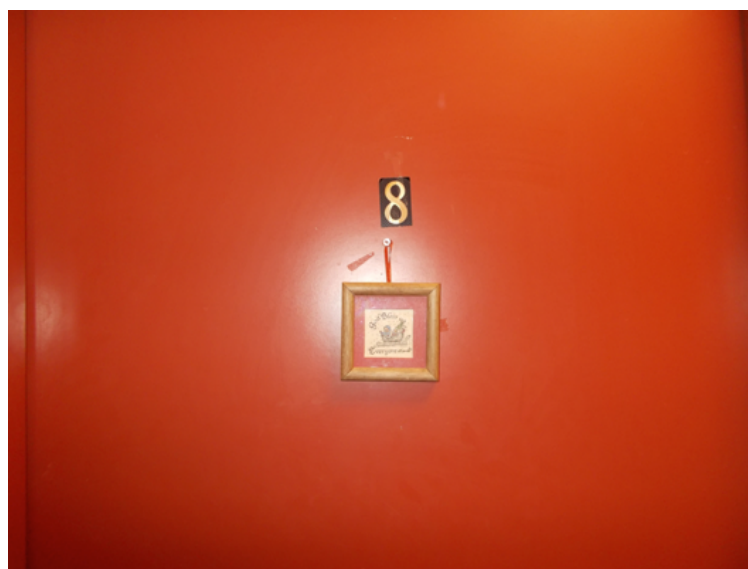


Figure 25. The Lioness's door

to provide adequate shelter, clothing, shoes, and hygiene items for herself.

Rose was not alone in taking photographs of her current living space. The Lioness also discussed how

photographs of her bedroom at the recovery home symbolized the better woman she was

becoming. She took a photograph of the door to her room (Figure 25) to show that she stayed in her own, single-person room, a privilege that signified she was doing well in the program. In her single room she found “a peace of mind.” She contrasted the privacy she enjoyed in her room with the complete lack of privacy she experienced in prison: “See I was in prison for two years with women...I never had privacy, you know? So to get in this room it was like...oh my God, I could breathe.” Having her own, private room allowed her “to plan my day or plan my week, what move I wanna make, what goals I have for myself, so now, it’s just my, my safe haven.” The single room represented the progress she had made and provided her with the space to plan how to continue to progress.

Denise also talked about her single room at the recovery home as a sign of her progress and contrasted it to her experiences living with abusive partners. She recalled, “When I...got my own room in [the recovery home], this was the first time ever in life that Denise’s had her own room, that I ain’t had to worry about waking up and there’s somebody next to me.” She looked forward to the peace and independence associated with having her own apartment, “even if it’s just a, a kitchenette or a studio,” that she could decorate any way she wanted. As Denise summed up, “It ain’t nothin’ like havin’ your own. You know, God blessed the child that has her own, has his own.”

The Lioness explicitly connected her progress to her femininity. While wearing a stylish, pink sweat suit, she explained the significance of a photograph of her bed (Figure 26), “This is my bed. That I love pink. I, I love pink.” She added, “My momma used to dress me in so much pink. You know, my momma was the type of person that she wanna

have little girls be always beautiful and clean. I used to have, my hair was always pretty and my clothes was never dirty.” She continued:

I love my room. I love everything. But the bed, it shows that, organized. I’m always keepin’ it nice and clean, I keep my linen clean. I, I if I get out the bed to go to the, come down here like now, I makes my bed, I mean I’m organized. I don’t like to be no scattered, I like my bed made nicely.

The Lioness used the photograph to show that she was working to cultivate proper

femininity, which her mother had taught to her in her childhood, but which she had lost through her drug use and participation in the streets lifestyle. Her repeated mention of being “clean” countered the judgment



Figure 26. The Lioness’s bed

she faced as a Black woman without a stable home who had used drugs and engaged in sex work. The color pink, which for The Lioness “is a sign of woman...pretty in pink,” represented that she was getting back to the type of woman her mother wanted her to be. Her housekeeping also reflected this transformation. She explained, “I have a ritual that I do. I clean my room in the mornin’, vacuum my floor, make my bed.” The cleanliness of her room reflected her clean, feminine identity.

Women also commented on photographs of their current living situations in less positive ways, which indicated that they felt they still had a long way to go to in their

personal transformation processes. The lack of a proper living environment represented what they described as poor personal choices or unfortunate circumstances that resulted in them losing their homes. Their reflections belied a sense of failed femininity, specifically an inability to care for a home and to provide an acceptable environment in which their children could live with them. These photographs represented what they had lost, primarily as a result of drug use or, in other words, their “spoiled identities” (Harris and McElrath 2012:815).

Photographs that represented women’s future homes indicated what they would be able to attain once secure in their recovery and thus in a “clean” identity. Iris took a photograph of a newer condo building in the West Loop to



Figure 27. A suitable home

represent what she would consider to be a suitable home (Figure 27). She explained:

Ultimately this is what I want. I want my own place, my own key, the lease or whatever, you know, in my own name. And see the thing is that I’ve had all of that, so I know, I know what I’m, hopefully with this, um, sobriety being the only, um, focus, huge priority, because that’s the thing that took everything away from me. Because I knew how to get a good job, how to even maintain a good job while I was still drinking, for 18 years I had a career going, how to make good money, how to maintain a home, because I was paying the bills...

Iris stressed that she had been capable of “maintain[ing] a good job” and “a home.” When she commented that her “addiction” had taken everything away from her, she referred, in part, to her identity as a woman. She had been a successful working mother who skillfully “maintain[ed] a home.” She indicated that if she would be unable to maintain her “sobriety,” then she also would be unable to fulfill these responsibilities.

Iris’s ability or inability to “maintain a home” would directly impact her ability to mother her children. She was working hard to win back visitation rights for her two children, both of whom lived with her ex-husband in another state. In order to do so, the courts required her to have a place where her children could stay with her overnight. The recovery home and residential drug treatment facilities where she had been staying over the past year and a half were not appropriate locations. Iris explained, “I have to have a nice, not super huge fancy place, but a place big enough and safe and secure enough to accommodate them. And it’s not just going to be my word against my ex’s...I have to provide a permanent address...and it has to be something that the judge will ok and say, ‘Yeah, they can come.’” In other words, the judge would determine her fitness as a mother based on her ability to maintain a home. Iris indicated a similar self-assessment, as she linked her recovery with her ability to again “have a nice place” and provide a safe, loving environment for her children. Chicken Wing also linked her goal of home ownership, which she also represented with a photograph of a building (Figure 28), with being a good mother to her children. She noted:

I can’t wait to get my own place so I can have my kids over for dinner. So they have somewhere they can go. When they get tired of runnin’ the street, they can come home to their mom’s house, you know, bring their

friend over, “This my mom!” You know what I’m sayin’? So that’s a beautiful thing I can’t wait for that. To cook for them.

Chicken Wing regretted that being incarcerated for 21 years had limited how she had been able to be a mother to her children. Although she had maintained a relationship with



Figure 28. “My own place”

them throughout her prison sentence, being on the outside now gave her opportunities to mother in ways that had been out of reach for decades.

As noted in

earlier chapters and at

the beginning of this chapter, participants indicated that the streets were no place for a woman. While selling drugs, using drugs, and living on the streets, women routinely experienced severe physical and sexual violence. Finding supportive recovery homes provided them with a refuge from this violence. Women consistently stressed their desire to find their own apartments. Having a place of their own would further protect them from the vulnerability and violence they had survived. It also would allow them to reclaim, or to experience for the first time, a key component of conventional femininity: taking care of a household. In some cases, having a home also would support women’s efforts to strengthen their relationships with their children, a point I return to later in this chapter. In short, getting off the streets and working toward the goal of maintaining a

household were important ways that women moved from a failed to a rehabilitated femininity.

Appearance and Embodied Femininity

An unexpected pattern that emerged across the photographs was that women often took pictures of themselves or had someone else take a picture of them.³ Discussing these photographs provided opportunities for women to reflect on how they viewed themselves and how they suspected others viewed them. Women indicated that their physical appearances communicated a great deal about their recovery from drug use. As Flores (2014) found in his work with recovering gang members, recovery was an embodied experience. For the men in Flores's (2014:189) study, "Embodied masculine practices and performances facilitated recovery, as the body symbolically and concretely represented the struggle between gang life and recovery." Women described how feminine practices and performances reflected their personal transformations from "criminals" and "addicts" to responsible women.

Although women were working to distance themselves from their pasts, they noted physical reminders of their past traumas and drug use. Sharon, a 44-year-old African-American woman, for instance, commented on the permanent damage she suffered to her thumb as the result of an off-duty police officer shooting her. She explained that the officer was working as a security guard at a store, and he had suspected Sharon's husband of shoplifting. Sharon recalled that the officer shot her husband in the

³ I am not able to show any of these photographs due to confidentiality concerns.

back. Her husband still managed to return to the car with Sharon and drive away. The

officer pursued them and shot Sharon, as well. She explained:

I didn't know he [her husband] was shot. I don't think he knew he was shot either...And I was, like, holding my hand up like this in the car. I don't know what made me hold my hands up, but as I was reaching up like this, um, it was a guy running on the side of the car shooting inside the car. And he had shot this, um, finger right here. My thumb.

Sharon described the devastating impact this event had on her life:

I just went hysterical 'cause it, I didn't know he was shot or, or when he fell over in my lap and then he started bleeding from the mouth, I knew something was wrong then. And then they took us to the hospital, tried to, um, put my thumb back on. They couldn't put it back on or sew it or anything, so he just put it on and put some, uh, tape around it to hold it back in place. And, uh, they wouldn't even let me go in there and see my husband. They pronounced him dead and they wouldn't even let me go see him or anything. They showed me the body on the, um, TV. They were showing me the gunshot wound that when he had the, uh, security guard shot him in the back. So, so that was really hurtful, hurt too, back then because I was young too, when I got, uh, married. So, that took a toll on my life too. And due to that, that's when I started going to jail and stuff.

Sharon explained that despite her husband's abusive behavior, "He was there for me. And after he left I was like, 'I don't have nothing else to live for.'" He had supplied Sharon's drug habit. Without him, she began selling drugs herself, which exposed her to numerous arrests and six separate incarcerations. At the time of our interviews, Sharon described the progress she had made since her release, including seven months of "clean time" and part-time employment. Yet, her thumb served as an ongoing reminder of her past life and "dirty" identity:

But when I look at it, I, I go back to, I was like, it'd take me back of when it happened. So I try not to look at my thumb all the time. And I'm kind of 'shamed of it too...by him shooting it, it shrunk it. Like it messed up my, um, joints and my bones so it shrunk it. So I don't really like, I usually cover it, put a bandage over it.

Sharon's comments indicated how drug use and the violence, trauma, and loss associated with this lifestyle were embodied in permanent ways.

In overcoming reminders of their past lifestyles, women frequently focused on their improved physical appearances as markers of their overall recovery. Carmel, for instance, noted that she looked so unhealthy when using drugs that she would not even visit her long-time partner while he was in jail. She explained, "I was so ashamed, I didn't even wanna look at myself! You know, I had lost so much weight, you know, 82 pounds, and cocaine has got me just this black. You know, 'No, I'm not comin' to let you see me.' You know. And my aunty, she would tell me that you know, 'God, you lookin' bad.'" Other women also referenced weight gain and changes in their skin complexion as evidence of their improved health. Their appearances were testaments to their "clean" identities.

Simply having control over their appearances also signified progress. Prison is a "defeminizing" experience since rules that limit or prohibit personal expression through dress, make-up, and hairstyles not only strip women of their individuality, but also of traditional markers of femininity (Haney 2010:250n27). Perhaps as a counter to these punitive rules that defeminize, recovery homes often provided women with special salon and spa days. In preparation for Christmas and Mother's Day celebrations, for instance, volunteers would pamper women with free hair, nail, and make-up services. Such services helped women to reclaim their femininity and distance themselves from their experiences in prison and the streets. Nyla reflected on this transformation when discussing a photograph her daughter took of her following a "beauty day" her recovery

home had set up for the residents. When I asked her what the photograph revealed, she replied:

Um, I was amazed. I was amazed because I always wear this ponytail. And even the ladies in the house when my hair was done, they were like, “Wow!” You know, and they begin to laugh, um, at me because they’re so used to the ponytail, and it was like, even my daughter, she was like, “Mom. You should wear your hair down more.” You know, so, yeah, I was amazed. I was amazed at this picture.

Nyla explained that the photograph revealed more than just a transformation in her personal appearance. It also revealed her recovery from drug use. She noted how this physical evidence of her recovery was important to her children, as well as to herself:

And then I also looked at this picture, and I could see the weight gain. But what I also thought about, too, with this picture was my sons. Because one of my sons [who is in prison], um, when I first came home from the penitentiary, and we begin to correspond with each other, and I wrote to him, and I would always say to his girlfriend, “Tell my baby I love him, and, and that I apologize for not bein’ there,” and...in the letter, he was like, “Mom, I’ve forgiven you. I never could hate you. It was just that I hated to see what the drugs was doin’ to you and how skinny and pale in the face you were.” So to see this picture and to send it to him, I was like laughin’, you know...and then I put in the...letter, um, “You can laugh because I know I have gained, um, some weight,” you know. And so, yeah, for, for them to see me just healthy, you know, that means a lot.

Nyla’s weight gain and darker complexion were positive changes that reflected her good health and communicated her fitness as a mother. She used the photograph to back up the words she wrote to her son as she began to reestablish a relationship with him. One way she was able to comfort him during his incarceration and resume a motherly role in his life was to send photographic evidence of her recovery.

Nyla explained that the “beauty day” photograph made her think of a photograph of herself that a friend had sent to her while she was in prison. She referred to it as a

“before picture” that showed how she looked when she was in “that lifestyle”: “it simply said to me that my soul was hurting. I was so tired. It, my soul was just cryin’ out.” Nyla hung the “before picture” on the wall in her room at the recovery home as a reminder that no matter how bad things seemed today, “it’s just not all that bad. It’s, it’s getting better...I’m like, ‘Ok, well, we are on our way.’” The physical markers of her recovery reminded her that she was becoming the woman she wanted to be. Ann W. made a similar point when discussing the free salon services she and other Starting Again residents received, an event I described in the previous chapter. Reflecting on a photograph of herself, Ann W. noted that the free salon services helped her to feel like a better person:

I felt so good, like, man. And everybody was complimentin’ like, “Man, your hair look good!” I’m like, “Thank you!” It just feels good to be on this side...it’s a lot...I still got to build up in me ’cause sometime my self esteem be, like, ugh. You know, but I do believe the more and more you go off into your confidence and get to that point...that’s where I wanna be...feelin’ good about myself! Feelin’ confident...I’m me! The real me! And I feel good about me, who I am...That’s where I’m tryin’ to get.

The outward beauty Ann W. felt reflected the personal changes she had been working on since her release from prison. She no longer looked like an “addict” who at one point had been incarcerated for child endangerment. She looked like a beautiful, confident woman who took care of her personal appearance.

As the above examples illustrate, the way others reacted to women’s physical appearances provided women with a gauge of how well they showed a rehabilitated femininity. Women pointed out how police officers, in particular, responded to them differently now that they looked like sober, law-abiding women. Chicken Wing took a

photograph of a police officer while she and her boyfriend were at Dunkin' Donuts (Figure 29).⁴ She explained that the photograph showed, "I don't have to be scared of the police no more. I'm not doin' nothin', you know, nothin' wrong no more. You know what I'm sayin'? So I can go up and ask them, 'Can I take your picture?' You know, I don't look like a crackhead. I don't look like I'm fittin' to rob nobody. I can go in stores now. I feel good about myself now." The information that police officers gleaned from Chicken Wing's appearance was so different today that she actually felt comfortable approaching the police officer in Dunkin' Donuts and asking him if she could take his photograph for her "documentary." She even joked with him when he asked her what her documentary was about. She replied, "'Criminals.' He said, 'But I'm the good guy, right?' I said, 'Yes, you are.'" Chicken Wing's



Figure 29. Chicago Police

photograph and her exchange with the police officer revealed a dramatic change not only in how she viewed herself, but also in how the officer viewed her. His assessment of her as a fellow person on the right side of the law stemmed from her appearance; she no

⁴ I cropped this photograph to remove the police officer's face. During our interview, Chicken Wing explained that she "really just wanted the Chicago Police badge," which the photograph now reflects.

longer looked like a “crackhead.” She noted that prior to her last incarceration, when she still was using drugs, she would have received a very different response from this officer: “I was lookin’ tore up back then! Like a crackhead! They’d of been scared of me. Not scared of me physically, but like, ‘Get away.’ You know.” She explained that a “crackhead” looked like, “Breasts like this, but sunk in. Your neck’s sunk in. You’re lookin’ like a wreck. Like I was twenty years ago. I looked-ed bad. I looked-ed like I was dead. I just didn’t have the dirt poured on me...It’s crazy. And you think you’re lookin’ good, but you’re lookin’ a hot mess.” Chicken Wing did not just look unhealthy; she looked decidedly unfeminine: too skinny, sunken in breasts, disheveled, an overall inattentiveness to her appearance, which broadcasted a “dirty” identity.

Taking control of one’s appearance was a way for women to communicate personal transformation and to accomplish femininity. The Lioness reflected on a recent interaction with a police officer in which she and her friend used their “sex appeal” to flirt their way out of a ticket, even though her friend was driving without a driver’s license. She recalled that the officer told her she did not need to get out of the car, and “was like, ‘No, you just sit there and look pretty.’” She described that his reaction made her feel “so good” and explained:

You know any other time they be like, “Get out the car! Put your hands up against the car!” You know. If, you know, African-American...in the hood, they gonna make the woman get out and put her hands on the car and, you know I’m sayin’? He was like, “Uh-uh, baby, you stay in the car and just sit there and look pretty.” Do you know that made me feel like, “Hey!”

Like Chicken Wing, The Lioness noted how her clean appearance changed what in the past would have been a confrontational interaction with a police officer that easily could

have ended in arrest. Her “sex appeal” and flirtatious femininity set her apart from other Black women “in the hood” whom the police automatically read as criminal. Rather than worry that the officer would find a reason to arrest her friend and her, The Lioness felt in control of the situation. That control stemmed from her rehabilitated feminine appearance.

The Lioness took pride in her new appearance, sharing a photograph of her personal hygiene items to illustrate how important it was that she took care of herself



Figure 30. Personal hygiene items

(Figure 30). The photograph captured a wealth of items: shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soap, bath beads, perfumes, toothpaste, toothbrushes, a bath loofah, cotton swabs, cocoa butter, and toilet

paper, among other things. The photograph showed how The Lioness was different from the woman she used to be, when she would stay out overnight getting high at unfamiliar places and would be without any personal hygiene items in the morning. She recalled a specific incident when she stole soap, toothpaste, and deodorant from a store. The man working behind the counter confronted her outside. She explained:

He said, “Hey!” And I turned around, and I was fittin’ to run. He said, “I’mma let you have that!” He said, “But a real woman would keep,” you

know...he was sayin' things that made me feel bad as a woman...he was sayin' things that, I, I should have it, and I should be ashamed of myself if I didn't have it, but he made me feel so bad as a woman that I could not keep my personals and keep my hygienes up. I mean he was just tellin' me that I need to keep myself clean and my hygeines up, I shouldn't have to steal, I should have money to buy it, I mean he made me feel so bad. So from that day, I vowed that I would never, ever, ever be without hygiene products. And I am not. Never ever.

The store worker did not judge The Lioness for breaking the law (i.e. stealing). Rather, he shamed her for failing to behave like a “real woman.” This judgment stuck with her for a long time, and taking care of her personal hygiene and appearance today was a way to rehabilitate her femininity. The Lioness added that she now made sure she had three of every personal hygiene item she might need, storing her back-up supply in a suitcase, to ensure she never ran out. She commented, “Because a woman is supposed to always be clean, and fresh, and smelling good.”

Just as drug use, violence, and trauma were embodied, so was recovery in women's weight gain, improved complexions, and overall cleaned-up appearances. Women repeatedly noted their clean, healthy appearances today as signs of their recovery from drug use and criminal activity. To underscore this point, they contrasted their current appearances with vivid descriptions of how they looked when they were “in their addictions” and “in the streets.” In the past, police officers, lawyers, partners, children, family members, and friends read women's appearances as evidence of their drug use and “criminality” (i.e. their “dirtiness”). Their failed feminine appearances reflected ways they were not living up to their roles as partners, mothers, and law-abiding citizens. Rehabilitating their feminine appearances provided a way for women to demonstrate the deeper changes they were making in their lives, particularly working on their recovery

and ending their involvement with the streets, and to gain recognition for these transformations.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships also were important markers of women's transitions from "failed" to "rehabilitated" femininity. Andrea Leverentz (2006:477, 2014) found in her research with formerly incarcerated women in Chicago that women's romantic relationships could "support changing self-conceptions." This finding is consistent with my research, as women's reflections on past and current relationships often provided insight to their "sense of self" (Leverentz 2014:114). Some women reflected on past relationships with abusive men as an unfortunate part of the drug- and crime-involved lifestyles they once lived. Chicken Wing, for instance, recalled the problems in her relationship with her children's father:

He jumped on me. My older kids' father jumped, that's because I didn't like me! It's not, you know, I know I got jumped on, but it was, you know, it was like I did a lot of shit, you know.

CR: Like what?

Chicken Wing: I'm jealous-hearted. You know what I'm sayin'? That's a trip. I don't never want to be like that again. I never, that Chicken Wing is dead. That Chicken Wing died when I went to prison.

While Chicken Wing acknowledged that her children's father was the one who was physically abusive and that it was his decision to treat her that way, she focused on how her self-perceived faults prompted his abusive behavior. More generally, Chicken Wing noted that her insecurities caused problems in all of her past romantic relationships, stressing that her character flaws – low self-esteem, neediness, jealousy – compelled her

to act in ways that strained relationships with her partners. She did not think she deserved better than the poor treatment these men gave her, and thus she settled for unfulfilling relationships. The old Chicken Wing was the type of woman who experienced abuse in a relationship, but not the new Chicken Wing. The absence of such relationships in her life today was a testament to the personal changes she had made and the different, stronger, confident woman she had become.

Denise also discussed multiple abusive relationships she survived prior to coming to the recovery home, particularly her relationship with her children's father. This relationship spanned several years, and Denise reflected on how difficult it was to end the relationship with him definitively. At one point, she and her children stayed at a domestic violence shelter. Throughout the stay, Denise maintained contact with her partner and frequently called him from a pay phone near her children's new school. She explained that someone who knew she was staying at the shelter, perhaps someone from the school, notified staff members at the shelter that she regularly was using the phone to contact her children's father. She described being angry when the staff members confronted her about the calls, but explained, "I was justifyin' and minimizin', you know, not, not thinkin', now I see why they was sayin' that. It was for my own good." When I asked her to clarify how, she replied:

Because! Obviously, I'm not thinkin' clearly to be subjectin' myself to all that. So I can't make healthy choices, decision. So somebody that's not in the predicament that I'm in can probably say, you know, help me out with my thinkin'. You know, so I look at it now like I understand. But then it was like, "How dare you?"... You know. Crazy.

Denise indicated that her understanding of the abusive relationship with her children's father had evolved significantly over the years. She reasoned that back when she was in the relationship, she had not been capable of making "healthy choices" and had resented the shelter staff members' efforts to restrict her behavior. Looking back on the situation several years later, Denise commented that she actually had needed someone to "help me out with my thinkin'." Although she did not excuse her children's father's abusive behavior, she pointed to what she perceived was her role in prolonging the relationship. Had she been able to make better "choices" and "decisions," she suspected that she would have ended the relationship much sooner. Denise's reflection here highlighted her shifting sense of self; she had become a different woman who was better equipped to think correctly and make "healthy" choices, specifically about relationships with men.

Getting it right. Whereas developing fulfilling, long-term romantic relationships was not necessarily a goal to which most women aspired, achieving these relationships represented ways that women felt they were changing their lives for the better. At times, women drew on their current, positive romantic relationships as evidence of their personal transformations. Throughout our interviews, Chicken Wing talked about how much she valued her current relationship with her boyfriend. She took a couple of photographs of him for this project, including one of him on the el (Figure 31) after they parted ways on Christmas morning to spend time with their own families before meeting up again that night at a church function. She shared another photograph that someone had

taken of her boyfriend and her Christmas night⁵ and explained that it showed,

“Happiness. Cuz I’m happy with him.” She elaborated:

Really I never had a relationship like this. Even when I was in the street, I never had a, a relationship where I felt that we love each other at the same time. It’s always I love you more or he love me more...[But] we like bein’ with each other. We like talkin’ to each other. You know what I’m sayin’? We like eatin’ together. We like doing things together. Like they had dancin’ under the stars this summer downtown. We went there for the, uh, steppin’ set. We had a good time. He videotaped it. We had a good time down there. We do a lot of things together. We go to the show. We just do a lot of things together that I never had a, that type of relationship with another man before.

Chicken Wing stressed what she valued about this relationship by comparing it to all that was missing from

her past

relationships. The

relationship

provided yet

another point of

contrast with her

past lifestyle.



Figure 31. Christmas morning

Additionally, Chicken Wing attributed the fulfilling aspects of her current relationship to the personal changes she had made since the start of the 21-year time period she spent in prison. She commented, “God said He would make your latter years better than your first years, and I believe that now, because my latter years are better than my first years. And I was in the world! I’m a better person now since I did 20 years.

⁵ I am not able to show this photograph due to confidentiality concerns.

Yeah, I am. I'm a better person." When I asked Chicken Wing how she was a better person, she replied:

I just can feel it. I just know I am. How I treat people, how I talk to people. I just, I'm a, I give now. I was selfish back then. You know, I was a taker. I'm not like that now. I don't mind volunteerin' for somethin' now. Back then I would've never did that! I don't mind sharin' what I got now. Back then I wasn't like that. I was just out for myself. I'm not like that today. You know what I'm sayin'?...Yeah. It's better not, to, to be a giver, it's better. Yep. I don't mess around on him, you know. I don't, you know, do nothin' like that. I don't want nobody else, you know what I'm sayin'?...I'm just, you know, I like bein' with him.

No longer a "needy," "jealous-hearted" woman who lacked self-esteem, Chicken Wing finally was able to enjoy a relationship with a man who treated her well and loved her for who she was. She explained that this relationship only was possible after she became a new woman and learned to love herself. Stressing this point, she commented, "I'm not that person no more. I'm not the Chicken Wing that went to prison...He got the best Chicken Wing. He didn't want that Chicken Wing before I went to prison, so he got the better Chicken Wing. He got the best deal. Yeah. He got the best deal." Chicken Wing felt that her boyfriend benefitted as much from their relationship as she did, reflecting the equal contributions they made to the relationship and ways they supported one another.

In a similar fashion, The Lioness discussed how different her current relationship was from all of her past relationships and specifically how her role in and contributions to these relationships differed. Talking about her current boyfriend, she explained:

I'm never been, um, in a relationship like this. I never, I mean, most of the guys that I was with, they was just, maybe 'cause I looked-ed good, had nice body, had a lil' money, could go make money, you know, I always had sugar daddies that kept me with cars and I bring somethin' to the relationship. Here I am in this relationship, we got nothin'. He got nothin'.

So what we get we build together. And so for me to be his inspiration and for him to do good, man, it feels good...It feels good because he loves me.

In contrast to past partners who expected her to engage in sex work in order to earn money to contribute to the relationships, The Lioness's current boyfriend provided her with money and food so that she would not have to return to her old ways of financially providing for herself. In other words, the relationship supported her in accomplishing a rehabilitated femininity. In exchange, she provided her boyfriend with support and encouragement as he attempted to leave behind gang life after being in and out of prison over the past 13 years. She helped him to find a new place to stay so that he no longer had to live with a friend who still got high and provided him with "deodorant, all his personals...sheets, towels...house shoes...[and] this plaque about how I love to...be here for him." She noted more than once that "he never had a good woman" and explained how she was teaching him how to be in a relationship. In line with traditional notions of femininity, she assumed responsibility for nurturing their relationship and ensuring its success. Their relationship allowed her to become a "good," "clean" woman, meaning she no longer engaged in sex work, used drugs, or broke the law. By being a "good woman," she was able to support her boyfriend in his recovery and benefit from the positive aspects of their relationship.

As Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) argue in their theory of cognitive transformation to understand desistance, relationships can be important "hooks for change" that help formerly incarcerated women who already are open to changing their sense of self further their cognitive transformation processes. In line with this approach, Chicken Wing, The Lioness, and others described how their ability to connect with others

and form partnerships was rooted in *and* reinforced their new sense of self. From the women's perspectives, they had to be willing to make and learn how to make personal changes in order for these relationships to be possible. In turn, the benefits these relationships provided helped them in maintaining their new identities. In other words, the relationships in themselves did not compel women to end their drug use and street involvement. Rather, women's "cognitive transformations" (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002) in concert with their romantic relationships encouraged the new sense of self they developed. Women's current romantic relationships were evidence of, as well as a vehicle for, their rehabilitated femininity. Their relationships only were possible because they were better women. Specifically, they were sober, honest with their partners, sexually faithful, and not involved with the street lifestyle. These qualities, as well as their romantic relationships, strongly contested the "controlling image" of the "jezebel" (Collins 2000, 2005) that, as African-American women living in severely economically disadvantaged, racially segregated communities, the women had encountered throughout their lives.

"I want to be able to be marriage material." Just as women's reflections on their current romantic relationships provided insights about their sense of self, women's discussions about marriage were similarly telling. At least two women were married, and at least five more explicitly identified marriage as a goal. Ms. Fields talked at length about how she was working to re-unite with her ex-husband. Her reflections highlighted the interconnection of religion, recovery, and rehabilitated femininity.

Ms. Fields explained that throughout her addiction, she had “manipulated” her ex-husband and used him for his money. With just under four years of clean time, she explained that she was capable of being a better partner to him today because, “I know how to love today...And I’m not that person who I was. You know. And I, I would not now do anything to hurt anybody deliberately, you know, I just won’t do it now...I’ve been transformed...Yeah, I’m not that person, so, you know.” Ms. Fields explained that her ex-husband also was interested in remarrying but only after she could show him she had changed, particularly through her participation in AA and NA. According to Ms. Fields:

He told me that once I work 12 Steps, we’ll start dating. Because now he goes to [AL-ANON] meetings, right, and he knows that from a meeting that he went to, he heard that after a person works 12 Steps, that they have, you know, really allowed God to go in and, you know, let them see who they really are and what they, you know, and so that’s what, what he’s waitin’ on.

When I asked Ms. Fields how she felt about her ex-husband’s stipulation to get back together, she described it as motivating and seemed to agree that she needed to work more on improving herself before becoming his wife again. Specifically, she said, “I felt that there was some hope, you know, because I want to be married, you know. I do really want to be married, but I want to be able to be marriage material.” Ms. Fields clarified how she would know when she was marriage material:

I can see a little of it now. I can see, you know, that I’m workin’ towards that. Um, one, one would be for me to have my own finances because I used to depend on his money so much and take all of his money. Yeah. I need to have my own money. I need to be able to bring somethin’ to the table... So those, those [12] Steps’ll teach me how to be a wife, how to be a friend, how to be a neighbor, how to do everything, you see what I’m sayin’? And I’ve gotten so much better than I used to be. That’s why I can

see that I'm getting to be, I can be that material. You know. It's still gonna take some work.

Ms. Fields's reflections on marriage indicated just how intertwined her sense of identity was with her recovery from drug use, the 12-Step logic, religious transformation, romantic relationships, and ideas about proper femininity. Only by working the 12 Steps and deepening her relationship with God could she ever envision herself becoming "marriage material." By most measures of "successful" reentry, Ms. Fields already had done quite well. She had been out of prison for nearly four years, and during that time she had lived at a variety of church-based recovery homes and participated in various support and employment programs for formerly incarcerated people. She had obtained her own subsidized apartment at a single room occupancy (SRO) building where she had been living for a little over a year at the time of our interviews. She also was attending college at a four-year university and working toward her bachelor's degree in social work. She was employed part-time as an outreach worker for a women's reentry program of which she was an alumna. She recently had accepted a position on the board of directors at a recovery home where she had lived following her last incarceration. Throughout our interviews Ms. Fields highlighted these markers of her personal transformation, as well as her involvement with 12 Steps, her relationship with her sponsor, and her commitment to serving the Lord. She viewed all of these aspects of her identity as helping her to become "marriage material," one goal she had not yet attained. Tracing Ms. Fields's path since leaving prison and paying attention to her hopes and goals for the future brought the gendered aspects of the post-incarceration moral order into focus.

Ambivalence about marriage. Women rarely identified marriage as a goal without also noting their ambivalence. Even The Lioness, who stressed throughout all of our interviews how much she benefitted from her relationship with her boyfriend and how they loved one another, was hesitant to marry. She explained, in a very low, unenthusiastic tone of voice, that they already had a set of wedding rings on layaway. When I asked how she felt about their marriage plans, she replied:

That's all he talk about. I don't care what it is, that's all he talk about is the rings, the rings, the rings...He would tell everybody I'm his fiancée...I mean, I can't crush the man like that...I want to get married, and I love him, and it'll probably be all right, but I know if I marry him, I just gotta, just, I'm just gonna, cuz he's the type of man that wants to, he's a, he like to be like his father. His father used to go home, bring the check home to his mama, and that's what he does.

Despite asserting her desire to marry her boyfriend and reassuring herself that “it’ll probably be all right,” The Lioness hinted that marriage might not be the best next step in their relationship. Specifically, she tied her reservations to her boyfriend’s controlling behavior, which he justified because of the provider role he assumed in their relationship. In exchange for providing for her financially, he demanded that she not accept money from old friends who were men. While she enjoyed how special he made her feel, she indicated that his attentiveness could be overwhelming at times and even “scary a little bit, because, you know, you have somebody that love you so hard that, if he, he’s jealous, you know.” The Lioness explained how her boyfriend already restricted her, and she worried that his control only would grow after they married.

Ella, who had been married for several years at the time of our interviews, also said that compromising her autonomy was a cost of marriage. She explained that she had

wanted to get married because she desired the “friendship” and “closeness” her mother and father had shared in their marriage. She wondered today, though, if she could have achieved those things without getting married. She commented, “But I think it, if I woulda thought it through, I, I, I woulda stayed by myself.” Ella called her husband her “best friend” and stressed that she loved him, but she commented, “Sometimes I do miss, uh, havin’ the freedom bein’ by myself.” She explained that her husband drove her to and from work, as well as other appointments, when his schedule allowed. Coordinating their schedules and transportation required them to frequently check in with each other by phone, which at times became a burden. Ella explained:

Ok, there was a time I didn’t even depend on that. I depended on Ella to get from point A to point B, whether I had to walk, catch the bus, get a ride, whatever. I depended on me, not on somebody else. Cuz guess what? Now if I’m dependent on you, and then you disappoint me? Now I’m disappointed, and angry, you know, why did I, uh, put this faith in you or put this trust in you and all this and that? And you got me used to it.

Ella’s ambivalence reflected a tension between the competing ideals of marriage and independence. On one hand, Ella’s marriage represented how far she had come since her last incarceration. No longer homeless, in the streets, and using drugs, Ella had established a home with a man who loved and respected her. As someone who also had been incarcerated, her husband understood the struggles associated with overcoming a criminal record and maintaining sobriety, and he shared her orientation to recovery. The marriage helped Ella to become the woman she wanted to be. Nevertheless, the benefits of marriage came at a cost to her independence, which was a fundamental part of her new identity.

The women's thoughts about marriage connect to a long history of Black women's skepticism about this patriarchal institution. Shirley A. Hill (2005) documents Black's women's resistance to marriage during the Reconstruction Era, arguing that it:

rendered fewer economic and gender privileges to African American women, as black men were ill prepared to support them financially or protect them from the onslaught of racist and sexist stereotypes...After centuries of slavery and sexual assault at the hands of black and white men, it is not surprising that many opted to control their own lives and sexuality, often by evading patriarchal marriage. (P. 79)

This skepticism persists today, as the "strong sense of independence" (Hill 2005:95) that Black women have developed over the years in the face of the intersecting oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism clashes with conventional expectations of women's passivity and submissiveness in heterosexual relationships, particularly marriage. Marriage remains a particularly risky institution for low-income and poor women. In their research with low-income single mothers, Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas (2005:113) found that women deeply revered the institution but only felt it was suitable to marry after they and their partners had established their own, independent financial security, which would provide "some insurance against a marital failure." Additionally, the mothers viewed marriage as a long-term goal that was appropriate only after they matured and were ready to settle down. Finally, the mothers indicated their fears that marriage would give their partners license to act in controlling, patriarchal ways. Participants' ambivalence about marriage indicated limits to the benefits their particular type of rehabilitated femininity provided.

Independence. Women indicated their reservations about committing to relationships in general, particularly when they sensed that doing so would compromise

their hard-fought autonomy. After enduring a complete lack of freedom in jail and prison; severely restricted living conditions in drug treatment programs and recovery homes; and the intense surveillance of parole and probation, women were reluctant to limit their independence for the sake of a man. None of the benefits that a romantic relationship could provide was worth compromising one's independence, particularly because women knew that dependence on a man would make them vulnerable once again to a number of risks, particularly violence, drug use, and trouble with the law.

Some women discussed why they chose not to be in romantic relationships. Their reasons often were rooted in a commitment to prioritizing their own goals and plans and not risking a romantic relationship getting in the way. Denise and Olivia each talked about recently ending long-term relationships because of their partners' behaviors. In our final interview, Denise seemed conflicted when recalling how she had broken up with her boyfriend earlier that day. She explained that he had Hepatitis C, which he had contracted years prior through intravenous drug use. He already had undergone a liver transplant because of the disease and took medication regularly. He pressured Denise to have unprotected sex with him. She reluctantly did and was worried not only about possibly contracting the disease but also about why her boyfriend would pressure her to do something that could harm her. She explained:

And it's, like, sometimes I be wanted to tell him, "I don't wanna be with you no more because if you love me like you say you do, you wouldn't have unprotected sex with me." Now I don't put the whole blame on him because I'm, I'm partially to blame, too...But I'm just saying, had I had any type of life-threatening disease and I know somebody say they care about me, and I know what I'm going through, these liver transplants, taking all this med- if I loved you I don't wanna see you go through that...So I had to, to try to tell myself, "Denise, he don't love you, because

if he did, he wouldn't, not under any circumstances would he put you in harm's way."...And I struggle with that.

Denise described making a decision to put herself first, after coming to the realization that her boyfriend did not really care for her if he was willing to prioritize his sexual desires over her health. His response when Denise told him that she no longer wanted to be with him reassured her that she indeed had made the right decision. Denise recalled:

And the things that he was saying to me, it just really just told me he don't care. He was like, "You know what? You know, you still the same dope fiend ass lady you was before you came into the program. You ain't shit. You ain't got shit. You never was shit. You ain't never gonna be shit." And I'm just sitting up here like, "Damn. You know, if he really cared about me, he wouldn't say nothing like that to me."

She added, "And I ain't, I ain't been talked down like that since I was sober." Although Denise expressed that she wanted to get married some day, this man clearly was not the type of person she wanted as a lifelong partner. The dynamic in their relationship echoed past relationships in which partners had abused and taken advantage of her. The old Denise had put up with this behavior. Ending the relationship with her boyfriend reflected the new woman she had become.

Denise described how lucky and grateful she felt that she had not contracted HIV or another serious disease throughout her drug use, and she attributed her relative good health to God. She explained that when deciding whether to end the relationship, she thought to herself:

"But you sitting here, you throwing your life on the line after God done blessed you so many times. You know, you think you invincible. You know, that you exempt from the whole world. Everybody else can get this and get that, but God done blessed you so much, girl, you covered in the blood of Jesus." You know, and, and, and I really struggle with that because I don't wanna keep putting myself in harm's way.

Denise's reasoning recalled Nyla's imagery (noted in the previous chapter) of being under "God's umbrella" and "in the light" while in her sobriety versus being outside "of His protection" and "in the darkness" while in her addiction. Even though Denise was not using drugs, the relationship with her boyfriend exposed her to the same risks she encountered while in her addiction. She commented, "I didn't catch this shit when I was in my addiction, and now I'm sober. I'm still doing some crazy, dumb shit when I should be able to think clearly now." It also is noteworthy that her boyfriend's positive Hepatitis C status was the result of his past drug use, and stigmatized diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV often are associated with dirtiness. Although caring for relationships is a traditional sign of proper femininity, Denise's relationship with this man could not be a marker of a "clean," rehabilitated femininity. Rather, it pulled Denise back toward a "dirty," failed femininity she still was working to leave behind.

While commenting on a photograph of herself and her ex-boyfriend Joseph, Carmel reflected on her reasons for not wanting to resume their relationship. She explained that the photograph was taken on one of the first days she had seen him after two years. Joseph had accompanied Carmel and some of her family members to church and then joined them for a meal at one of the family member's homes. Carmel was surprised she no longer felt the same type of love for him as she had during the approximately seven years they had been together. Throughout their entire relationship, Carmel had used drugs. Joseph also had used for most of that time, with some periods of recovery. Carmel recalled how he had taken care of her financially by making sure they had a place to live and food. In addition to encouraging Carmel to go to rehab and school,

he tried to protect her from the harsher aspects of drug use. She noted, “he would make sure I had those drugs so he didn’t want me out there sellin’ it, he didn’t want me out there sellin’ my body or none of that.” Carmel had never stopped using drugs during their relationship, and thus their recent reunion was the first time Joseph had seen her while she was in recovery. She explained that despite how close they had been, it felt like they were meeting for the first time.

He don’t know me, he don’t know me. But I know him sober and I know him clean. But he don’t know me sober so for him to see me Sunday and we went to my aunt’s and everything else, I understand how he felt because he don’t know me. He don’t even know the person I am. And he said it. He said, “You totally, you know, like a stranger.” And I know, I am... You know it, like, put him in a state of shock or somethin’.

Carmel was so different from the woman Joseph had known throughout their seven-year relationship that he was uncertain how to interact with her. She commented, “I had to tell him it’s okay to hug me. He wouldn’t even hug me. He wouldn’t, I say, ‘It’s okay, you can hug me.’ He wouldn’t. he wouldn’t even hug me, ’cause he didn’t, he don’t know how I woulda reacted.”

While Carmel still cared for Joseph and was happy to see him again, she did not want to resume their romantic relationship. Commenting on her different feelings for Joseph today, she explained, “I can see the happiness in the picture for, for both of us. But I can’t see us bein’ together. I don’t see it, and I see us bein’ friends. Yeah.” She stressed that she was focused on her own plans, a focus that even was reflected in their getting together on a Sunday and attending Carmel’s church. I asked Carmel why they met at church rather than at a restaurant as they had a couple of days earlier. She replied:

'Cause I wasn't gonna let him distract my goals and my plans that I had been doin' for me. He either could've waited 'til I got out of church and I would have met him somewhere or he could've came and joined church because that's what I do every Sunday. And that's my schedule...I'm not turnin' around my schedule for him or nobody.

She added that she had not contacted Joseph throughout the following week because she was busy with her schoolwork. Carmel was focused on maintaining “the new me,” and the foundational components of her new identity were her relationship with God, her sobriety, school, and being able to provide for herself.

After all of her comments about not feeling the same about Joseph, I was surprised when Carmel casually mentioned that she would marry him if he asked her to. Her thoughts about marriage actually fit quite well, though, with her reflections about her new identity. In response to my question about what marriage meant to her, Carmel explained:

Bein' able to have that significant other right there as a friend. Someone you could trust, and someone just to have their fun with, you know. I mean, we both recovering now, now I understand when he was trying to recover now. Um, and that support system for the both of us would be very good for each other because when he was you know, cleanin' his self up, I wasn't supportive... Well, today, both of us is you know, in recovery and everything and I would just like to share some of that with him.

The desire for a positive marriage was rooted in Carmel's new sense of self. It was another marker of her personal transformation, particularly because she had pawned the engagement ring Joseph had given her many years ago in order to have money to support her drug use. Marriage had not been possible in the past because of her drug use and her dependence on Joseph to support that habit. She had not been capable of being a good wife to him. Looking forward, though, Carmel could envision a marriage with Joseph in

which she was able to support him because she had taken the time to build up her new sense of self.

Motherhood

Thirty-one of the 36 women were mothers, and all discussed how their drug use and incarceration had impacted their relationships with their children in long-lasting ways. At the time of our interviews, none of the women were living with their children. Many children were adults and living on their own. Most of the younger children were living with family members, sometimes as a result of involvement with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) but more commonly because family members had stepped in to assume a caretaking role when the women's drug use interfered with their mothering or when the women were arrested. Women indicated ways that the criminal legal system judged them to be bad mothers and described their efforts to move past these judgments. The stories of Ann W. and Iris illustrate how race and class shaped the experiences and consequences of being judged a bad mother.

Ann W.: "I was humiliated...I was ashamed." Ann W. was a 44-year-old Black woman and the mother of six children ranging in age from five to 17 years old. All of her children lived with their father. Throughout our three interviews, Ann W. talked about how she was rebuilding a relationship with each child. She described numerous ways that she had let her children down over the years, such as using drugs throughout her pregnancies, frequently being homeless with her children and their father, and generally being absent when she was "out on the streets" using drugs.

During our first interview, Ann W. spoke at length about a child endangerment charge that was one of her first cases several years ago. She and her children recently had moved into public housing, and Ann W. left them in the care of a family member while she was out using drugs. The family member left the children alone in the apartment, and someone notified the police that the children were unsupervised. The police eventually located Ann W. and arrested her for child endangerment, and local television news media heavily covered the case. She stressed that she held herself responsible for the situation and was “horrificed” today to think of how her children could have been hurt while she was away. Yet she remained critical of how the media portrayed her case:

Of course, TV gon’ make it, they gon’ tell the horrifyin’ part of it. But I always went to the grocery store, had plenty of groceries in the kitchen. I had beds, it wasn’t much because I was just startin’ off! I’m, I’d just moved in my place, we had mattresses but, you know? I was just startin’! I was workin’ my way up but, you know, they say, “Oh they was sleepin’ on,” you know, this. We was sleepin’ on beds but it was like, you know. And um, I always kept food, you know, I always went grocery shoppin’, but, “There was no food, the kids was eatin’ out the ’frigerator.” And it probably did happen like, happen kinda like that because I didn’t, what I mean by that, horror, somethin’ that’s horrifyin’ and scary like that, I didn’t wanna look back. Man, I done been through some stuff I’m talkin’ honest, I had to see a psychiatrist and had to talk this stuff out.

The court proceedings were particularly painful because she felt completely exposed and judged by the public. She recalled how during each court appearance, the judge announced her charges:

“Child endangerment, she got a child,” and you know, every time I came out the, there it go once again! They readin’ these papers, you know, they readin’ your life history off. “Yeah, this and that. She left her kids.” And these people is in the court, every time, and every time I went in the courtroom this was to audiotape.

In addition to the actual charges she faced and the prison sentence she ultimately received, the public judgment she faced as a “bad mother” took a tremendous mental toll. She explained, “I was humiliated by that...I was on TV for somethin’ like that. And then I had to go into a courtroom with cameras still...It was humiliating.” She worried that after seeing her on TV people would think, “She, look at her! She, girl, she left her kids.” She worried that this stigma would stick to her for the rest of her life. She explained, “That was real scary for me...I was ashamed! I thought that people, years [from now], like as in today, they would say, ‘That was, you was the one that was on, that!’”

Ann W.’s fears underscored the powerful “controlling image” of the “welfare queen,” popularized by Ronald Reagan to justify cuts to social welfare programs in the 1980s (Collins 2000:80). Reagan repeatedly told the fictionalized story of a Black woman in Chicago who used multiple fake Social Security numbers to illegally collect government benefits, which she used to support a lavish lifestyle that included steaks piled up high in her freezer and a Cadillac (Hays 2003, Roberts 2002). Patricia Hill Collins (2000) paints the popular picture:

In contrast to the welfare mother who draws upon the moral capital attached to American motherhood, the welfare queen constitutes a highly materialistic, domineering, and manless working-class Black woman. Relying on the public dole, Black welfare queens are content to take the hard-earned money of tax-paying Americans and remain married to the state. (P. 80)

As a poor, Black, unmarried, drug-using woman living in public housing, Ann W. could not make any legitimate claims to motherhood. The criminal legal system, media, and general public judged her as a deviant, unfit, poor Black mother. Throughout her adulthood, Ann W. had served four separate prison sentences. She pointed out that no

state's attorney or judge ever offered her drug treatment in lieu of incarceration. For every court case she faced, she received a prison sentence.

Ann W. also had not escaped DCFS involvement. She had used drugs throughout all but one of her pregnancies. After giving birth to one of her sons, she experienced a practice that low-income and poor Black women are disproportionately likely to face; a nurse at the hospital tested her for opiates (Roberts 2002). The test was positive, and the hospital notified DCFS. Although the father of Ann W.'s other children was not the biological father of this son, he stepped in to care for the newborn in order to avoid a foster placement. Ann W. did not work with the DCFS caseworker assigned to her case and refused to move into a residential drug treatment program DCFS recommended because, as she explained, "I was on a roll, remember I told you I was in and out getting drugs, usin' drugs. I was back out there on the streets." She asserted that DCFS never terminated her parental rights, but at the time of our interviews, about 16 years after this DCFS involvement, Ann W. was not certain of her legal parental status. She was less concerned with the legal status, though, because she had regular contact with her children, all of whom still were living with their father, despite his own drug use over the years.

Iris: "You don't look like the type that needs to be going to prison." Iris was about as different as possible from Ann W. Iris was a 49-year-old white European immigrant and the mother of two children, ages 16 and 13. She described living an upper-middle-class lifestyle prior to her last arrest. As a college graduate, she had enjoyed a successful corporate career, lived with her husband and children "in a nice house in the

suburbs,” and drove a Jaguar. Iris described an escalating problem with alcohol and pain medication, which led to her arrest for three driving under the influence (DUI) charges over 10 years. The consequences of her first DUI were “no big deal.” She faced more severe consequences for her second DUI, but her family and financial resources helped to mitigate some of the long-term impact. The court ordered her to spend about six months in an inpatient drug treatment program. Iris recalled:

It was time away from the family for, uh, receive that many months so my ex-husband had the kids, and I was able to keep my job, even, they were even paying like the long-term disability benefits so the family was getting some income, so things didn't really get, I mean they were bad, but I was really participating in the program, I think. After maybe like a month or two, I was able to go home and visit like on the weekends like maybe spend one day like from Saturday morning until, um, Saturday night, be with the kids, and I completed their program successfully.

Iris moved back home with her family and went back to her job. After a few months, she began drinking and taking pain pills again. She was able to keep things together for about six years until her most recent arrest for a DUI she received after crashing her car. The DUI was her third, meaning it could result in a felony conviction. At the time of this arrest, her daughter was visiting family overseas, and Iris was supposed to meet her there in a couple of days to bring her home in time for the start of the school year. Her husband and son were on vacation out of state, so Iris was unable to reach him immediately. She recalled:

It wasn't even nobody to call...I mean that's the only family I had, so it was just like so painful and overwhelming and I'm like, “So what's gonna happen now? What do I do?” It was just, it was, it was just horrible. Horrible experience.

CR: So it sounds like right away you were already flooded with...

Iris: Right, I was flooded with all these emotions and, and fears and anxieties about, “Oh my God, what did I just do? What’s gonna happen now?” It was just like horrible.

In addition to worrying about reaching her husband and ensuring her daughter would be able to return home, Iris was overwhelmed by what she anticipated would be a harsh penalty for her third DUI. She explained:

I knew that most likely I would be going to jail, if not prison...I was aware, well aware...it took me two years after the second DUI to get my license back. I remember going through different agencies, going in front of the Secretary of State for the hearing, trying to get my license back. I remember [the] hearing and these people clearly telling me, it’s like, “Hopefully, this is the last time we are seeing you here, because we want you to know and understand that the third one is almost impossible to get your license back, and you will be going to prison and you will have, you know, this and this and that,” and it’s just like, I, these, all these tapes just started playing back in my head.

The combination of the severity of the charge she faced and her inability to meet her daughter abroad overwhelmed Iris. She described having a “nervous breakdown” while in lock-up at the county jail and was sent to the hospital for an overnight stay. When she returned to jail the next day, she continued to worry about her daughter and about losing her job of “over 12 years...the best job I ever had.” Iris felt completely isolated and alone.

Iris eventually reached her husband, who switched her plane ticket to his name and flew overseas to meet their daughter and bring her back home. He was furious, though, and told her they were getting a divorce. After about five weeks in jail, she eventually met with a public defender who secured her release on an I-Bond, essentially a personal recognizance bond that allowed her to be released from jail without paying anything for bail. Her husband allowed her to return home while she awaited the

conclusion of her case, which provided Iris with critical stability and allowed her to be with her children while she worked with her public defender to prepare for her case. Iris recalled that the state had a great deal of evidence against her, including videotapes of her field sobriety test following the car accident. Because of the tapes, her public defender advised her to plead guilty, and he managed to get her a sentence of two years of probation and fees. According to Iris:

There is a prison sentence that's almost like a required, a minimum requirement for the third DUI, I don't know how I got out of it, I think it was clearly God, because he [the public defender] used five weeks that I was in jail, he said, "I'm just gonna use that, you don't look like the type that needs to be going to prison." Those were his very words, and he said, "I think I can convince the judge. Prison isn't going to do anything for you."

CR: What did you think he meant by that when he said you don't look like the type?

Iris: Like maybe if I go, like you don't belong, I, I'm not sure like maybe you don't belong there because the crime you have committed you have a substance abuse problem, but you, maybe it will damage you more than it will, I, I don't know, I really don't know. That's what he said. I really don't know why he said like, "You don't need to go there. Maybe we can get you out of there, maybe there is a different way that you could try to do substance abuse probation that you can do some of those other things."

The public defender implied that Iris looked different from the typical woman in prison: Black, poor, undereducated, unemployed, homeless or precariously housed. Her race and class privilege protected her from a prison sentence. Unlike Ann W., the court read Iris as a mother who was worthy of treatment and who only would be harmed, along with her children, by a prison sentence. As Iris speculated, the courts viewed her not as a criminal, but as someone who needed help for a drinking problem. While the state never offered

Ann W. treatment as sentences for any of her cases, the state never pursued prison sentences for any of Iris's cases.

Although Iris's social privilege shielded her from some aspects of criminalization, her arrest and conviction negatively impacted every aspect of her life. She explained, "I had not been able to recover. I have not been myself...there's a huge, huge impact on, on my life. In every area of my life. Family, relationship, financial, education, uh, career, living, um, health, like more like mental, if you will, uh, social, just about every single, yeah." She and her husband divorced. He won custody of their children, re-married, and moved to a far-away state to accept a lucrative job offer. Meanwhile, Iris struggled to stop drinking, find a job, keep an apartment, and maintain contact with her children. She, too, was punished, except not by the state.

"If I'm not right, I can't be right for them." Despite the stark differences in their social locations and experiences with the criminal legal system, Ann W. and Iris faced similar struggles regarding their identities as mothers. Both stressed the "guilt" and "shame" they felt as "bad mothers," and how overcoming that judgment was an important part of developing their new identities. Their strategies to become "good mothers" echoed themes that emerged across the interviews with mothers: they had to forgive themselves for the mistakes they made and the pain they caused their children and focus on how they could be involved in their children's lives today. Their first priority was to work on their recovery and on improving themselves so that they could be there for their children (McKim 2008; Opsal 2009). As Ann W. said, "I gotta work on me. If I'm not right, I can't be right for them [her children]."

While women wanted to rebuild relationships with their children, they feared that moving too quickly could jeopardize their own recovery and inhibit their ability to be in their children's lives in the ways they wanted. Iris stressed how she must build a "strong foundation" in order to be a good mother:

I just need to really, changing more on a, from the inside and building a strong foundation and just going forward not just surface wise. And not just trying to grab bits and pieces and maybe a job, an apartment, or buy a few things here or there, open a bank account, I just need to have something little more substance and a foundation like a solid program and some steps, and the sponsors.

While having a job, stable housing, and financial stability all were requirements for her to gain visitation with her children, these things alone were insufficient to mother appropriately. Only real changes that went beyond the surface and were achievable through a 12-Step-based recovery program would allow her to be in her children's lives permanently. Stacey discussed how she slowly was becoming involved with her seven and nine-year-old daughters' lives. Her sister had cared for both of her daughters since they were born. While Stacey described being anxious and excited to reunite with them as soon as possible, she added:

But first I have to get myself together to let them know that, well, she's sayin' one thing and then down the line she's gonna do another thing. So I'm gonna have to make sure that I'm ok. You know. 'Cause you never know what tomorrow brings. I might wake up and say I want to use drugs. I don't know. That's type of person I am. I don't know where I go from the next moment.

Having been out of prison for only about three months at the time of our interviews, Stacey knew she had a long way to go before she would feel secure in her recovery. She had been incarcerated four separate times throughout her adult life, meaning family

members and her children had witnessed her come home before and eventually return to prison. Stacey wanted to take the appropriate amount of time to feel secure not only for herself but also to prove to her family and children that this time would be different. Again and again, women stressed that not using drugs (i.e. a “clean” identity) was foundational to their identities as good mothers.

Being there. In reflecting on rebuilding relationships with their children, mothers also stressed the importance of being present in children’s lives, in contrast to the ways their drug use and incarceration had led them to be absent. New Life’s experience at the recovery home’s family event in which the senior staff member asked her to sing the “Grateful” song underscored this shift from absence to presence.⁶ New Life’s participation in this event demonstrated her growth as a mother. Her children accompanied her to the event and sang the “Grateful” song with her. This display of family togetherness contrasted with her past absence from her children’s lives. Although drug dealing allowed her to provide more than adequately for her children financially, the lifestyle required her to spend a lot of time away from them. She recalled that while participating in parenting classes in prison, she began to realize that she had “made them [her children] happy with a lot of material things,” but she had not spent enough time “communicating” with them and developing a “bond.” New Life regretted this trade-off and vowed to correct it going forward. To illustrate her point, New Life recounted a birthday party she threw for one of her daughters a few years ago. After her daughter

⁶ I discussed this event in more detail in the previous chapter on the post-incarceration moral order.

opened her birthday cards, many of which contained money from her relatives, New Life had to leave to meet a customer. She explained:

My daughter looked at me, she like, “Mom! What you fittin’ to do?” I said, “I’m fittin’ to go, um, and pick up somethin’. I’ll be back, ok?” She said, “Mom, I’ll give you all my money I got, Ma. You know what I really want for my birthday? I want a whole day with my mama.” Oh my God. Do you know how many days I cried thinkin’ about that day? Do you know I still walked out that door? Because I thought my baby was just talkin’, you know how kids say little stuff? But in reality my daughter wanted me there for her birthday!

New Life believed she was a better mother now because she was spending “quality time,” a value she learned in a parenting class in prison, with her children, such as at the recovery home’s family event. Her orientation to motherhood shifted from being a sound financial provider to being present and attentive.

The Lioness also contrasted her involvement in her children’s lives today with her former absence as a mother. She explained that her mother had taken care of all of her children while The Lioness was “in my addiction.” When her mother died, she did not feel that she could properly care for her children. She said, “I was unfit, I wasn’t worthy or responsible enough to be a parent, I gave my kids away. I took ’em to adoption agency, and I gave them away.” She added, “It was the best thing to do, because...I would have had my kids when I was out in my addiction, and I wasn’t ready to be a mother.” At the time of our interviews, The Lioness recently had reconnected with her children, nearly 20 years after they had been adopted. She described how she carefully was becoming a part of their lives:

The only thing is that I try not to ask, um, too much about their lives, you know? If they don’t offer to tell me, I don’t pry and be, “Well this, that,” you know, because it’s not that I...shouldn’t be told about it, it’s just, it’s

not important. What, what they're doin' with their lives and me a part of their life now today is what makes the difference, not the past. And what I love about, when I called, when I talk to 'em, and I always say, "Thank you and I'm sorry," they be like, "No, you did the best you, you did what you thought was best...you're not supposed to apologize." They don't want me to apologize. They don't want me to tell them...why I did it, they don't wanna hear nothing. All they want is they momma.

Importantly, The Lioness focused on how she could be there for her children today and going forward. The immediate support she could offer, as well as her promise to remain a part of their lives, outweighed past events that led to their separation.

Ann W. also talked about slowly entering her children's lives again and being mindful about how much they were ready to share with her. She shared photographs of each of her six children with me and explained that the recovery home director was allowing two of her children at a time to stay with her on the weekends. These weekend visits allowed her to spend private time with her children and establish a new foundation for their relationships. Ann W. defined what being a mother today meant to her:

To be open-minded, to be loving, to understand, to be responsible. You know, to be there every step. You know what I'm sayin'. It's a lot. To be a mom. You know what I'm sayin'. It's a lot, but I'm willin' and I'm learnin'. Every day with my kids, okay, I wasn't there in the past but now I'm here, now, so...I can't go back to the past...I can only do what I can do now in the present and the future.

Having time with her children allowed Ann W. to explain to them how their relationships would be different going forward. Recalling a recent visit with her teenage daughter, she said:

I was like making amends, so I said, "That wasn't the person I was when I did that, when I did those drugs, that was not me, that was a monster inside of me, that wasn't me. The real me, this is the real me. And I'm learnin' to know who I am and be comfortable with who I am. So...that was not me. That was...some person that I don't know," and, you know,

all the sudden she was like, “Mom, I forgive you...I know that wasn’t you.” And she was like, “I forgive you, and I love you, and um, I don’t know about my brothers and sisters, but I know I do.”

Like other participants, Ann W. stressed the importance of not dwelling on the past but rather on “what [she] can do now in the present and the future.” She clearly made a distinction between her past identity as an absent, drug-using mother who fell prey to “a monster inside” of her and the “real” her, who was a present, non-drug-using (i.e. “clean”) mother. Weekend visits allowed her time to bond with her children through partaking in everyday activities of which she previously had missed out. Recalling a recent visit with her youngest daughter, Ann W. said:

I got time to really, I got time to bond with because, you know, prior to the things that I wasn’t doin’, so it was like, it was good for me. I mean, you know, I cooked. We sat down, and we had family time. I mean, you know, laid together, slept together in my room. It was, it was awesome.

Finding ways to be present in her children’s lives, such as through weekend visits at the recovery home and attending events at their school, helped Ann W. to begin to change their relationships and to make a promise for how their relationships would be in the future.

Modeling success. One of the important ways that women described being present for their children today had to do with older children’s own involvement with the criminal legal system. Nyla, for instance, described how about a week after her release from prison, she attended her 20-year-old son’s sentencing date at court for a burglary conviction. Prior to sentencing, the judge gave Nyla an opportunity to speak on her son’s behalf. She recalled her impromptu statement:

“I, I, I, I would like to, um, I would like to apologize on behalf of my son, um, and, and us bein’ here on today, um, as a result of the, the crime committed against the young lady.” Um, and I don’t know quite verbatim, but it was geared in that direction. And how, um, the time that my son had spent, spent in the Department of Corrections, I believe in my heart without a shadow of a doubt that he, too, is very remorseful and, and, um, is, um, sorry for what he’s done. And if given the opportunity, I believe also in my heart that he will do the right thing, as a result of havin’ to have, um, sat down and having had the time, the time that he sat to take a look at the error of his ways and the pain that it has caused someone else. And, and, um, it was very emotional that day.

Nyla described how the judge listened attentively to her, turning all the way around in his seat to face her and even putting his pen down. The judge sentenced her son to three months in boot camp, and her son’s public defender told her that her statement influenced this relatively favorable outcome. Before the sheriff’s officer led her son out of the courtroom, he instructed Nyla, “‘Hug him. Hug him. Hug your son!’ And at first I didn’t realize what he was saying. He was like, ‘Hug him!’ You know, ‘He’s gettin’ ready to go. Hug him now!’” In this way, the officer showed approval of Nyla as a caring mother who had stepped up to support her son. When I asked Nyla how she felt about her statement, she said, “I’m glad that...I was able to be there and that I was in the mentality that I was, because, truthfully, I don’t think that anyone knew that I had just come back from the penitentiary. And that I also had a background. Wow. Somethin’ to think about, huh?” Being in the courtroom that day allowed Nyla to show her son how much she loved him, and it reflected her shifting identity.

Additionally, Nyla discussed how drawing on her own experiences of being in trouble with the law strengthened her ability to guide her son through his experience. She had been there, and she thus could relate to him and understand the challenges he faced in

concrete ways. During our second interview, Nyla reflected on a group of photographs she had asked people to take of her that symbolized the progress she was making. One photograph showed her at a reentry program where a case manager was teaching her computer skills and helping her with her job search. She explained that the photograph revealed how “I was in a, in a mental state where, ‘Ok, I can do this.’ Even though it seems to be tedious from day to day, but it’s all gonna pay off. That was one of those days.” Another photograph showed her sitting at the recovery home’s table after a long day of submitting job applications and attending meetings. She commented, “I’m actually, um, sittin’ down tryin’ to regroup, you know, get all these things together, cuz I’m all over the place. You know, I felt like I had been all over the city of Chicago.” Nyla also explained how the photos showed her relationships with her sons. She said, “Then I was also, um, thinkin’ on my sons, you know, um, that this could all be used to help them, too. Bein’, bein’ that they’re incarcerated. And so it’s just not, I’m just not wastin’ my time.” Nyla indicated that leaving prison, trying to find a job and an apartment, and staying out of trouble with the law was about more than just her. If she could succeed, she could provide her sons with a model of how to turn their lives around once they also were released from prison.

Sharon described how her progress since her release and the relationships she developed with staff members at the recovery home where she stayed already had benefited her 28-year-old son. During our second interview, Sharon had just found out that her son, who was being released from prison later that week, could not parole to her sister’s house as planned. During our third interview, she explained that her son initially

had paroled to a large homeless shelter, but he now was staying at the men's recovery home that was run by the same organization as the recovery home where she stayed. Staff members at her recovery home had helped her son to secure a spot at the men's recovery home. Sharon now was helping him adjust to living in a recovery home. Her son was feeling overwhelmed by all of the requirements to fulfill at the recovery home. She recalled:

So he got distracted and upset about it because he said, "Mom, this is too much at one time." So I said, "Just calm down and just talk to somebody." And he talked to somebody. I said, "Just talk to somebody. I'm sure they can work around your schedule"... 'cause he wanted to leave. He wanted to pack his stuff and leave. I said, "No, that ain't the way out." I said, "God sent you...through stuff for a reason, for you to open your eyes and to realize...That's just a stomping ground, just to prepare you to get out into the real world." So I said, "Don't get frustrated because I get frustrated sometimes. But by me being here at Growing Stronger almost seven months, I know the format. I know what I have to do to stay clean and sober and not to go back out there and use drugs. And you have to do the same thing."

Like Nyla, Sharon suggested that the lessons she learned throughout her post-incarceration experience allowed her to offer her son a perspective on his own experiences. Based on her experiences, she was able to normalize her son's frustrations and assure him that the recovery home had a reason for all of its requirements and that by following its program, he would be better prepared for "the real world." Although he did not yet understand the "format," Sharon reassured him that she did and encouraged him to follow her lead. Because she no longer was incarcerated, Sharon could be there for her son. Furthermore, because she had stayed at a recovery home and remained "clean and sober," she could give him specific guidance on how to navigate his own post-incarceration process. Sharon explained:

So I talk to him on a daily, daily basis and tell him, "It's gonna be okay. We gonna have stumbling blocks we have to go through to get it right." So I told him, "It's okay. But you don't have to jump up and run every time you get in a situation." So because, like...I do it, too, but I know I can't run. Because if you just get up and take off and wanna go back out there, you ain't gonna do nothing but find, uh, trouble.

Sharon merged her son's experience with her own, noting "*we* have to...get it right."

Like other participants, Sharon mothered through modeling a successful post-incarceration process and recovery and passing on lessons she had learned. Using drugs or becoming incarcerated again would mark more than a personal failure. As a mother, she would be letting down her son by not providing the guidance and model he needed.

In sum, mothering was a strong theme that dominated many of the women's interviews. While they consistently expressed remorse for past absences from their children's lives and noted the guilt and shame they felt, they consistently articulated a forward-looking orientation to mothering. In other words, women focused on ways they were present in their children's lives today through spending time together, showing up to important events, and drawing upon their experiences to help children navigate their own involvement with the criminal legal system. They also stressed how they were building relationships with their children in order to remain involved in their lives and continue to deepen their mother-child bond. Women recognized developing relationships with their children as processes and expressed clear visions for their future as mothers. Ann W. showed her future vision with a photograph of the dining room table at the recovery home where she lived (Figure 32). She explained that the photograph revealed, "One day I'll be at my own table with my family, at a beautiful table like that. That's what it really reveals...Cuz that would be a, the table, my home, me and my kids. And we'll sit at my

table and have family time.” In order for any of their visions to become reality, though,



Figure 32. Dining room table

women stressed that they must always work on their recovery and remain “clean and sober.” As Iris explained, referring to her efforts to gain visitation with her children, “The first

condition is that I stay clean and sober. If I don’t do that, none of this even matters.” The foundation of women’s “good” mother identities was a “clean” identity.

Employment

Employment was the final key piece of rehabilitated femininity that women stressed throughout the interviews. Similar to sobriety, it was a foundational component because it would enable women to accomplish the other components of rehabilitated femininity discussed above. A secure financial income would help women to obtain stable housing, take care of their personal appearances, exercise independence within romantic relationships, and provide for their children. As poor women and women of color (primarily Black women) with criminal records living in the neoliberal era of post-welfare reform, they could not rely on the state to provide financial assistance (Haney 1996, 2004, 2010; Hays 2003; Leverentz 2006, 2014; McCorkel 2004, 2013; McKim

2008; Richie 2001, 2012). Most women received \$200 per month in food stamps, which for most was their only form of financial assistance. Two women were receiving SSI payments of about \$600 per month for a disability. Two more women had been receiving SSI at the time of their last incarcerations, but because they had been incarcerated for longer than a year, the state had discontinued their SSI payments. Both women were in the process of reapplying for SSI benefits, which would take at least 90 days. The women also could not rely on partners to provide for them financially. The women who were involved in romantic relationships were partnered with men, and in one case a woman, who had their own criminal backgrounds. These partners faced intersecting discriminations based on their criminal records, as well as their race, which constrained their access to employment (Alexander 2010; Leverentz 2006; Pager 2007). While their partners helped them out financially as best they could, they did not have sufficient resources to provide for the women.⁷ In short, romantic relationships did not provide financial security or an avenue out of poverty.

Work and identity. Women frequently noted how employment was a marker of their personal transformations. Having a legitimate job showed that they were on the right track and distancing themselves from their past lifestyles. The Lioness, for instance, discussed how being employed would not only show that she was a responsible person, but also would change the way others viewed her:

⁷ This dynamic reflects a long history in the United States of the traditional male breadwinner family model being inaccessible to people of color, particularly Black men and women, due to intersecting oppressions based on race, gender, and class (Amott and Matthaie 1996; Collins 2000; Hill 2005; Lorber 1994; Padavic and Reskin 2002).

It's a sense of, bein' responsible, you know? And...everybody wants to be responsible, I wanna be responsible, a productive part of society. I mean, that's, that's just, you know, and then, when you in the working class field, you know, you a workin' person, peoples tend to look at you different. When I say, "Oh, I gotta go to work," or, "I'm on my way to work," people be like, they would never look at me and say, "Oh she's an ex-offender." See it's a big difference. They look at you with respect. I'm more respected when I'm a workin' person.

She added that once she had a job, she would be able to pay back a \$6,000 debt she owed to a professional school. The Lioness stressed that paying this debt was important "because then I'll be, I will be clean, I will be you know, I won't have no, I won't be owin' nobody. You know, it's just be a sense of responsibility." Employment was a critical part of being able to attain a "clean" identity.

Chicken Wing also discussed the importance of having a job. She took a photograph of her place of employment, a church where she worked as an assistant doing whatever tasks she was asked to do, such as cleaning and preparing food (Figure 33). She earned about \$660 per month, but more importantly to Chicken Wing, the part-time job was a sign of the new



Figure 33. "My first job"

person she had become since being incarcerated. She commented, "I never had a job before. This is my first job. I'm 55 years old! My first job." She added that she had

“money in the bank” for the first time in her life and recently obtained a credit card, which showed “that I’m a productive citizen now...It just feels so good. And my sons are so proud of me. Least when I die, they can’t, they can’t say their mother died a crackhead.” Chicken Wing also indicated that not having a job was linked with her past, “dirty” identity. Like The Lioness, employment moved her closer to a “clean” identity, which included being a good mother to her children.

Chicken Wing’s focus on her credit card was echoed by Ms. Fields and Denise. All three specifically discussed how obtaining a credit or debit card was a milestone that



Figure 34. Debit card

represented becoming part of society. Ms. Fields even took a photo of the Chase bank branch where she opened a bank account after obtaining a job after her last incarceration (Figure

34). She talked at length about how happy she was to have a debit card and explained what it meant to her:

I don’t know if I felt like I was a ‘big shot’, you know, or, you know, I just felt like I was a part of something. You know, or I had some money, you know, I hadn’t had money in 14 years, you know. Unless I was, uh, stealin’ or, you know, beggin’ my mother or just drivin’ her crazy and she just would give it to me. So it just kind of made feel, you know, everywhere I went, everybody, you know, my sponsor would swipe, my

sister, everybody swiped. So I don't know if it was just the prestige or I just wanted to swipe or, you know, but, yeah. I just wanted to feel like I was a part of, um, gettin' better, I guess.

Denise talked about how she had never had a bank account until she came to the recovery home and started working. She had rotated among a variety of jobs, many of which were temporary employment programs specifically for formerly incarcerated people, during her time at the recovery home and explained that whether she was employed or unemployed, "I kept that account open because that was a goal that I always wanted... When I go in stores and see people not pulling out no money, they just handing the card, I'm looking like, 'Man, I wanna be like that.' You know, I wanna card."

Although she had not yet qualified for a credit card, Denise used her debit card with pride:

That makes me feel special, like when I be going to the stores with the ladies [from the recovery home] sometimes and they'll put cash on there. And, baby, I'll just bust out with that card and they, you know, they, they give me the look, but they was probably saying the same thing that I was saying. "Man, I wish that was me." But see, a lot of us in our addition, we done took from banks and done wrote bad, you can't get no account. So the only way they can go it is pay in cash.

Denise, Ms. Fields, and Chicken Wing made clear that bank accounts, credit cards, and debit cards were status markers that distinguished them from other women who were not as far along in their recovery and post-incarceration processes. The accounts and cards were signs of respectability that represented their rehabilitated, "clean" identities.

Denise underscored this point by recounting a story from when she first arrived at the recovery home. She explained that without a job, she returned to her old behaviors to make money:

I was still kinda sorta prostituting while I was here. I was still sleeping with men for money. So I could have cigarettes and be able to be like the other ladies, be ordering Italian beefs and pizzas and all that...And, you know, I was sitting back like, "Oh, they think they better than me, you know, because they got this and they got that. You know, all I gotta do is go out. I'll get me some money." You know? Then it got to the point where it was like it was humiliating, you know...being with people I didn't wanna be with just so I can get some money.

Denise reasoned, "Well, you know, being an addict and didn't have an income, it's quite expected that you was prostituting or whatever to get money." Again, Denise linked employment with her sense of self. Sex work was illegitimate work that she associated with her "addict" (i.e. "dirty") identity. For Denise, employment, even when it paid minimum wage and was temporary, guarded against going down the wrong path back to her past identity. Legitimate work allowed her to keep money in the bank and protect her "clean" identity. For instance, she recalled how her daughter recently had called her from jail. Denise went directly to the bank.

I took out \$250 dollars and I went to the police station and I got my daughter...And I was so happy that I could do that. 'Cause she was saying she called her daddy and he was like, "I ain't got no money." But he worked, made good money. Told her he ain't got no money...And I was able to get my daughter outta jail. That meant so much to me. And it was like I, I knew that was gonna happen one day. I said, "Denise, you sittin' up here savin' this money, but watch, one of your kids gonna need you, and you gonna wind up, you know." And I was okay with that, too.

Employment allowed her to maintain a savings account and to respond to her daughter as the type of mother she wanted to be. Employment and sobriety were the basic building blocks of Denise's rehabilitated identity.

Finding employment. The majority of women (24 of 36 participants) were not employed at the time of our interviews. Women frequently identified stable, full-time

employment as a goal but faced a number of challenges in finding this type of work. In addition to their criminal records, many women had limited work histories and had been out of the workforce for extended stretches while using drugs and while incarcerated. Five of the 12 women who were employed worked for programs for incarcerated or formerly incarcerated women. Four of these women worked at programs in which they had participated or recovery homes where they had lived following their last incarcerations. In short, obtaining employment in the reentry field was one career path for women, and women who worked in these jobs stressed how much they enjoyed giving back and being able to help other women who were in situations similar to those they had overcome. Their employment allowed them to turn their personal experiences with the criminal legal system into valuable information that benefitted others. These jobs often were part-time positions, though, which limited the pay women earned and prevented them from obtaining financial security. Even full-time staff members earned a modest salary that was comparable to entry-level social service positions. Additionally, the number of permanent jobs that were available in the reentry field was limited. Moon pointed out that one employment training program for formerly incarcerated people hired a formerly incarcerated woman to work at the front desk. Moon viewed this arrangement as a way to trick people into enrolling in the program. She explained, “They hire the girl...we knew...from prison. ‘Oh yeah, we will go there! They’ll hire us, too.’ When the thing was over with, they, you didn’t have no job, um, you get this certificate, they fix you this lunch...but I’m not interested in no meal! I’m not lookin’ for no meal ticket. I want a job!” Employment in this field was a sign of women’s personal success and, at

times, the program's success. The opportunities for women to model success in this way, however, were quite limited.

The seven women working outside of the reentry field typically had found their positions through word-of-mouth referrals and personal connections. Even when they obtained these positions, they continued to face challenges in keeping their jobs. Nyla, for instance, had managed to find two part-time jobs at fast food establishments. At the time of our second interview, she recently had been hired at one job and was surprised that the manager had not asked her about her criminal record during the interview even though she had indicated on her application that she had a felony conviction. As a result, Nyla was concerned that her background would pose a problem at some point. Because of the ever-present possibility that her background could lead to her losing her job at any point, Nyla stressed that she could not relax or feel secure in her position. She had to “keep movin’,” meaning keep working with reentry organizations in case she became unemployed again. Although she was unemployed at the time of our interviews, Moon validated Nyla's concern about the temporary, uncertain nature of even permanent jobs. She recalled that after being hired by a major retail corporation, the manager called her to notify her that they were rescinding the job offer because of her background. She commented, “I feel like, ‘When am I ever going to be done payin’ my debt to society?’ You know, I’ve done wrong, yes...but...I’m finished with that, you know? So give me a chance! Give me a chance at havin’ a normal life.” Olivia echoed this concern:

It's just hard to get a job once you get a background... They gave me three years, but I really got life. 'Cause if I go fill out for a job now, they're gonna ask me do I have a background. And if I say no and they hire me

and they find it, they're gonna fire me. And if I say yeah, that might be the only reason I don't get the job, and I mean, that could've been years ago.

Both indicated the somewhat permanent nature of their “criminal” identities, despite all of their work to maintain their sobriety and “reenter” society.

Available jobs also were located in distant suburbs that made them inconvenient and expensive to reach. During the course of our interviews, Stacey and Tinybig began doing telemarketing work with a company in a far western suburb. While they needed the money and the work experience, both ultimately left their positions after several weeks. Stacey took a photograph of the Chicago red line el station, which was just one leg of her two-hour commute each way to her job (Figure 35). She commented that her days lasted



Figure 35. Two-hour commute to work each way

“12 hours, including from me getting up at four in the morning to get out there, two hours to get out there. But I’m only working eight hours a day. But it’s just too much.” Because she had not yet made any

sales, she had not earned any commission. Thus, her earnings totaled only about \$400 every two weeks. Stacey stressed that she needed the money. Her sister, who took care of Stacey’s two daughters, was ill and needed Stacey’s help. Thus, she felt a great deal of

pressure to find a stable income so that she and her sister could pool their resources and rent an apartment. The costs associated with the telemarketing job simply were too great.

Given these hardships, women often strung together a series of temporary jobs, including overnight shifts in factories, “ringing the bell” for the Salvation Army during the holiday season, and apprentice-like positions with city-funded programs, such as with the Chicago Transit Authority. These positions provided women with critical income. As Moon explained, she had done day labor before and would do it again because, “It was a paycheck! It helped me pay some rent!” She added, “It was really tiresome. It was really, really tiresome. And, but at the end of the week, you could pay your bill. You can even go get your hair did. That might be it, but you’ll be able to pay your bill, you know?” These positions did not provide women with security, however, in terms of their financial situations or their shifting sense of self. As Corrine summarized, “being employed was one of the key factors that I believe helped keep me on the path that I was trying to go on.”

Overall, the women’s reflections about employment indicated a reformulated notion of femininity. They strove to become strong women who were good mothers and good partners because they first took care of themselves, ideally through stable employment, and were secure in their sobriety.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that women’s discussions of their personal transformation processes illuminated how the post-incarceration moral order is raced and gendered. The element of transformation is important because it showed how women viewed their own

identities as shifting from “dirty” (drug using, “immoral,” and distant from God) to “clean” (not drug using, “moral,” and close to God). This language reflected the 12-Step logic and the criminal legal system’s rhetoric and use of dirty versus clean drops to judge one’s identity as “recovering addict” or practicing “addict” (Harris and McElrath 2012). Although the women were closed off from attaining a fully rehabilitated femininity in the eyes of the larger social order due to racism and classism, they drew on gendered markers of their clean identities, thus indicating a particular type of rehabilitated femininity, albeit not a universal notion of femininity. Recovery homes aided women in this process. Recalling her time as a resident at the recovery home where she now worked, Ella commented that the program had helped to “bring out...the lady in me.” She explained that being a lady:

[M]eans a certain confidence, it means a certain, uh, way of doing things, of being, you know. Um, uh, building on yourself. Uh, mentally, physically, you know, um, I find that a lot of ladies come in, and they have low self-esteem. I see that build as they go on to be here [at Growing Stronger], you know. Some of them have been through rapes, um, uh, abandoned...it affects your, your psyche, your self-esteem and all that. We try to build that up. And I can see where, um, they start feelin’ better about theyself. They start doin’ positive things. And they start seein’ themself as ladies, you know.

Ella stressed that developing self-confidence and self-esteem and healing from traumatic experiences helped women to become “ladies.” The notion of becoming a “lady,” or of rehabilitated femininity, prescribed that women should first take care of themselves so that they could enjoy the benefits of being a “lady,” namely having their own homes, developing fulfilling romantic relationships, and becoming better mothers. Rehabilitated

femininity represented a balance between independence and nurturing others, and sobriety and faith were its bedrocks.

This particular type of rehabilitated femininity further showed how after their incarcerations, women encountered and had to navigate a moral order that was distinct from the larger moral order of society. They did not, in fact, reenter society. They came from disadvantaged neighborhoods and typically returned to those same communities (or similarly disadvantaged communities) where they faced the same hardships that shaped their criminalization and funneled them into the criminal legal system (Richie 2001). The particular type of “clean,” rehabilitated femininity to which women alluded reflected their attempts to make it in a society that was hostile to them as criminalized women, all of whom are poor and most of whom are women of color.

In the next chapter, I investigate how women experienced the raced and gendered post-incarceration moral order as both constraining and enabling. I also examine how women adapted to the order even while recognizing the criminal legal system as racist, unfair, and in need of reform, and while critiquing recovery homes and reentry programs. I argue that women’s very survival while navigating the racist, sexist, and classist criminal legal system was a noteworthy act of resistance. I conclude the chapter by showing how women’s critiques and moments of collective awareness challenged the order’s individualistic focus on personal transformation and highlighted the need for broader social change.

CHAPTER SIX

MANAGING THE POST-INCARCERATION MORAL ORDER

Denise and I sat down for our first interview on a snowy Friday evening at the recovery home where she had resided for almost two years. Over the past month or so, she had made it clear that she had been looking forward to our interview. I frequently saw Denise when I came to Growing Stronger for scheduled interviews with other residents. Without fail, she would tease me when I arrived, stating matter-of-factly, “You’re here for me, right?” I would play along, explaining apologetically that I was there to see someone else, and remind her of our scheduled interview time. She would comment that she would be ready for me and that she could not wait to get her camera. Perhaps because of this rapport building, our first interview lasted over two and a half hours, as Denise reflected on her experiences with the criminal legal system. She avoided incarceration after her last arrest, instead receiving a sentence of intense probation. For two and a half years, she had to meet weekly with her probation officer, “drop” weekly (provide a urine sample for drug screening), and attend a monthly court date so that a judge could monitor her progress. Additionally, after Denise relapsed and had a “dirty drop” (a positive drug screening), she had to complete an in-patient drug treatment program, which eventually led to her entrance to Growing Stronger.

While reflecting on her probation, Denise described an evolving relationship with her probation officer and judge, who had refused to grant her any leniency. By the end of

her probation, though, Denise said both had a positive influence on her life. In fact, although her judge had transferred off of her case by its conclusion, Denise sought her out in her new courtroom on the day she completed her probation. She recalled:

So I went in there, and I stood in front of her, and I said, “Judge [last name]...I’m here today because, um, I completed my probation...So it’s terminated satisfactory...And I want to tell you that I thought that you was really bein’ hard on me...and I was really angry, but once things...start comin’ into place, I realized that you cared more about my future than I did...I know you probably have never had a person come back and thank you...but I made it my business to thank you because I am truly grateful. God worked through you to help me.” And she came...out of her seat, and she said, “You gonna make me mess up my mascara.” And she started cryin’, and she hugged me. And the state’s attorney and everybody started clappin’. And she said, “Denise, I’m so proud of you. Stay on the right path.” And I said, “I will.”

Denise’s comments showed how well she had adapted to the post-incarceration moral order. She explained her journey of personal transformation, from resentment and anger about her sentence to acceptance of the drug treatment she had to complete and the surveillance measures she experienced. Additionally, Denise grew to understand the judge’s tough love approach as God’s work. Denise drew on her faith to make sense of what she initially thought was the judge’s unfair treatment, and she came to believe that the judge was hard on her because the judge cared for her. Beyond just completing her probation, Denise publicly verbalized her changed character and earned the state’s recognition of her “clean,” “rehabilitated” identity, as evidenced by the state’s attorney’s applause and the judge’s hug, tears, and praise.

This process of gradually coming to view an intrusive state intervention, such as intense probation, as a helpful, needed presence was a trajectory other women shared. Denise’s reflection also summarized the varied ways participants responded to state

interventions, ranging from total rejection of the state's demands (i.e. Denise's continued drug use and "dirty drop") to deep engagement with the state (i.e. Denise's expression of gratitude to her judge). This range of responses illuminated how women experienced the post-incarceration moral order as both constraining and enabling.

In previous chapters, I explained women's post-incarceration experiences as structured by a distinct moral order that is rooted in recovery (specifically the 12-Step logic) and religion and that is raced and gendered. I also described how the post-incarceration moral order was individualistic, encouraging a focus on women's personal transformations. In this chapter, I show how women managed the post-incarceration moral order, which they experienced as both constraining and enabling. When women experienced the moral order as overly constraining or unable to meet their needs, they simply disengaged from it. A more surprising finding was the varied ways women engaged with the post-incarceration moral order. Like Denise, women hesitantly engaged with the order, which at times led to gradual acceptance of and even gratitude for state involvement in their lives. As women became familiar with the moral order, they learned how to manage their encounters with authority figures and service providers to access resources by "following the rules," and "playing the game," two strategies I discuss below. Building on the work of E. Summerson Carr (2011) and Jill A. McCorkel (2013), I show that women did not passively and without question accept the messages embedded in this order. Rather, they engaged with the discourses they encountered in innovative ways that allowed them to access resources and support, as well as make sense of their personal transformations. Specifically, I describe how women negotiated the "master

narrative” (McCorkel and Myers 2003; Romero and Stewart 1999) of incarceration to suit their needs.

After describing the range of ways women managed the post-incarceration moral order, I focus on times when women broke from its individualistic focus and connected with other incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. I also highlight instances when women raised critical questions about how the criminal legal system operated, particularly with regard to race. I refer to these moments of collective awareness and critique as cracks in the moral order. I conclude with a discussion of how these cracks contributed to women’s efforts to challenge the criminal legal system in individual and collective ways.

Moral Order as Constraining

Most of the women who participated in this project lived highly regulated lives and experienced the post-incarceration moral order as constraining. Conditions of parole and probation required many to meet regularly with parole and probation agents and to complete additional stipulations, such as mental health counseling and drug treatment. Women living in recovery homes also had to adhere to each home’s specific rules and requirements, such as participating in support groups, complying with random urine drops for drug screenings, completing daily house chores, and abiding by a curfew. Some women were not willing (or perhaps not able) to deal with such intense regulation, particularly when they did not receive adequate assistance in exchange for their compliance. For them, the restrictions the state imposed were too overbearing, and they responded by outright rejecting at least some of these impositions, such as by leaving

recovery homes, eluding law enforcement, and avoiding contact with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Often women's disengagement from the state became apparent when they left recovery homes, either by choice or because recovery home staff members terminated their stays. Sarah, a 46-year-old Latina and Native American woman, was one such participant. Between the time we scheduled our first interview and when we met for that interview, Sarah had voluntarily moved out of the recovery home where she had lived. At the time of our interviews, she was living with her boyfriend and his brother at the brother's apartment. She explained that there had been too much "chaos" in the recovery home and that its neighborhood was a "trigger" for her. The "outside area" near the home made it "hard to keep straight there." Every time she left the home, she encountered "Kids coming...up to me, say[ing], 'You wanna buy some rocks.' You know, and they're on the left of you, the right of you...So I would be walking alone, you know, sweating the block through."

Other women echoed Sarah's description of the challenges they faced living in the neighborhoods where many of the city's recovery homes were located. For instance, Maryann, who stayed at the same recovery home as Sarah, discussed how she had wanted the prison's field services unit to place her at another recovery home because of that home's reputation. In describing the attractive features she had heard about that recovery home, she commented on its location in a "nice neighborhood" that was not as "rowdy" as the neighborhood where her recovery home was located, meaning there were not people dealing drugs on every corner. When I asked Maryann what was important about

the “nice” neighborhood, she explained, “I mean like temptation, I mean like...not seein’ the gym shoe boys – that’s what we call them – not seein’ them and have to, you know, like pass by them and they hollerin’, ‘You straight? Are you straight?’” A “nice” neighborhood would be “safe for your...treatment.” Like Sarah, Maryann identified the “gym shoe boys” as a constant source of temptation with which the recovery home’s residents contended.

Throughout all three of our interviews, Sarah described how she struggled daily not to use drugs. She missed the structured drug treatment program she participated in while incarcerated and had not been able to find a comparable program on the outside. The 12 Step meetings she regularly attended did not provide the level of support she desired. Sarah explained that she did not want to use heroin again, but the reminders she encountered daily about how easily she could resume using at times felt physically overwhelming. Almost every time she left the recovery home, she had to “sweat the block through.” Sarah described a physical reaction and a physical internal fight to resist responding to the frequent invitations to “buy some rocks.” Regardless of her stated desire not to use, the urge to use persisted and was strengthened by her physical environment.

It was not until our second interview that Sarah openly talked about the “chaos” inside the recovery home that ultimately prompted her to move out of the residence. The presence of drugs inside the home proved to be an even more challenging “trigger” than the open drug dealing she regularly observed in the neighborhood. She told me that she

used heroin a few times at the recovery home, explaining that her roommate and another resident:

Came in the room and they dabbed it [heroin]...on a CD case. They done it. I walked out of the room. Then I came back, and I said, "Let me try some." I took out a twenty [dollar bill], "Go buy one for you, and buy one for me." I done that, now I want another one. Then I said, "No, I'm not goin' under. I'm not doin' this again." And [if] this lady [who runs the recovery home] finds out, where am I gonna go?

After weeks of battling "triggers," Sarah joined in with other women in the recovery home who already were using heroin. The relatively easy access to the drug, made possible by the "gym shoe boys" who worked the corners just outside of the home, allowed Sarah to follow through on an impulsive decision to use heroin again. She regretted her decision almost immediately and reminded herself of her determination not to re-engage with a lifestyle she was trying to leave behind. Furthermore, she realized that she had jeopardized her housing at the recovery home and worried that the director would discover her drug use and kick her out of the program. Sarah reached out to her boyfriend to see if she could move in with him and his brother if necessary. Her relationship with her boyfriend and his relatively stable housing situation provided a safety net that was not available to many women if their recovery home housing fell through.

The worry Sarah felt became an urgent fear when she learned of the director's plans to submit every resident to a drug test, presumably based on suspicions that several residents were using drugs. Sarah recalled, "[The director] wanted to drop everybody. A urine drop. And everybody went crazy...I did too." Even though the director did not "drop everybody," Sarah decided to leave on her own. She was concerned that her

“dipping” into heroin could turn into something more serious. As she put it, “I didn’t want to develop the dope habit.” She did not trust that she could continue to live at the recovery home and not use. Thus, she called her boyfriend one night to confirm she could still move in with him. Sarah’s need to get out of the recovery home was so urgent that she could not wait until the morning to move. Quite literally, she left in the middle of the night and only returned later to pick up her belongings.

By preemptively moving out of the recovery home on her own terms, Sarah effectively disengaged from one of the more pervasive state interventions in her life, thereby limiting her engagement with the post-incarceration moral order. In many ways, her middle-of-the-night departure was a survival strategy. She was not able to maintain her sobriety while living in the home, despite her desire to do so. Somewhat counter intuitively, leaving the recovery home allowed Sarah to live in an environment that she viewed as more supportive of her recovery from heroin use. The residence where she



Figure 36. Park where drug deals occur



Figure 37. People high on the bus

moved was located just a few blocks from the recovery home, and thus Sarah continued to confront regular triggers. In fact, almost every photograph she took for our second interview emphasized the daily challenges to her sobriety that she continued to face

living on Chicago's west side, including a nearby park where drug transactions routinely occurred (Figure 36) and a bus route on which she saw people who were under the influence of drugs and alcohol (Figure 37). A short walk around the block exposed her to numerous signs of drug and alcohol use, all of which Sarah documented to show how hard she was fighting to maintain a "clean" identity (Figure 38). Despite the neighborhood location, Sarah stressed that neither her boyfriend nor his brother used drugs. Thus, she did not have to deal with drug use in her home, which she identified as the overwhelming "trigger" that had pushed her to use heroin



Figure 38. Daily "triggers"

during her stay at the recovery home. By leaving the recovery home on "good terms," Sarah also ensured that she continued to have a back-up housing plan. That is, she could return to the recovery home if things did not work out at her new residence.

An additional concern that Sarah did not mention during our interviews, but is important to note, is that if the recovery home's director had discovered Sarah's drug use, Sarah's probation officer might have found out about her relapse. This development could have landed her back in prison, an outcome she desperately wanted to avoid. Sarah limited the likelihood of this outcome in part by leaving the recovery home and avoiding

the risk of a “dirty drop.” As a condition of her parole, Sarah had to continue to engage with her parole officer. She notified him of her move and provided him with her new address, as required. Her officer came out to her new residence to meet with her and check out the environment. Sarah could not disengage from the institution of parole without violating a parole stipulation and thus facing re-incarceration. By leaving the recovery home, however, she was able to limit how much access her parole agent had to her. Moving out of the recovery home offered some relief from the constraining post-incarceration moral order by lessening the amount of surveillance she experienced and providing a small degree of privacy.

Nyla also described her motivation to move out of the recovery home where she had resided since her release from prison approximately six months earlier. It was neither the recovery home’s location nor the other residents’ behavior that concerned her. In fact, throughout our three interviews, she did not focus on any current challenges to her sobriety and, in comparison to Sarah, seemed much more stable in her recovery process. During our last interview, Nyla talked at length about the uninhabitable conditions of the recovery home. She described a drainage problem, which caused the entire house to stink, and noted that the stench had settled deep into the furniture and even into the residents’ clothes and belongings. Nyla described sitting with several residents at a mandatory AA meeting off-site and noticing the stench. She realized that the women had carried the smell with them into the meeting. Nyla also stressed the poor physical upkeep of the house. She explained there was standing water in the basement, making it necessary for the women to wear special boots to trudge through the water to use the washer and dryer.

She also discussed a severe problem with rodents, specifically mice, rats, and bedbugs.

Recently, she had to go to the hospital after waking up with a swollen bed bug bite on her wrist. Another woman also had been “eaten up” by bed bugs during the night. Nyla also described seeing rats in the house and said she wasn’t sure if the stench in the house was caused by the standing water in the basement or dead rats in the walls.

What made the living conditions particularly unacceptable was that Nyla had to pay the recovery home \$350 per month for rent since beginning a new minimum-wage job. This rent was in addition to giving her LINK card, and thus her monthly allotment of food stamps, to the recovery home. In short, she had to turn over a significant portion of the limited financial resources that she finally had begun to acquire. Nyla wondered if continuing to live at the recovery home was worth the financial cost and dangerous living conditions. She commented, “Oh my goodness. Maybe when I first got there, Chez. Now I just don’t see it.” As a result, she was planning her exit strategy and contemplating paying family members in exchange for being able to reside at their home.

Nyla, like Sarah, described a process of gradually disengaging from the recovery home where the prison’s field services unit had placed her. Because she was on parole, Nyla would have to continue to meet with her parole agent and remain engaged with and accountable to this arm of the state. The circumstances of Nyla’s planned departure differed significantly from those of Sarah, however. While Sarah described the need for more autonomy and a drug-free living environment, Nyla focused on the lack of acceptable living conditions her recovery home provided, especially when considering the financial cost of staying there. If this recovery home could have provided an

acceptable standard of living at an affordable cost, then it could have served as a safe transitional space for Nyla to reside while saving money, building up her employment experience, and engaging with some of the services she found helpful. The physical and financial drain of the home, however, effectively pushed Nyla away and prevented it from being a reliable safety net.

While Sarah and Nyla framed their departures from recovery homes as voluntary decisions, other women described premature departures from recovery homes and housing programs that were not necessarily their choices. For instance, participants described how continued drug use and other rule infractions resulted in staff members' decisions that they no longer could reside at the housing programs. Lynn recalled two separate times when she had to leave the same recovery home. During her first stay at the home, she "relapsed" and then stayed out overnight, missing the weekly Bible study group. The following day she attended her son's birthday party and did not return to the recovery home until later that night. Lynn explained, "Well, I didn't call 'em or do anything. I stayed...[out at] my son's birthday party...And I got drunk again. And I ended up goin' back to the house, and I was drinkin', but they wanted to drop me, and I told 'em... 'Well, I'm gonna be dirty.' And they're like, 'Well, you can't stay.'" While Lynn had violated a few program rules (i.e. curfew, missing Bible study, drinking alcohol, using drugs), she recalled her drug use as the deciding factor in the staff's decision to terminate her stay. She had to leave the recovery home immediately.

Lynn described moving around between various recovery homes and in-patient drug treatment programs for a number of months before returning to this recovery home.

She did not like the program and only returned because her girlfriend was living there.

This stay at the recovery home also was short-lived. The director again terminated Lynn's stay for a rule infraction, this time after a staff member "caught" Lynn and her girlfriend engaged in a sexual activity in Lynn's room one night. After attending the required church service the next morning, Lynn recalled her meeting with the director: "She was like, 'Uh, you gotta pack your stuff and leave now, cuz, um, you know I do not condone relationships and this and that...within my place.' And I'm like, 'Are you serious? It's rainin' out.' And she's like, 'Yeah. Now. You have to go.' And had to leave. Packed a bag, and I left." Once again, Lynn and her girlfriend found themselves on the streets. Lynn again alternated between staying on the streets, in recovery homes, and at a drug treatment program before reuniting with her girlfriend at a different recovery home.

Lynn's comments indicated a fairly common experience: women having to leave recovery homes due to rule infractions, which overwhelmingly were connected to drug use. As in the case of Lynn's first termination from the recovery home, a "relapse," which was a rule infraction in itself, compromised women's abilities to adhere to other rules, such as curfew and attending required groups. While drug use was not the cause of Lynn's second departure from the recovery home, she immediately began using again upon the termination of her stay. In some cases, a terminated recovery home stay seemed to be the beginning of a downward spiral, as women left one institution and program after another. It was these types of disengagement from the state that had harmful consequences for women, specifically homelessness and re-incarceration. They

experienced the post-incarceration moral order as constraining, and their inability to adapt to it led to them being pushed out and left them scrambling to make ends meet.

In Lynn's case, her terminated recovery home stay was the beginning of a four-month process of slipping in and out of homelessness and in and out of drug use. After staying on the streets and using for a few days, Lynn recalled that she eventually made it to another recovery home, where she stayed for only a few days before moving to yet a third recovery home. Eventually, she received a sizeable amount of money (a scheduled installment for a class action lawsuit), which allowed her girlfriend and her to rent a kitchenette in an extended stay hotel. Between the cost of the room and drugs, the money quickly ran out, and Lynn found herself on the streets again. During this time, she stopped communicating with her probation officer, a violation of her probation. Overall, Lynn reflected on this four-month period as a desperate time:

I was homeless. I was in the streets. And, you know, it wasn't fun to be getting high anymore. It was like a job...it's like it always ends up turning into a job. First, you know, it's like fun and then it's like pshhhh...I don't know why I just keep relapsing, and it's just stupid because, you know, in the end you always know it's gonna end up, it's more consequences that you have to deal with...I was escapin' from probation for like a whole four months, I could have risked goin' to jail...

In short, Lynn had disengaged completely from any type of state supervision as well as from any possible assistance the state might have provided, such as through homeless shelters or other recovery homes. Given her negative experiences and the clear condemnation she felt of her sexuality, it is not surprising that Lynn's response was to retreat further and resume her drug use. When she felt there was no place for her in the post-incarceration moral order, she dropped out until she eventually found a more

welcoming place. After completing a detox program, she joined her girlfriend at yet another recovery home, where she felt staff members accepted them as individuals and as a couple.

Other participants described a similar type of disengagement from correctional supervision and how this disengagement was precipitated by a “relapse” or ongoing drug use. Moon described being “on the run” from law enforcement for two years after a warrant was issued for leaving the state without her parole officer’s permission, a violation of her parole. While gone, he called her on her cell phone and informed her that she needed to meet with him at his office in one hour. There was no way for Moon to comply with this demand:

And I said, “Well, okay then, alright, well, alright, so you gotta violate me huh?” He was like, “No, you need to be here in an hour,” and I was like, “Well, okay.” And when I hung up from talkin’ to him, I threw the [cell] phone out the window, you know...Cuz I won’t be back [in time], so I’m violated. So I’m not fittin’ to just give myself to the police...“Here, come take me to prison. Here, I’m ready.”

Moon faced two choices: return to prison or do her best to disappear. For her, the logical choice was to do whatever it took to prolong her freedom for at least a limited amount of time.

In the most extreme example of disengaging from the state, Stacey escaped from jail after violating a requirement for participation in the sheriff’s furlough program. The program allowed her to live at her son’s home, wearing an electronic monitoring device around her ankle and returning to the jail daily to participate in required groups and drug screenings while awaiting trial. When she had a dirty drop, the sheriff’s officers took her into custody. Stacey knew they were going to lock her up and terminate her house arrest.

She recalled, “I didn’t want to go [back to jail]...the lady was fittin’ to put me in the cage, and she didn’t lock the cage, and I escaped. I got out of there.” Stacey made the split-second decision to run away and simply walked out of the jail, exiting unnoticed amidst the chaos of shift change. Similar to Lynn and Moon, she essentially hid out. After about three weeks, bounty hunters found her. Stacey returned to jail and eventually received a four-year prison sentence (for the drug charge that led to her participation in the furlough program and the escape charge) of which she served about two years.

Lynn and Stacey managed to evade the state for relatively short periods of time (four months and three weeks, respectively) and endured precarious and dangerous living arrangements during those times. Their drug use escalated, and they struggled to survive from day to day while supporting their habits. Unlike Lynn and Stacey, Moon avoided contact with law enforcement for approximately two years, and she described a more controlled type of drug use. She did well enough financially to move rather easily from one city to the next and even stayed in “luxurious five-star hotels.” Like Lynn and Stacey, though, Moon lived with the ongoing threat of being picked up on her outstanding warrant. And while it took longer for her drug use to escalate to a point where she felt it was out of control, she eventually reached that point. In fact, all three women described being quite ready to re-engage with the state by the time law enforcement caught up with them. Each explained willingly surrendering to law enforcement after growing tired of being on the run, in part because of their increasing drug use.

Before turning to ways that participants engaged the state, it is useful to consider how their experiences of disengagement were not necessarily new. That is, women often indicated that they were used to having to leave supposedly helpful programs that let them down in the past. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) was a particularly threatening state system. While DCFS's stated mission is to safeguard the well-being of children in Illinois and it identifies as a state system invested in providing helpful services and protecting vulnerable populations, scholarship documents how Child Protective Services (CPS) throughout the country (and DCFS in particular) remove children into state custody and terminate women's parental rights (Flavin 2009; Law 2009; Roberts 2002). This scholarship also shows how CPS disproportionately impacts poor women and women of color, particularly with regard to these harsher sanctions. Women who are in trouble with the law are particularly vulnerable to CPS.

Participants regularly revealed painful reflections on current and past involvement with DCFS. DCFS's harmful practices prevented the agency from being a resource when women *did* have concerns about their children's safety and *wanted* assistance with protecting their children. Two examples are particularly illustrative of this pattern. First, while reflecting on her troubled relationship with her mother, Ella described her mother's reaction to learning that Ella's brother had sexually molested Ella's daughter. At the time of the assault, Ella had not personally been in trouble with the law, but her brother had recently served time in prison. When Ella's daughter confided in her about the incident, Ella called the police. The police were dismissive of Ella's report and did nothing about the assault because they claimed "that [it] was a family matter, that she was too young to

know what she was talkin' about..." Despite this non-action, Ella's mother was furious that Ella had contacted the police and threatened to retaliate if anything happened to Ella's brother. Ella's mother told Ella and her husband, "If we do anything to send him back to prison, she gonna tell them [DCFS] that we, um, been neglecting our kids so they can open the case back up and take our kids." As Ella indicated, DCFS previously had conducted an investigation of possible child abuse after another one of her daughters accidentally burned herself on a stove. DCFS determined neither abuse nor neglect caused the burn. Regardless, the agency informed Ella that they would "keep the case open for at least...two or three more years. You know, it will be closed but not sealed, cuz if anything else happened, they would like go back to that, and then they could build a case." DCFS's ongoing surveillance and threat to "build a case" against Ella gave her mother significant leverage in shaping how Ella was able to care for her daughter. She knew that certain state interventions were not accessible to her, particularly those interventions that might help to hold her brother accountable for the assault. She rejected those systems and instead engaged with a social service agency that provided counseling for her daughter and her family.

Corrine also recalled how DCFS felt like more of a threat than a supportive resource when she suspected someone had sexually abused her daughter. She called DCFS to report the incident but then decided not to follow up with the agency and provide the more detailed information they needed to be able to investigate the claim. After placing the initial call, Corrine worried about how DCFS likely would respond: "I remember my fear being they were gonna come back and look at me. They were gonna

look at my addiction, they were gonna look at I've been in and out of jail. So, I can, I can blatantly tell you that's why I didn't follow up." When I asked Corrine what changed after placing the initial call, she explained, "Uh, bein' in my addiction. That...made my decision...because now I'll take a risk of her bein' taken from me, I take a risk of never getting her back, because once again, I'm thinkin' I'm never gonna change." Simply put, Corrine feared that DCFS's response would cause more harm to her daughter and her and would only worsen an already painful experience. It is worth noting that Corrine's fear was rooted in her knowledge of how DCFS treated women like her. When I asked Corrine if she had known anyone who had had their children removed by DCFS, she replied without hesitation, "Oh, absolutely. I mean, you hear it all the time in jails and in prison...And that was just like that 'one yet' for me." Corrine knew that losing custody of her children was a very real possibility; in fact she indicated that she almost expected this outcome. Losing her children was "that one yet," meaning the one experience she had yet to share with other incarcerated women. To avoid that experience, she second-guessed her decision to call DCFS for help.

For Ella and Corrine, their initial reactions to learning or suspecting someone had harmed their daughters were to reach out to a state system for assistance (the police in Ella's case and DCFS in Corrine's case). Both had second thoughts, though, based on their concerns that DCFS would judge them as unfit mothers and potentially remove their children. When Corrine contacted DCFS, she already had a criminal record and was "in [her] addiction" – two factors she knew DCFS would hold against her. Ella had not yet been in trouble with the law, but she suspected that DCFS would view her history with

the agency as sufficient evidence to call her parenting into question. Additionally, Ella and her husband were using drugs during this time. Although Ella was not worried that DCFS would discover her drug use if the agency opened an investigation about her daughter's sexual abuse, this possibility likely intensified her fear of the agency. In short, Ella and Corrine had a number of things in common that influenced their assessment of DCFS as an arm of the state to avoid. As Black women who had extremely limited financial resources and were struggling with drug use, they fit the profile of the population that DCFS targets for removal of children (Roberts 2002). Their experiences provide clear examples of how an arm of the state that, at least in theory, should offer assistance poses a threat to poor women of color. They also highlight how the punitive context within which state assistance is offered undercuts this very assistance. Women's knowledge about how state systems treat poor women and women of color – a knowledge rooted in their everyday lived experiences – influenced how and whether they engaged with the post-incarceration moral order.

As I have shown in this section, women responded to threats of harm that state interventions might cause by disengaging with at least some forms of state interventions in their lives. Personal resources, such as money and support, allowed women to distance themselves from a post-incarceration moral order they experienced as constraining and unable to meet their needs. Women who did not have these supports had fewer options. Living under formal correctional supervision (i.e. parole or probation), also made disengaging from state systems and social services difficult. Even though Lynn, Stacey, and Moon all evaded law enforcement agents, it was just a matter of time before each of

them was apprehended by law enforcement and eventually forced to reengage with the post-incarceration moral order.

Moral Order as Enabling

The post-incarceration moral order imposed rigid expectations on women and closely monitored their adherence to them, yet women did not experience it solely as constraining. Women also experienced the moral order as enabling and found a variety of ways to engage it when they viewed that it could offer something of value to them, such as stability, support, resources, and recognition of their personal transformations. Below, I discuss how women followed the rules, “played the game,” negotiated the recovery script, and advocated for themselves within the criminal legal system. These strategies helped women make sense of their current situations, overcome obstacles, and develop plans to continue moving forward.

Following the Rules

Almost every participant described establishing a strong relationship with a recovery home staff member, parole or probation agent, or a social service provider. Even when they initially resisted the influence of these authority figures, some women came to agree that accepting these interventions and following the rules was in their own best interests. In other words, as women became familiar with the post-incarceration moral order, they learned how to manage their encounters with authority figures and service providers. Denise’s evolving relationship with her judge was the quintessential example of this gradual acceptance.

Ann's reflections on her relationships with her probation officer, the judge who oversaw her case, and recovery home staff members echoed Denise's experience. Ann avoided a prison sentence on her most recent charge but was sentenced to participate in an intensive drug treatment program in Cook County Jail (Division 17). She desperately wanted to leave the jail and described growing angrier and angrier with her judge at each court date. The judge praised her progress but refused to grant her release. When she finally was paroled, Ann planned to move in with a friend, but the judge required her to move to an in-patient drug treatment program. After completing this program, Ann planned to move to another program where a friend was staying. Her judge refused this plan, as well, and ordered Ann to move into a recovery home. Her probation officer broke the news to her:

And he was like, "No, Ann," he said, "the judge wants you to go to Growing Stronger." I said, "I don't know Growing Stronger, I'm not goin'!" I cried, I had a fit. Oh, I hated [my probation officer] then, too. I kept tellin' him "I don't like you, I knew I didn't like you!" You know, and he's like, "You'll be okay." I said, "No, don't even talk to me," you know, I walked out of the room even, in the middle of the session I walked out. I wouldn't even come back to it. Cuz I didn't wanna come here [to Growing Stronger].

Like Denise, though, these feelings gradually gave way to a deep appreciation for the judge's and probation officer's strict handling of her case. In fact, Ann said that today she "loves" her probation officer and judge and explained that after moving into the recovery home, she actually thanked her judge at each court date: "Every time I went to court I thanked him...He's like, 'No, Ann, thank you.' 'No, thank you. Cuz if you wouldn't a sat me down the way you did I probably would've been dead by now.' ...I know I would've...OD'd and killed myself." Like Denise, Ann even continued to live at the

recovery home beyond the end of her probation. She noted, “You know, like now I’m not mandated, not even to stay here, I stay here cuz I choose to stay here and cuz they allow me to stay here.” Her voluntary residence at Growing Stronger marked how much she had changed from the time of her arrest.

What is noteworthy is that shortly after our final interviews, Denise and Ann both moved into their own subsidized apartments. Growing Stronger had the unique opportunity to partner with an agency that was a leading provider of subsidized housing throughout the city. This agency opened a newly renovated SRO building, and Growing Stronger placed almost all of its residents in apartments in the building. As Growing Stronger residents in good standing, Denise and Ann were two of about 15 residents who made the move. By following the rules, they gained access to housing and a variety of items to furnish their apartments. Women who did well at another recovery home (Starting Again) sometimes had the option to move into a second location run by the director, a shared apartment offering the women more privacy and autonomy. Staff members did not regularly work on-site, and women often had their own bedrooms. Two participants in this research project moved to this location and viewed it as a reward and acknowledgement of their progress. Neither could explain what specifically qualified them for the move, though. It seemed that the director selected them after they lived at the recovery home for at least three months without causing any problems or violating any major rules.

Following the rules also connected women to employment opportunities, even if these jobs were part-time and temporary. For instance, one staff member at Growing

Stronger ran her own cleaning business and employed some of the residents there. Staff members at Growing Stronger also recommended residents for certain job readiness programs that provided a stipend and for temporary positions, such as factory work and “ringing the bell” during the holiday season for The Salvation Army. While these programs and temporary jobs did not guarantee long-term employment or financial stability, they provided women with much-needed immediate income. Moon, for instance, explained her frustration with being passed over for a job readiness program. After participating in the program’s orientation session, she anticipated being accepted into the program, but another resident, who recently was let go from a different job readiness program, received the position instead. Moon reasoned:

It made me think that somebody [at Growing Stronger] may have called and said, “Give her [the other resident] the job, she’s been here longer,” or you know, something to that effect, I believe. It was some extra added for her to get the job, she wasn’t here when the people came, she wasn’t at the orientation with us when we went, she wasn’t at the initial interview...and then, when she got fired from the job that she got with the [other] program, they called over there instantaneously and she got the position and I didn’t... Sometimes people make phone calls for people.

Thus, a woman’s relationship with staff members had real consequences for her access to resources. In various ways, demonstrating acceptance of the post-incarceration moral order by following the rules paid off.

“Playing the Game”

Women realized the potential benefits associated with adhering to court mandates and parole and probation stipulations and with following the rules of the agencies and programs. Even when women did not describe the kind of close, life-saving relationships that participants like Denise and Ann shared, they often described a willingness to follow

the rules, despite their criticism of what they viewed as unfair practices and mediocre services. As Moon explained, “You just gotta adapt to some things, just like prison. You don’t like everything that go on, but you can’t do nothin’ about it, just gotta roll with it ’cause you gotta be there. I gotta roll with it ’cause I gotta be here.” In these instances, women identified “reentry” as a “game” they had to learn and master. Only by successfully “playing the game” could they complete their formal correctional supervision and access things like education, employment, and housing that would allow them to enjoy a greater degree of independence, freedom, and stability.

As part of “playing the game,” women indicated that they had to manage their frustration with and criticism of programs and correctional supervision and show authority figures that they were complying with what was expected of them. Chicken Wing was rather vocal about this practice. She shared how angry she was with her parole agent for imposing a restricted curfew as a condition of her parole. Chicken Wing planned to contact the agent’s supervisor about the situation if the agent did not remove the restriction after a couple of weeks. In the meantime, Chicken Wing planned to remain polite and compliant in her interactions with the agent, in hopes that these positive encounters would convince the agent to lift the restriction on her own. Chicken Wing reflected on the skillful way she managed a recent meeting with her agent, who was smiling by the end of the meeting despite her “funky attitude.” Chicken Wing explained, “I know how to work her... You have to, like, kiss they ass.” She clarified:

They want that. They... wanna control the situation. They want you... to know that they in charge of this. So you got to act, you got to... make ’em feel like they in charge. “Yes, ma’am, you right,” you know, when I really wanna say, “Bitch, get the fuck up outta here.” You know what I’m

sayin'? But I can't. Gotta bite the bullet. I'm sick of bitin' the bullet. I am. I can't wait till I get my own place.

In addition to her daily efforts to find housing and a second job, as well as attending required groups and individual counseling sessions at the recovery home and required off-site 12 Step meetings, Chicken Wing had to act in the proper way in her interactions with her parole agent and all individuals who had influence over her life. This self-monitoring extended to her interactions with staff members at Growing Stronger. When a relatively minor verbal disagreement with a staff member culminated in her parole agent revoking her ability to leave the recovery home over that weekend, Chicken Wing realized that she had to be even more guarded in her interactions with staff members. She explained:

I'm never gonna talk to nobody here again. I mean, I'm gonna be cordial, but far as tellin' my business anymore, far as you knowin' anything about me anymore, I'm not gonna do it...Period. I'm gonna be cordial. "Hi. Bye. Good morning." And as far as, you know, my business...that's nipped in the bud now. Cuz I can't trust nobody...I'm gonna let these other girls do all the talkin', tellin' they business, whatever, but Chicken Wing ain't doin' it. Uh-uh.

In short, Chicken Wing described how she would put her guard back up, a practice that made it possible for her to survive 21 years in prison. Similar to the way she adapted to the prison environment, she adjusted to Growing Stronger by learning that surface-level interactions would best serve her needs. She would maintain what she felt was a healthy critical distance from the program and the staff, essentially biding her time until she secured her own apartment.

Jean also reflected on how she "plays the game." At the time of our interviews, Jean was serving a five-year probation sentence for her part in a burglary. During her

court case, her public defender explained that she had two plea options: three years probation with the conviction staying on her record, or five years Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC) probation with the conviction coming off of her record. TASC probation is an intense, specialized program for individuals who have drug issues. Even though Jean did not identify as having a drug problem, her public defender was able to argue successfully that she qualified for TASC probation, because there was alcohol in the car that she drove to flee the burglary scene. Jean recalled, “The public defender, oh, he made me sound so terrible. He was like, ‘Your Honor, she’s got a serious alcohol problem and this, that, and the other, and she just needs help. I think we should give her the help that she needs.’” Despite adamantly rejecting the label of “drug addict,” Jean went along with the public defender’s representation of her in order to secure the best possible outcome to her criminal case.

As part of her TASC probation, Jean’s officer mandated her to complete an in-patient drug treatment program. Although Jean did not think she needed this type of service, she felt she had no choice but to comply. She recalled how she negotiated the intake process at the treatment program. When the worker asked her if she thought she had a drug problem, Jean replied that she did not. She explained to me with a laugh, “That’s what you’re supposed to say.” When I asked her to clarify what she meant, she explained that “anybody with a real drug problem” would deny having a problem. But Jean “wasn’t really just sayin’ that just to get in. I was sayin’ it cuz...I didn’t believe and I still don’t believe that I have a drug problem, but not only is it the truth, but it’s probably gonna help me get in here.” Jean responded to the intake worker’s questions in a

way that indicated eligibility for the program and allowed her to answer honestly, without falsely representing herself. Jean was accepted into the program immediately and lived there for about six months. During that time, she figured out how to get by, in ways that mirrored Chicken Wing's experiences at Growing Stronger. Recalling one of her most challenging days in the program, Jean said:

I don't know if I was like still pregnant, like seven or eight months pregnant or I had just had my baby, and I was like, "I'm so tired of this place." Like it was just...pressin' on my head, you know, we have the groups every day...and...I was just freein' up my mind, cuz I was, "I, I hate this place. I hate these women. I'm tired of this place. I want to leave!" And...the group facilitator...immediately took that and ran with it and went to the front office and was like, "Jean doesn't want to be here anymore. I think she should go cuz she's not learning anything." And like we're supposed to be talkin' about our feelings! So like after...three days to a week of like, "Oh my gosh, I'm probably gonna get kicked out," nothin' happened, and I was like, "Yeah, I just got to watch my mouth around here." Like I already got that vibe, and I was doin' pretty good with it, but that was one of those days.

Like Chicken Wing, Jean described how a conflict with a service provider taught her that she had to "play the game" or risk the consequences. In this case, Jean could have been kicked out of the program, which could have negatively impacted her probation status. Like Chicken Wing, Jean learned to distance herself from the program and keep her criticisms to herself.

Despite the challenges the program posed, Jean found ways to benefit from it. Namely, it provided her with a relatively safe, stable place to live during the final months of her pregnancy and helped her to apply for a medical card, food stamps, and WIC so that she could provide for the baby. The treatment facility also had a post-partum wing, which meant Jean was able to continue to stay there after giving birth and during the

period of time she worked with an adoption agency to find a family whom she believed would lovingly raise her child. The treatment program did not fill the need the court presumed Jean needed to address, but by “playing the game” and participating in the program’s services, Jean accessed a number of resources and emotional support, all of which she greatly needed, without necessarily internalizing the program’s messages.

E. Summerson Carr (2011) identifies a similar practice in her ethnographic study of a drug treatment program for women, in which she documents the political importance of language and talk in American addiction treatment. Carr (2011:3) shows that practitioners used clients’ language to assess their progress in recovering from drug use. Clients could demonstrate their progress by appropriately, according to the program’s standards, identifying and sharing their feelings and thus coming to understand the inner self. As Carr (2011) argues:

[T]herapists suggested that by reading and rendering themselves aloud, stock takers [i.e. clients who are looking at their inner selves and expressing their feelings] could also *clear away* the pathological layers of the addicted psyche, allowing for deeper, more direct, and purer internal access. Accordingly, successful clients learned to use language as a means of inner reference: matching spoken signs to innermost signifieds, which were thought to be already there and awaiting expression. (P. 94, emphasis in original)

Practitioners relied on clients’ use of language to determine how to “distribute resources.” That is, in exchange for successfully expressing themselves, practitioners granted clients access to resources. Jill A. McCorkel (2013) observes a similar dynamic in her ethnographic study of “Project Habilitate Women (PHW),” a drug treatment program located in a women’s prison. As in the program Carr (2011) studies, McCorkel (2013:101) argues that PHW’s goal was “to make the self visible and interpretable.”

PHW staff members also relied on incarcerated women's language, particularly their descriptions of themselves, to assess whether a woman was internalizing the program's model of addiction that focused on a "diseased self" and "moral blameworthiness" (McCorkel 2013:159, 175).

Carr (2011) and McCorkel (2013) both argue that language is not only an assessment tool that practitioners use, but also a tool that clients and incarcerated people use to access resources. While both scholars note that some participants in the respective treatment programs they studied seemed to internalize the program's model, both also argue that other participants told practitioners exactly what they knew the practitioners wanted to hear, without internalizing this language. Participants in Carr's (2011:191) study referred to this process as "flipping the script," which Carr describes as "a matter of perfectly reproducing therapeutic scripts, in both their generic form and textual content, with one big exception – script flippers did not match their spoken words to their inner signified (i.e., their thoughts, feelings, and intentions) as 'healthy' speakers should." Participants in McCorkel's (2013:198) study called this practice "faking it to make it," which "references a style of participation in which prisoners appear to have surrendered to habilitation, while remaining privately critical of program ideology and claims about the self." This strategy helped women to hold on to their self-identity while continuing to progress through the program. Successful completion of the program typically ensured a sentence modification, meaning women would be released from prison sooner than if they completed their sentence in the general population. In both programs, performing

compliance and expressing belief in the treatment ideology connected women with significant benefits.

Similar to “flipping the script” (Carr 2011) and “faking it to make it” (McCorkel 2013), when “playing the game,” the women I interviewed did not share their inner frustrations and criticisms or outwardly challenge what a service provider or correctional officer mandated. Rather, they did just enough to satisfy recovery home staff members, parole and probation agents, and service providers. They acted “cordial” and pleasant and did not cause problems. They followed the rules without necessarily believing that doing so would improve who they were or that the rules were enforced for their own good. In contrast to Denise and Ann, they did not grow to “love” judges and probation officers or thank them for their strict demands and vigilant surveillance of women’s lives.

Negotiating the Recovery Script

Beyond “playing the game,” women also negotiated what I have come to think of as a “recovery script.” Throughout the interviews, it became clear that programs within jails and prisons, specialized courts (like drug courts), recovery homes, and drug treatment programs assume a “master narrative” (McCorkel and Myers 2003; Romero and Stewart 1999) of incarceration. Because the War on Drugs is a significant causal factor of mass incarceration in the United States, the master narrative of incarceration today cannot be separated from the master narrative of “addiction.” As a result, the post-incarceration process is intertwined closely with the process of recovery from drug use. In general, this master narrative of incarceration borrows from the master narrative of recovery, both of which assume a linear path in which “a dirty past” and addiction lead to

prison, with incarceration being someone's rock bottom (Carr 2011:11-12; Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013:479). Following this linear trajectory, post-incarceration represents a period of time in which people continue to rebound from hitting bottom, bettering themselves through employment, education, counseling, and lifelong drug treatment (at least in the form of 12 Step meeting attendance). Per this narrative, abstinence from drugs is key to ending involvement with the criminal legal system.

Gendering the master narrative of incarceration reveals specific assumed components of women's incarceration, namely that women have survived past physical and sexual violence as children and/or as adults, that women's drug use is a form of self-medicating to deal with the impact of these traumas, and that the time women spend in their addictions and on the streets makes them vulnerable to further violence. At times this vulnerability is tied to women's survival strategies, such as engaging in sex work. These gendered components of women's victimization, drug use, and incarceration are well documented and widely understood by academics and practitioners. This master narrative of women's incarceration means that people working within the criminal legal system and throughout the re-entry field expect women to say and do certain things as evidence of their progress. Similar to Carr's (2011) argument about American addiction treatment, the politics of language and talk also pervade the post-incarceration moral order. At a minimum, women had to identify and work through the traumatic experiences that undergirded their addictions and subsequent criminal behavior. The prevailing logic was that by healing from that trauma and letting go of those past experiences, women could overcome their desire to use. Telling one's story in a variety of venues, including

individual counseling, group counseling, drug treatment counseling, 12 Step meetings, and various public events, was a central part of healing and moving forward.

Not surprisingly, some women found the master narrative of women's incarceration constraining, since women's experiences were far too varied and complex to neatly fit one dominant story arc. As a result, women often picked and chose which pieces of the recovery script to adopt. Chunky's take on Prostitution Anonymous (PA) illustrated this selective interpretation of the recovery script. Although Chunky described benefiting from many of the mandated groups she attended during her time in Cook County Jail's Division 17, she adamantly rejected the PA meetings. She stressed that during all of the years when she was using drugs, she never engaged in sex work. She vehemently expressed her revulsion at the thought of participating in any type of sexual activity for any type of favor. The PA group leader questioned Chunky's claim that she never practiced prostitution and tried to convince her that the group was relevant to her by explaining that women often sell their bodies in exchange for something, whether it be money, drugs, shelter, or to meet some other need. She encouraged Chunky to remember some experience in which she relied on a man, with whom she had sex, for something. Chunky refused. Working within the bounds of the treatment program's organizational logic, the PA group leader intimated that the practice of exchanging sex for resources was fundamental to the master narrative of women's incarceration. This practice was not part of Chunky's personal narrative, however, and she was not willing to reinterpret her personal narrative to make it fit with the assumed sex work component. Chunky could have "played the game" by going along with the PA group. By doing so, she would have

earned a certificate of completion that a judge presumably would have looked favorably upon when reviewing her case. Instead, Chunky bypassed the certificate. Rather than “play the game,” she challenged this service provider’s assumptions about her past and expectations of how she should practice recovery. In doing so, she also resisted this piece of the recovery script.

New Life also reflected on her negotiation of the recovery script. Unlike the vast majority of participants, she did not initially think of herself as an addict. She dealt drugs for a living and smoked marijuana regularly, but before her most recent incarceration, she did not think she had a drug problem. In describing her experiences attending groups in prison, New Life noted how different she was from the other women who used cocaine and heroin. The women regularly shared their stories, but New Life chose not to share hers because she did not think it was “relatable.” She reasoned:

If a woman just told her story yesterday about digging in a garbage can and asking for change or selling her coochie for two dollars or sucking penises for 50 cents, I’m just giving examples, and then I get up here talking about how, you know, I’ve been selling drugs since I was 12, I had my first car at 14, um, I had my first apartment at 16, by myself. You know, you’re like, “Okay, where do the pain come in at?” You know what I’m trying to say?

Although New Life survived robberies, people pulling guns on her, and basically being on her own as a child while her mother struggled with her own drug use issues, she described how her challenges could not compare to the pain and trauma that other incarcerated women regularly shared in groups. Her path to incarceration did not fit the master narrative. In particular, New Life could not relate to the sex work practices and extreme poverty that were requisite parts of the master narrative of women’s

incarceration. New Life did not think of herself as a woman who suffered traumatic experiences, began using drugs to cope with this trauma, and then was vulnerable while living the lifestyle. Instead, she viewed herself as a strong woman who was in control of her life, did quite well financially while selling drugs, and was able to provide for her children. The economic security and relative stability and safety she felt set her apart from most of the women with whom she served her prison sentence.

New Life did not reject the recovery script, though. She described how she continued to attend groups throughout her incarceration and after her release from prison. Over time, the stories women shared made an impression on her and influenced her to understand how she did, in fact, fit within the recovery script. New Life reinterpreted the recovery script by applying what she learned about addiction to her practices as a drug dealer. Specifically, she grew to see herself as at least partially responsible for other women's addictions. Although New Life initially struggled to understand how someone could be so desperate that they would do nearly anything for crack or heroin, she now viewed herself as contributing to that behavior. She explained, "So you know, me sitting around other women I'm like, 'Wow, yeah?' You know...my heart goes out to them because, you know, I was selling that poison. You know, for a very long time." She added, "I didn't see it as I play a big part in that [people's inability to get their lives together] because I'm the drug dealer. You know, I ask for forgiveness still and I pray because there's so many lost souls out there." Since she generally was on the supplying rather than the receiving end of drug deals, New Life had a different orientation to the recovery script than most of the women she met in recovery. She identified with these

women, though, through her expressed need for redemption and by stressing the importance of reforming her past harmful behaviors.

In addition to her reinterpretation of the recovery script, New Life also adopted a key piece of the script by coming to identify as a marijuana “addict.” I struggled with her adoption of this label. Efforts to decriminalize marijuana are gaining strength throughout the country, as evidenced by Colorado’s and Washington’s recent voter-approved initiatives to legalize recreational marijuana use. Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle also recently advocated for police to stop making arrests for low-level marijuana possession and instead issue citations. In terms of public opinion, marijuana has the reputation of being distinct from “harder” drugs like crack and heroin. New Life was steadfast, though, in reflecting on her marijuana use as an addiction. When I asked her what she learned from the groups she attended in prison, she replied, “I learned a lot. I learned that I am a addict. I learned that I had addictive behavior. I learned about all the chemicals that’s in marijuana.” Later she added, “Certain symptoms and side effects that they was talking about, I apply to a lot of them.” Particularly, New Life noted how she used to have to “smoke a blunt” first thing in the morning before doing anything else, as well as “smoke a blunt to really enjoy a meal.” She also commented on how irritable she would become if she didn’t smoke marijuana, a similar feeling other group participants described experiencing if they were not able to smoke crack. New Life drew connections across their somewhat divergent experiences, which allowed her to engage with and personally benefit from the group. While most of the service providers and other group participants referred implicitly to crack and heroin when discussing addiction, New Life

applied their insights to her use of marijuana. In this way, she adopted a recovery script that did not initially seem to connect to her experiences and made it applicable to her life.

Jean faced a similar challenge as New Life in that she did not identify as having a drug problem but had to participate in drug treatment services as a condition of her probation and as a requirement of the recovery home where she resided. Jean shared that she struggled to attend the mandated eight 12 Step meetings each month. While she enjoyed certain aspects of the meetings, they did not resonate with her experiences for the most part. Jean noted:

Out of any program, I thoroughly enjoy the 12 Steps. I think everybody should live the 12 steps, cuz they're...just good for you. They come out of the Bible. You know, how you should live your life, you know, good stuff. Everybody should do it. But the AA 12 Steps is focused on the alcohol. You know, they say to...take alcohol out and put in...what you need to hear, but it's so hard when alcohol, alcohol, alcohol. Or cocaine, cocaine or, you know, whatever. Like when everybody's saying, "Hey, I'm an alcoholic," I'm not an alcoholic. Like it's kind of hard to...filter that when every other word is alcohol or drugs or, you know, so.

Jean found a way to make the meetings work for her, though. As she explained, there's an "Anonymous" group for every type of addiction, such as gambling or overeating, and attendance at any of these various types of "Anonymous" meetings counted toward her required eight monthly meetings. Knowing that drugs and alcohol were not her problem, she asked herself, "What is *my* problem?" According to Jean, her problem was "sex and relationships." Thus, she sought out a Sex Addicts Anonymous (SA) meeting and immediately felt more comfortable in this setting. At the SA meetings, Jean realized "I can do this. I can talk about this stuff, and I feel lighter after I talk about this stuff, after, instead of going to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and I feel heavier." Like New

Life, she adapted the recovery script to better fit with her experiences and needs. Given the criminal legal system's organizational logic and the master narrative of incarceration, 12 Step meeting were supposed to help women maintain their sobriety from alcohol and drugs. Jean used these meetings, however, to help her understand and manage her sexual behavior. Through her SA meeting attendance, she complied with service providers' and her probation agent's requirements, but the personal benefit she experienced came from the way she adapted this requirement to suit her needs. Of course, Jean still was accepting the overarching "addiction" discourse (Haney 2010) and might have been pathologizing sexual activity that only was labeled deviant because she was a young, homeless, African-American woman who had a child out of wedlock. It is noteworthy, though, that she challenged the "criminal drug addict" label and found ways to work within the constraints of the recovery script that allowed her to gain as much benefit as possible from the mandated services with which she had to engage.

Chunky's, New Life's, and Jean's ability to adopt, reject, and reinterpret certain pieces of the recovery script allowed all three women to engage in the overall programming that was fundamental to their correctional supervision and post-incarceration experiences. Rather than completely run from state involvement in their lives by refusing to participate in these programs, they engaged the state on their terms. They modified and applied what they learned from service providers and other women who were in trouble with the law to their own experiences in ways that personally were helpful, while dismissing non-applicable and thus unhelpful lessons.

Self-Advocacy within the Criminal Legal System

The post-incarceration moral order also was enabling when women used markers of their successful engagement with it to earn formal recognition of their personal transformations. In their appeals to representatives of the criminal legal system, women drew on a variety of legitimizing factors, including employment and education, to demonstrate their new, “clean,” “rehabilitated” identities. Ella and Corrine shared specific examples of their self-advocacy with judges that illustrated this process.

At the time of our interviews, Ella had been out of prison for approximately seven years. She was a well-liked staff member at a recovery home, had her own apartment with her husband, and had nine years of “clean” time. Despite her successful negotiation of the post-incarceration moral order, she still felt restricted by her criminal background. She talked about the importance of having her record sealed and her plans to apply for clemency for her two convictions that were not eligible for sealing. I accompanied Ella to her court date to petition to have her record sealed. Sister Maria, one of the senior staff members at the recovery home where Ella now worked and previously had lived following last incarceration, also came to court. Both of us stood in front of the judge beside Ella when her name was called. Sister Maria had written a letter on Ella’s behalf, which Ella handed to the judge, along with a stack of additional reference letters and certificates of completion for things like computer classes, drug treatment, and anger management classes. The judge quickly flipped through the paperwork and then asked Sister Maria if she would like to say anything. She praised Ella as one of the recovery home’s stars and an excellent employee, noting how far she had come since she was a

resident there and how much support she provided to the current residents in her staff role. She noted that she had included this information in her letter. The attorney from a local non-profit organization who helped Ella file her petition added that she had a stack of Ella's certificates. The judge said that the documentation was good, but sometimes the personal touch was more important. To my surprise, he then asked me if I had anything to add. I paused, not having prepared anything to say, and quickly responded that I echoed Sister Maria's comments and that Ella was an amazing woman who had overcome a lot and was determined to keep going. The judge nodded and then, while looking over Ella's background, asked her some questions about what had helped her. Ella identified the recovery home, a well-known local drug treatment center, and God. The judge granted Ella's petition to seal her record. The whole process took less than five minutes.

Ella was able to engage with the court (and the judge, specifically) on its terms, using its language. For one, he recognized the importance of the certificates she had accumulated over the past seven years and presented as evidence of her rehabilitation. Additionally, although Ella had not anticipated that the judge would ask Sister Maria and me to speak, our presence served as a further legitimating force. Importantly, Ella brought Sister Maria to court as her boss at the recovery home, not as someone who could speak to Ella's time as a resident at the home. Sister Maria's comments likely reassured the judge that Ella not only had stable employment, but also excelled in her staff position, through which she meaningfully contributed to society. It is noteworthy that the judge knew nothing about me aside from Ella's introduction of me as her friend. It is likely that my white, middle-class appearance and proximity to Sister Maria

communicated a certain degree of legitimacy that made the judge open to my limited comments.

Ella explained that she wanted to have her record sealed and apply for clemency “because I’m no longer doing those things, and I have changed my life around.” Beyond opening up employment and housing opportunities, the sealed record was an affirmation of Ella’s reformed identity. Although Ella felt like she was a different person from when she was using drugs, getting arrested, and going to prison, the record was a reminder, not just to Ella, but to anyone who could access it, of her past, criminal self. By sealing Ella’s record, the judge formally recognized her rehabilitated self.

Corrine also drew on legitimizing factors, specifically education, to advocate with a judge. She described her last incarceration as an important turning point. She participated in a drug treatment program in prison and moved into a supportive recovery home and reunited with her daughter upon her release. Over the next approximately ten years, Corrine did not have any problems with the law and felt that she had turned her life around. She was steadily employed, pursuing her college education, and had purchased a home. Another encounter with the criminal legal system, though, jeopardized this progress. While shopping for eyeglasses, the store’s security officer stopped her as she attempted to leave the store and had her arrested for attempted shoplifting. Corrine stressed that the officer did not find any merchandise on her person, but she reasoned, “it all had to do with them running my name and saw that I had had a past conviction.” Her past criminal record outweighed any evidence of her rehabilitation, and a judge sentenced Corrine to five years of probation and ordered her to pay a fine.

An antagonistic relationship with her probation officer early on reinforced the court's message that Corrine had failed to overcome her "criminality." She said that the officer was "really poking at me trying to show that, you know, I was, had returned back to this criminal person that I used to be." Additionally, the new conviction interfered with Corrine's educational and professional progress. She recalled, "it was a crucial time because I was working on my Master's degree...had been employed for four and a half years at that time on my job. And I saw all of this going down the drain." Corrine knew that her most recent conviction would limit, and maybe even prevent, her ability to become employed as a social worker. She explained that while applying for a position at a "federal and state halfway house," the attempted shoplifting conviction "was a blemish." The employer told her that she "would need to wait at least a year or two before I could come back and reapply...because I had that misdemeanor. And when you're applying for a job as a felon, you must have not had any arrests within the last...five to seven years...especially trying to get a job in, in that capacity." Ten years had passed since Corrine's felony, but the recent misdemeanor conviction negated her progress. She recalled that it was "another adversity...a devastating point."

She appealed to the judge who had placed her on probation. Upon completing her graduate program and earning her Master's degree in Social Work, she wrote a letter to the judge, explaining her educational accomplishments, her goals for a career in social work, and "how this probation was limiting my ability to move forward in life." She included a copy of her unofficial transcript with the letter. To Corrine's surprise, the judge terminated her probation. Her ability to advocate for herself through the written

letter and substantiate her request with proof of her graduate degree provided sufficient legitimacy to compel the judge to reverse her previous decision to sentence Corrine to probation. In short, she communicated with the court in a language it understood and respected. The judge's favorable response to Corrine's self-advocacy had a deeper impact than just helping her employment prospects; it legitimated that Corrine had left behind her "criminal self" and truly had become a "rehabilitated" person. To use Corrine's words, the judge communicated that the state believed Corrine "had not returned back to that person," specifically that criminal person, she used to be. As she and Ella both showed, women used documented markers of their personal transformations to successfully ask judges to formally recognize their rehabilitated identities. Understanding the post-incarceration moral order enabled women to engage with the criminal legal system in effective ways, using a discourse that resonated with the courts.

Cracks in the Moral Order

To this point, I have focused on how the post-incarceration moral order was individualistic, encouraging a focus on women's personal transformations. Whether women experienced it as constraining and/or enabling, their task was to demonstrate their personal progress away from a "dirty," "criminal" identity and toward a "clean," "rehabilitated" identity by drawing on various markers of individual success. This individualizing focus started with women's arrest, detainment, prosecution, and incarceration, as the state worked to prove that they had committed a crime and deserved punishment, regardless of larger, mitigating circumstances. Incarceration was a particularly isolating experience. Women were separated from their family members,

friends, and communities, as the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) shipped them to distant locations in central and southern Illinois to serve their prison sentences.

Keeping to themselves was a common survival strategy women practiced in prison in order to avoid conflicts with guards and other incarcerated women. Although criminalization and incarceration were isolating experiences, the state also paradoxically brought women together in jail and prison and through the post-incarceration moral order. Despite frequent references to conflicts among women in all of these sites, women also focused on the support and care they received from and offered to other women. A sense of community emerged as women shared strategies and resources on how to get by.

Community

Ann W. and Sharon were just two women who noted the critical support they received from other women throughout their prison sentences. Ann W. had been incarcerated four separate times, and Sharon had been incarcerated six separate times. Ann W. stressed how alone she felt while in prison because, unlike many of the other women, she had no family members on the outside to send her care packages or put money on her commissary account. The other women helped her, though, by letting her know that she could submit a request with one of the guards for a care package and by sharing their items. Ann W. explained, “I was blessed because I had the girls, my roommates. I got along with them...every time they shopped they threw me [some items]...so I was kind of, like, blessed. It wasn’t...as bad, but it really opened up my eyes far as, um, I ain’t got to never worry [about going without].” Birthdays could be

particularly painful, with no cards or gifts arriving from loved ones on the outside, but

Ann W. fondly recalled the last birthday she spent in prison:

They went out of their way and showered me and made a card. See, they say the little things can touch your heart, and...I was thinkin', you know, what they gon' do? They made that day really special for me! And I still to this day got that card...they sung happy birthday, they made food for me...we had like a little grab bag, and then they had little stuff on my bed. I went and took my shower, and I came back, all my little treats and stuff was on my bed, my card. It was really nice. I really enjoyed that... they really made me feel loved and excited and happy...that was a great experience for me.

The community of love and support that Ann W. experienced carried her through particularly difficult days and helped her to make it through her sentences.

Although she described herself as someone who kept to herself, Sharon also reflected on the relationships she developed while in prison. She recalled growing close with one woman, who ultimately died while in prison after guards ignored her pleas to see a doctor for her asthma. Sharon recalled being “heartbroken” by the woman’s death: “I was so hurt because when I first came on the unit with this young lady, she didn’t know me, and she walked right up to me and just start, she had a care package, she didn’t even know me, she gave me food, deodorant, and stuff...and ever since, we became close.” Like Ann W., Sharon stressed how important these moments of connection were in prison and how something as seemingly simple as giving someone deodorant was a humanizing act in a deeply dehumanizing place.

As women left prison, they also developed friendships with other women with whom they lived at recovery homes. In fact, women commonly learned about recovery homes from other incarcerated women who recommended which places could offer the

most help. Again, while women noted conflicts and tensions that arose in these communal living arrangements, they highlighted how women helped one another. A theme that emerged across women's photographs was pictures of housemates and recovery home activities.¹ Sharon, for instance, took photographs of a close friend at the recovery home:

She's a sister that I always wanted...She's down to earth...she talks to me, because like my real sisters never talk to me and...on a daily basis she asks me what's wrong with me. She...calls me on a regular basis, asks me how I'm doin'. Even when I take my weekend pass, she calls and checks on me. And my real family don't do that, but she does it...and it makes me feel good and it makes me feel loved...She talks to me about anything, and I can talk to her about anything and it stays there. It don't go anywhere.

This woman was such an important support that Sharon felt closer to her than she did to her own family. Red similarly took a photograph of a couple of residents at Starting Again to show the impact they had on her life. She described how much she appreciated one resident who voluntarily cooked for everyone in the house and explained that the women depicted in the photographs were "here like me" and symbolized "a second chance in life, you know, that I'm not alone, cuz I'm really not alone with them...They don't let me be alone." Denise also used photographs to communicate the togetherness she felt with fellow recovery home residents. She shared a photograph she asked a friend to take of her and a Michael Jackson impersonator, whom they encountered on an elevator platform on their way to a 12 Step meeting. Denise commented, "I just seen an opportunity...to get some entertainment, you know, cuz they say that you can have fun in

¹ I am not able to show these photographs due to confidentiality concerns.

recovery, so I caught myself creating some.” She and her friends at the recovery home were finding ways not to just stop using drugs, but to enjoy their sobriety together.

Women also used photographs to document more structured collective experiences, such as school and recovery home events. Carmel shared a photograph of herself and her classmates at an adult high school where she was taking classes and eventually earned her high school diploma. Reflecting on the photograph, Carmel said, laughing, “They mean a lot to me because we struggle, all of us struggle... We’re trying to stay clean. All of us in this picture are recovering from alcohol and drugs and prison, coming out of prison and stuff. That little group right there.” She explained that school was a collective experience: “There’s no one in there arguing and fighting and stuff like that. Everybody is a help to one another, and we worked so hard... We give each other hope and strength... ‘Come to school tomorrow, you’re gonna get it. We’re gonna get this graduation and stuff. We’re gonna graduate together.’” The students were not only committed to their individual success; they were committed to their collective success. They hoped the high school diploma, as a marker of their personal transformations, would help all of them overcome the obstacles they faced because of their criminal records. In fact, when I attended Carmel’s graduation ceremony, the executive director of the organization that ran the adult high school stressed that the diploma would help the graduates find new employment opportunities and stressed that all of them were deserving of a second chance. Denise also shared a photograph she had someone take after a recovery home event where alumnae spoke about their accomplishments since leaving the recovery home. Denise personally knew the alumnae because they all were

participants in a job training program. She said the photograph revealed, “Recovery. Everybody in here is sober and got a new start. That’s why I asked to take it. I said, ‘These are all my...sisters.’” Through her photographs, Moon documented her and other recovery home residents’ participation in a One Billion Rising event² and described how much she enjoyed the afternoon:

We danced and celebrated ourselves...we don’t have to be quiet and sit back and take it...it was just like a good thing to do with a bunch of women...we’re not the only ones, even though, like, we’ve been to prison and rehab, and...drug abuse and stuff. It was women there that wasn’t been through that, but they been through the traumatic part like rape and...beat up and...just abused period. And they was all there celebrating the fact that you don’t gotta take that anymore...It was wonderful. I’ve never...seen anything like that. So it was wonderful to see so many women comin’ together just to celebrate being a woman, you know?...We got rights and stuff like that, so it was like a feminist sort of thing...It was all women...together on one accord, to celebrate freedom...especially freedom of not being the only one. That’s what was the most important thing to me...Not being the only one who’s gone through some of these hard experiences.

Moon stressed the collective nature of her recovery, not only from drug use but also from violence, as the critical factor that was helping her to move forward. She knew she was not alone, and this knowledge provided her with a sense of power and strength. Despite her past mistakes, she still had “rights” and deserved a second chance.

² One Billion Rising is a global campaign started by Eve Ensler’s V-Day organization to raise awareness about sexual violence against women. Beginning in 2013, groups around the world participate in coordinated events annually on February 14th (V-Day). According to the One Billion Rising website: “It is a call to survivors to break the silence and release their stories – politically, spiritually, outrageously – through art, dance, marches, ritual, song, spoken word, testimonies and whatever way feels right” (<http://www.onebillionrising.org/about/campaign/>). A dance movement therapy intern at the recovery home organized an event and taught women a choreographed dance to perform at the event.

A final theme related to community that emerged across the interviews was that women's connections spanned the prison walls. Despite their own hardships, women frequently commented on how grateful they were that they had an "out date" and expressed their concern for women who remained incarcerated, serving longer sentences, sometimes even life sentences. Ella commented on the women she met in prison who were serving life sentences

For some people to know that they're never leavin' there, I don't know how I would deal with that. I think for me knowin' that I had a out date made it better for me, because I knew each day that I'm in there, I'm gettin' closer to my out date. But if I knew that this was it for the rest of my life, that's a lot to swallow.

Similarly, Ida sympathized with women who remained in prison, even though she had one of the most severe charges (attempted murder) of all of the women I interviewed and served six years. She commented:

I've got to meet a lot of young ladies at Dwight, a lot of young ladies in Lincoln...and a lot of them have shared their stories with me...and they say, "You know what? You can go back home to your family, we can't." Some of us girls that's locked up in prison, will never come from behind those bars.

Through communicating with one another in prison, women learned that there was more to people's stories than just the charge for which they had been convicted. Ann W. described slowly getting to know the other women with whom she was incarcerated and "understanding [them]...getting that connection, feeling them...There's some women in there ain't never gon' leave...And just looking around and seeing...we all made bad choices and mistakes. You know, but we still good people." Rather than distance herself from the "lifers," Ann W. related to them, using "we" to refer to their common

experiences of criminalization and imprisonment. Regardless of their “mistakes,” they all are “good people.”

Critique

As women shared their experiences with one another and grew to view themselves as “good,” “rehabilitated” women, they found openings to begin to view their situations as part of a collective experience and not just an individual problem. They began to critique how the criminal legal system operated. If they could be transformed, why could not other women who still were locked up? If they benefited from drug treatment and supportive services, why did prison have to be so harsh? Thus, women’s individual personal transformations occurred even as they recognized the criminal legal system as unfair, racist, and needing reform. Women learned how to navigate the raced, gendered post-incarceration moral order even when they disagreed with basic parts of it and understood their involvement with the criminal legal system as marking their lives indefinitely. Women discussed the harm prison caused even when asserting that prison had saved their lives.

Corrine felt the tension between accepting personal responsibility for her past behaviors and being critical of how little support she received to try to turn her life around. She remembered “having good desires and intentions after serving time to go home and do the right thing...and not finding that the community support was...there for me. Or the family support.” As a professional who now worked within the criminal legal system, Corrine walked a fine line daily between encouraging women’s individual

change and recognizing that the odds were stacked against them. Her “goal” with her work was:

To educate and empower and to give women hope that...their lives can change with some determination and strong willpower and footwork. However, even in promoting that, it's sad because women often do not have the adequate resources once they leave the jail. And that's a big impact on them succeeding in their re-entry process back into the communities, and when I mention the resources I'm thinking more of housing, safe living environments...many of them will be forced to return right back to their communities, but also without the skills that they need in order to be successful in their reentry process.

As a result, Corrine saw the same women return to her program and described jail and prison as a “revolving door.” Rather than blame the women, Corrine recognized that “the state today plays a big part, because they have removed funding...for rehabilitation for these women, and...the money is just not there for services.” Based on her experiences of her own criminalization and now working with criminalized women, Corrine developed a structural critique of the criminal legal system.

Women's critiques also centered on how racism and economic inequality structured the criminal legal system, specifically whom the system targeted and how the system treated them. Moon, for instance, discussed the unequal life chances children faced based on whether they were born into rich or poor communities. She noted that children who lived in well-resourced communities benefitted from private educational programs, while children in under-resourced communities were left to struggle on their own, as she did as a child. Reflecting on a photograph she took while attending a basketball game at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Moon described how hopeful she felt for the young people she saw in the stands (Figure 39): “I was like, man, now that's

what's up, showin' these little kids that it's more to life than just the block, you know?"

She was happy that someone was encouraging these young people to see ways that their lives could be different from what they routinely observed in marginalized communities.

Moon was so moved that she approached the adult chaperone for the youth group and told her:

"Take the kids and let them see like the Black colleges, Morehouse and stuff like that. Let them see Arkansas, Pine Bluff, Mississippi State, let them see that there are Black kids doing other stuff, too, besides the hood"...It gave me a good feeling to see all these kids in a good place. No funeral. No Ceasefire. This was a game. They were there having fun being kids, and I like that.

By mentioning Historically Black Colleges and Universities and noting the importance of Black youth having positive Black role models, Moon indicated that Chicago's racially and economically segregated communities created structural disadvantages for young



Figure 39. UIC basketball game

people. She also recognized that structurally disadvantaged communities supply the Black and Brown bodies that fill Chicago's jail and Illinois's prisons

(LaVigne, Mamalian,

Travis, and Visser 2003). Moon described prison as "a modern day slavery" and noted that when she started getting in trouble with the law, she always encountered white

people in positions of authority (i.e. state's attorneys and judges), who reinforced her grandmother's warnings throughout her childhood that white people did not want her to succeed. Moon explained, "It made it seem like [what her grandmother said] was true, because they didn't send me to...rehab, they didn't send me nowhere to like get...help. They sent me to jail...And jail wasn't the answer."

Olivia similarly critiqued the criminal legal system's racism, noting that the figure of the blindfolded Lady Justice who holds the balanced scales of justice was inaccurate. Olivia said that in an accurate representation, "Her blindfold is crooked. It's not actually straight...and then the scales [are] not balanced. They're uneven. That's not fair. That's what justice is." A crooked blindfold would symbolize the way the criminal legal system treats defendants differently based on their "nationalities," "class," and where they live: "In the city, they have a real high conviction rate. And if they have somebody from the suburbs, they've got a better chance of giving them probation or rehab or something, as to where us in the city, they want to send us straight to the penitentiary." According to Olivia, the courts "figure the people in the suburbs, the middle-class and upper-class, they come to the city to get their drugs or whatever. Ok, but they're grown like me. Them the choices they made. You can't be mad at the city for it, cuz they're doin' what they want to do." Olivia expressed an intersectional analysis in which "prejudices" based on race, class, and community intertwined to result in more punitive sanctions for low-income and poor people of color who live in the city.

Tinybig represented this disparity with a photograph she took of news trucks that were parked outside of the Chicago Police Department Headquarters (Figure 40). She

went to this location to request her criminal background, which was the first step in the expungement process. It happened to be the same day that local news outlets were reporting on Chicago reaching the dubious milestone of its 500th homicide for the year.

Tinybig took the photograph because, “It’s interesting how some features or events show up on the news and some don’t...Like a lot of times in the Black community...or even



Figure 40. Chicago’s 500th homicide of the year

community, it may not come across the news where somebody died of an overdose, of a bad heroin purchase. But in the suburbs, it may.” Tinybig explained that this uneven news coverage reflected the way society devalued the lives of people of color. If she had died while on the streets, “it may not be broadcast, but because it might be a political figure’s daughter, a judge’s daughter, an attorney’s daughter, it’s all over the news.”

Similar to Olivia’s analysis, Tinybig recognized that certain lives mattered more than others and that this social hierarchy played out in the criminal legal system. Olivia connected this valuing and devaluing of lives to the privatization of prisons, noting that since prisons actually generate wealth for some people, particularly stockholders, there always will be prisons. She explained that shortly after she learned about privatization, “I

noticed they started really buildin' jails. That's all they seem to want to put up instead of places that's actually gonna help you. They'd rather put up a jail. Lock us up." Through their analyses, Moon, Olivia, and Tinybig stressed that the criminal legal system was rigged along the axes of race and class to benefit privileged groups at the expense of disadvantaged groups.

Overwhelmingly, women stressed that the harms prison caused extended long beyond the end of their incarceration and even beyond the completion of parole. As discussed in the previous chapter, women faced challenges finding housing and jobs because of their criminal records, and there was no way to recover the time they lost with their children and family members while imprisoned. The experience of incarceration in itself was harmful. As discussed in Chapter 3, women survived multiple types of state violence in jail and prison, including verbal and physical abuse from correctional officers, inadequate healthcare, poor quality food, and punitive treatment during childbirth, ranging from inattentiveness to shackling (Amnesty International 1999; Davis 2003; Davis and Shaylor 2001; Flavin 2009; Law 2009; Richie 2012). A few women noted needing to heal from the "trauma" of incarceration. Moon commented that everyone who leaves prison should go to a "therapeutic environment" like the recovery home where she stayed, because "we do need therapy, after being incarcerated for X amount of times...it's traumatic mentally, you know, even though you make it back out sane, you still have like this exterior or this mask on, you know." Sarah also described prison as "traumatic." While she explained that she participated in drug treatment for the first time while incarcerated and began to recover from her drug use, she also noted how "hard" it

was to live in jail and prison. She commented on frequent conflicts, drug use, inadequate bathroom and shower facilities for the number of women using them, inadequate bedding and hygiene items, food that was barely edible, and expensive commissary prices. Sarah perfectly summed up the balance between help and harm she experienced while incarcerated, when she said, “For me, jail was a trauma. A good recovery, but a trauma recovery.” Sarah meant that although she began to recover and heal in jail and prison, the experience of imprisonment itself was traumatic. Now, on the outside, she had to work on recovering from the trauma of her incarceration.

Like others who were critical of the criminal legal system, Sarah indicated that jail and prison were not appropriate places for people to get the help they needed. Women’s critiques grew out of their shared everyday lived experiences and reflected an emerging discourse that challenged, or at least complicated, the individualistic focus of the post-incarceration moral order. Women realized that the personal responsibility rhetoric alone, without giving attention to structural change, was inadequate. Furthermore, they struggled to reconcile personal accountability with their knowledge of the criminal legal system’s unfair practices.

Challenging the System

Women’s recognition of racism, bias, and inequalities that were embedded in and perpetuated by the criminal legal system contributed to their efforts to reform the system. They challenged the system in individual and collective ways. At the individual level, women sought recognition of their personal transformations from authority figures, as exemplified by Denise’s and Ann’s reflections of earning praise from judges, probation

officers, and recovery home staff members and by Ella's and Corrine's self-advocacy efforts (all of which are discussed above). Situating actions like these within a larger social-historical context makes clear that successfully managing the post-incarceration moral order was a noteworthy form of resistance.

Doing well in recovery homes, drug treatment programs, and re-entry programs; getting a job, however low-paying and unstable it was; getting an apartment, even if it was an SRO unit where children could not live; and not getting in trouble again with the law were ways that women resisted the criminalization of disadvantaged communities. Some might argue that women's progress in these areas only upheld larger systems of inequality, as they participated in precarious labor markets and failed to challenge neoliberal systems of governance that rely on self-discipline and economic insecurity. By successfully managing the post-incarceration moral order, however, women avoided what the state attempted to do to them, which is lock them up and "disappear" them, as Angela Davis (1998) argues. Davis explains that the state responds to social problems by criminalizing and imprisoning poor people and people of color. This response attempts to "disappear [social problems] from public view" (Davis 1998:11), while leaving systems of inequality intact. She argues, "But prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings. And the practice of disappearing vast numbers of people from poor, immigrant, and racially marginalized communities has literally become big business." (Davis 1998:11).

In addition to Davis (1998; 2003), scholars including Kristin Bumiller (2008), David Garland (2001), and Loïc Wacquant (2009; 2012) explain that mass incarceration

in the United States is a neoliberal state project to contain socially marginalized populations. As Davis (2003:91) summarizes, “The massive prison-building project that began in the 1980s created the means of concentrating and managing what the capitalist system had implicitly declared to be a human surplus.” Neoliberal policies that deregulated the economic market, facilitated deindustrialization, and allowed corporations to exploit a global labor pool contributed to growing wealth inequality and social stratification. The resultant economic and social insecurity felt by the middle class contributed to support for harsh law-and-order approaches to maintain social control (Bumiller 2008; Davis 2003; Garland 2001; Wacquant 2009, 2012a). Given this historical, social, and political context, women’s abilities to complete parole and probation, pass drug tests, maintain their stays at recovery homes, move into their own apartments, attend school, and get jobs mattered. Their relative stability in the post-incarceration moral order mattered. Representatives of the criminal legal system and service providers could not ignore them. Women’s resilience made them visible, as they refused to allow the criminal legal system to “disappear” (Davis 1998) them. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, women’s personal transformations helped them to feel better about themselves and establish meaningful relationships with children, family members, and romantic partners. Women grew to love and accept themselves and felt that they were in a better position in life.

Women’s individual success also made it possible for them to participate in more collective forms of resistance, aimed to bring about broader changes in the criminal legal system that would improve all women’s experiences. Three women discussed being part

of class action lawsuits, one for illegal shackling during childbirth and two for illegal strip searches (one at Cook County Jail and one at Lincoln Correctional Center), meaning guards conducted the strip searches with groups of women, rather than individually, and men correctional officers were present. In addition to wanting restitution for the state violence she endured throughout her 21-year prison sentence, Chicken Wing hoped the lawsuit would bring about broader change:

I hope they stop that, you know. Men ain't supposed to be looking at us, and they was talking about women and looking at our bodies, and we have to squat and all this, stand up there for like 15 minutes, you know, and all that. You can't put on a pad or tampon, you know, it's just disrespectful...they should stop that...they should sue their butts off. And the warden should get fired behind that.

The lawsuits were one way women collectively attempted to hold the state accountable and force changes that would benefit all women caught up in the system.

Five women spoke of their advocacy and organizing efforts to bring about larger change in the criminal legal system and social service field. Chunky discussed her volunteer work with an organization that provides direct legal services to incarcerated women and does policy work.³ As part of its policy work, the organization organizes formerly incarcerated women to work on legislative campaigns. This organizing work includes strategies, such as lobbying trips to Springfield to meet with state legislators, public demonstrations, petition drives, and meetings with officials within the criminal legal system. Chunky talked about a recent trip she made with the organization to Dwight Correctional Center, where she had served time, and her participation in a meeting with

³ Chunky took a photograph of the organization's name placard that hangs outside of its office for our photo-elicitation interview. I have chosen not to include the photograph for confidentiality reasons.

IDOC officials to advocate for better living conditions in the prison. Chunky said, “basically what they were talking about was the healthcare situation and getting those women out of there that are eligible to go home on home monitor. The problem is a lot of them don’t have any place to go.” Chunky specifically talked about the need for better healthcare services and to lower the fee women had to pay to see the doctor. At one point, women had to pay two dollars per doctor visit, but IDOC raised the fee to five dollars per visit. Chunky stressed that this fee was too expensive, especially for women who did not have anyone on the outside sending them money. She asked, “So what? So now we into crime and punishment instead of corrections? What? You’re punishing me already, I’m away from my family, I’m away from my kids, I’m away from everything.” Chunky expressed that the increased healthcare fees were a further form of punishment that prevented women from getting the medical services they needed and had a right to receive. She also informed the officials, that they needed to “change your guards, ’cause I think you know you got some guards here that is not right.” She recalled the racist insults guards used and their gossiping about the women during her imprisonment and said, “It felt really good,” to speak her mind and give input to the wardens and deputy director. “They took our suggestions, and they wrote them down. They were duly noted, and we felt like...it wasn’t wasted. They were actually communicating with us. That was a good feeling...I felt hopeful.”

Iris also talked about her advocacy work with this organization, specifically a lobbying trip to Springfield to encourage support for a bill that would allow people to petition the court to seal certain non-violent felony convictions four years after

completion of their sentence. Although the bill would not benefit Iris directly, since her felony conviction was for one of the excluded offenses, she valued the opportunity to contribute to a “good cause to improve people’s life conditions, to give them chances, to be of service, and just get outside of myself and do something for a good cause.” She also benefitted from the lobbying experience because, “It empowers me, and it motivates me. Because I have a voice! You know, and the voice needs to be heard.” Julia also gained lobbying and organizing experience with a different organization that led a successful campaign to end felony convictions for prostitution in Illinois. When I was at the recovery home one day to meet with another woman, Julia proudly showed the organization’s newsletter to me that featured a picture of her, as well as a short bio that explained her contributions to the campaign. Julia and I remained in contact after I completed data collection, and she periodically sent text messages to me, updating me on how she was doing. She had been working in an apprentice program for “ex-offenders” at the Chicago Transit Authority. She cleaned CTA buses at one of its garages, as well as the garage itself. The position was temporary and paid minimum wage. Julia always spoke positively about the job and expressed her gratitude for the program. In one of her text messages, though, she said she planned to start a campaign to increase payment for the apprentices. Tinybig also remained in contact after data collection and worked in the same CTA program. While stressing that she liked the position, she also expressed frustration with the heightened surveillance the apprentices experienced in comparison to the permanent employees, as well as the insecurity of the temporary position.

Reflections such as these indicated that women recognized the need for broad, social change. As they encountered barriers, despite adapting to the post-incarceration moral order, they recognized the limits of personal transformation and accountability. In a few cases, this recognition moved women to collective action to work for changes that would benefit all women who were in trouble with the law.

Conclusion

This chapter documents how women managed the post-incarceration moral order, which they experienced as both constraining and enabling. When the order was overly constraining and did not offer adequate assistance, women disengaged. More commonly, women engaged with the order in a variety of ways that allowed them to access resources and recognition of their personal transformations. This chapter also shows how women challenged the individualistic focus of the post-incarceration moral order by forming community and developing critiques of the criminal legal system. These cracks in the moral order contributed to women's efforts to challenge the system in individualistic and collective ways. These efforts were important, though often overlooked, forms of resistance.

In addition to more visible forms of organizing and advocacy, many of the ways that women managed the post-incarceration moral order, specifically "playing the game," negotiating the recovery script, and advocating for themselves, were noteworthy forms of resistance. Women worked to maintain a "clean," "rehabilitated" self-identity and contested the stereotypes of "woman drug user" and "formerly incarcerated woman," as well as the racialized, stigmatized identities (such as unfit mother, homeless person, poor

person, victim, and sex worker) that are fundamental to these stereotypes. Through these strategies, women also found ways to access resources and support. As Carr (2011:19) argues, exerting this type of influence is a political act: “[P]eople can act politically by strategically reproducing – rather than simply resisting – ideologies of language. For in perfectly performing inner reference and therefore the role of the ‘good client,’ those who flipped scripts also directed the flow of the basic resources, sanctions, and services.” By “flipping the script,” women navigate “institutional and social terrains that so often punish and penalize,” and “the rewards of this linguistic practice” can be “real resources gained or tragic losses avoided” (Carr 2011:19). By not just surviving the state systems that bear down on their lives, but actually finding ways to make these systems benefit them, women reinterpreted and resisted these systems in everyday ways that were significant.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, I foregrounded women's narrative and visual accounts of their experiences with the criminal legal system to answer three central research questions: (1) How does the state structure women's post-incarceration experiences? (2) How do these post-incarceration experiences relate to women's experiences of criminalization and incarceration? (3) How do women respond to criminalization, incarceration, and post-incarceration? I drew upon poststructuralist theories of the state, specifically how the neoliberal state increasingly relies on the criminal legal system to regulate social marginality, to contextualize and understand women's everyday experiences. I extended findings from research that examines how therapeutic governance operates in carceral settings, such as drug treatment programs located in prisons (McCorkel 2013), alternative-to-incarceration programs (Haney 2010), and residential, court-mandated drug-treatment facilities located in communities (Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Kaye 2012; McKim 2008), to show how women experienced governance *across* multiple sites during and following incarceration and even after completing formal correctional supervision.

In addition to the barriers the "reentry" literature highlights, I showed how women's experiences post-incarceration reflect the state's moral project to manage social marginality through encouraging processes of personal transformation from "criminal,"

“immoral,” “dirty” identities to “rehabilitated,” “moral,” “clean” identities. Building upon the work of Bumiller (2013), Kaufman (2014), Miller (2014), and Wacquant (2010), I argued that women did not face the task of “reentering” or “reintegrating” to society after incarceration. To explain, women shared histories of severe social disadvantage that indicated they never were part of “mainstream society” (Bumiller 2013:58). Even prior to formal involvement with the criminal legal system, women, for the most part, existed in disadvantaged communities structured by racial and economic segregation, punitive public policies characteristic of America’s “prison nation” (Richie 2012), and heightened surveillance and policing reflective of the unprecedented expansion of the penal state (Richie 2012; Wacquant 2009, 2012a, 2012b). After imprisonment, women encountered a space that existed in between their home communities and mainstream society, what I term a *post-incarceration moral order*. To avoid re-incarceration and persistent recognition of their identities as “criminal,” “immoral,” and “dirty,” they could not simply rejoin their home communities. Yet, their social marginality, exacerbated by the violence of criminalization and incarceration, as well as the “mark” of the criminal record (Pager 2007), precluded them from joining “mainstream society” (Bumiller 2013:58). As such, after leaving jail and prison, women faced the task of acclimating to a distinct post-incarceration moral order in which they had to continuously perform their “rehabilitated,” “moral,” and “clean” identities.

State actors (such as parole and probation agents, judges, public defenders, and state’s attorneys) and non-state actors (such as recovery home staff members, drug treatment specialists, other formerly incarcerated women, AA/NA sponsors, and 12 Step meeting attendees) offered religious and recovery discourses as mechanisms for women

to use to demonstrate their personal transformations. The inherent moral tone of these discourses, coupled with intense surveillance, raised the stakes of recovery for women. As a result, formerly incarcerated women's recovery experiences greatly diverged from those of more privileged drug users. A misstep easily could lead to a parole or probation violation, re-incarceration, and loss of privileges at or even termination from a recovery home. I offered the concept of *criminalizing recovery* to stress that the War on Drugs has not only criminalized drug use, but also has criminalized the process of ending drug use. Although drug treatment specialists recognize relapse as a routine part of recovery, it is a luxury the state does not afford to criminalized women. Furthermore, based on the dominant 12-Step logic, women had to not just avoid further trouble with the law and stop using drugs, but also to take personal responsibility for repairing their weak, flawed selves that had caused their "addictions" and "criminality." Similar to the methadone treatment clients in Harris and McElrath's (2012:814) research, women did not have access to the range of identities that exist beyond the "'clean/dirty' dichotomy." A setback in their recovery communicated not just a temporary relapse, but also a potential return to "criminal," "immoral" selves, or, to use Nyla's words, to being outside of the "protection" of God's "umbrella."

Religious and 12-Step discourses also structured personal transformation as a lifelong process (Leverentz 2014; Miller 2014). As such, women never were done demonstrating their "clean" identities. I argued that because the state so thoroughly linked women's "addict" and "criminal" identities, by extension, women always faced suspicion of not only drug use, but also of "criminality." This consequence became clear

to me during my last interview with Olivia. Between our second and third interviews, she had been fired from the recovery home where she had been employed due to suspicions that she had started using drugs again. Some residents and a co-worker had told Olivia's boss that she had come to work while high. This development shocked me, since Olivia was one of the recovery home's success stories. She had lived at the program following her last incarceration about six years prior, moved into her own subsidized apartment, and worked full-time at the home for five years. Along with the other residents-turned-staff-members, Olivia embodied the program's success and modeled the benefits of personal transformation to current residents.

During our final interview, Olivia talked at length about how she felt about her termination and how the agency's leadership handled it. She did not state whether she had started using drugs again or had come to work under the influence, and I did not ask. My job was not to catch her but rather to understand how she made sense of and experienced losing her job at a place that she clearly held dear to her heart. Many of the pictures she shared during our photo-elicitation interview showed her at work, with co-workers, and when she was a resident at the recovery home. I also realized that it did not really matter if Olivia had come to work high. Despite her accomplishments, she remained marked by the stigma of having been incarcerated and having had a drug problem. Whether she actually relapsed and came to work high was beside the point. The "truth" of what happened did not really matter. What was significant was that her status as a formerly incarcerated woman and a recovering "addict" made her vulnerable to any allegation levied against her. The allegations of her drug use, combined with her marked

status, were all her bosses needed to fire her. They did not need proof in the form of a dirty drop, because Olivia was always already an “addict;” by hailing her as an “addict” again, the residents and co-worker who made the allegation in effect shifted Olivia from the “clean” category of recovering “addict” to the “dirty” category of active “addict” (Althusser 1971). Olivia’s firing suggests that it is not possible for women to ever move beyond the “criminal” and “addict” identities that the state so thoroughly affixes to them. As such, they constantly and continuously must perform their “rehabilitated” identities, drawing on the discourses available in the post-incarceration moral order.

While the continuous performance of personal transformation is a common theme in the literature on life after incarceration (see Flores 2014; Maruna 2001; Miller 2014), the gendered aspects of this process are understudied. Flores’ (2014) work with former gang-involved men is an important exception, as he explains how they reoriented from a “Chicano gang masculinity” to a “reformed barrio masculinity.” My research extends this work and introduces a detailed account of the gendered dynamics of personal transformation for criminalized women. I showed how women demonstrated their “rehabilitated” identities by contrasting their present selves to their past selves and, in the process, challenged racist, sexist, and classist “controlling images” (Collins 2000) of women of color. Women frequently discussed domesticity, appearance, romantic relationships, motherhood, and employment to explain how personal transformation was an embodied process of moving from a failed femininity to a rehabilitated femininity.

Although my analysis shows how recovery homes, drug treatment programs, and religious groups ultimately extended the discourses around “criminal” and “rehabilitated”

identities that women experienced while incarcerated, my intent is not to critique these programs. While I am critical of these discourses, particularly their moralistic tone and individualistic focus, I want to stress that, in many cases, recovery home staff members, drug treatment specialists, and members of faith communities provided critical support for formerly incarcerated women. They did the important work of building women back up in compassionate ways. Repeatedly, women noted how they felt cared for in ways they never had before and learned that they were deserving of a second chance and could make a difference in others' lives. These programs provided safe havens that allowed women to feel that their humanity was recognized, particularly in the face of multiple systems that reduced them to "criminals" and "addicts," and to recognize the humanity of others. Additionally, as I showed in the last chapter, some programs helped to break open what I refer to as *cracks in the moral order* by creating spaces for women to build community with one another and raise critiques of the criminal legal system, specifically, and structural inequality, broadly.

In sum, the main contribution of this project is to show that there is a race and gendered post-incarceration moral order that extends not just beyond jail and prison, but even beyond parole and probation. Formerly incarcerated women always are subject to suspicion of relapse, and thus of a return to "criminality" and to "immorality." In his critical review of Mitchell Duneier's *Sidewalk*, Wacquant (2002:1472) judges Duneier's claim that the street vendors whom he studied lived in a "moral order" as "unexceptional" because "who does not?" The post-incarceration moral order I have documented is exceptional, however, because it is a state-constructed moral order that, in the literature,

is an unexamined part of the state's overall project to contain social marginality and manage the urban poor. The post-incarceration moral order represents the state's diffuse efforts to encourage and monitor lifelong personal transformation processes (Flores 2014; Miller 2014) outside of the confined spaces of jails, prisons, drug treatment facilities, and other single sites that ethnographers study (Gowan and Whetstone 2012; Haney 2010; Kaye 2012; McCorkel 2013; McKim 2008). Relying on religious narratives of redemption and the 12-Step logic, two under-analyzed topics in research on women's involvement with the criminal legal system, as mechanisms of personal transformation, the state depends on state and non-state actors working inside and outside of jails and prisons to advance American ideals of personal responsibility and quell critique of social inequality.

Recognizing and analyzing how the state structures post-incarceration experiences is especially important given the growing traction with politicians and the general public of prison reformers' calls for decarceration in favor of community corrections and mandated treatment. Many academics also support this move. For instance, Leverentz (2014) concludes her study of formerly incarcerated women's experiences by arguing that we need more programs like "Mercy Home," the well-resourced recovery home in Chicago through which she recruited participants. Noting the limitations of Mercy Home's "self-help...message of success through hard work," Leverentz (2014:182) also calls for supporting "desistance" efforts by limiting employment barriers for formerly incarcerated people and through "[p]ublic acknowledgment of desistance efforts with ceremonies or rituals in which the state recognizes successful desistance efforts or an

official end to punishment...” (see also Maruna 2001; Maruna 2011). While these recommendations could offer important relief to people currently caught up in the criminal legal system, much like the discourses advanced by “Mercy Home” (Leverentz 2014) and the recovery homes in my research, they still would leave underlying structural inequalities in place and thus would not address the root causes of mass incarceration.

As scholars like Gowan and Whetstone (2012), Haney (2010), Kaye (2010; 2012), McCorkel (2013), McKim (2008), and Tiger (2013) point out, community corrections and mandated treatment carried out under the gaze of the carceral state will not change the state’s overall project to contain social marginality in overtly racist, sexist, and classist ways by bringing socially disadvantaged groups in line with the status quo. Rather, the state’s efforts to ensure social order by encouraging self-discipline and self-regulation of those it deems threats to that order will continue in another guise. Thus, the concept of the post-incarceration moral order makes clear the varied ways that the state promotes dominant discourses that support personal responsibility and transformation. The concept also makes clear that, while the jail and the prison may be the most obvious symbols of intersecting oppressions and inequalities in the United States today, targeting the jail and prison, alone, is an inadequate goal for social justice efforts, because their undergirding logic will persist in a host of other less obvious sites.

Implications

As I discuss below, my research indicates a need for fundamental changes to the criminal legal system that go beyond reforming the conditions of imprisonment and easing the barriers people face post-incarceration. Additionally, my research indicates a

need to reverse the trend of disinvestment from social welfare and public institutions, as well as the punitive turn of social policy (Richie 2012; Wacquant 2009).

Multiple Approaches to Overcome Drug Use

At a minimum, my research shows the dominance of the 12-Step logic across multiple sites, inside and outside of jails and prisons. Similar to the participants in Leverentz's (2014) study, the women with whom I worked frequently referenced 12-Step phrases (such as staying away from "people, places, and things" associated with their drug use, not waking up the "phenomenal craving" of their "addictions," and "cleaning up the wreckage of their pasts") as guidelines they followed even when they were not specifically talking about ending their drug use. For many, working the 12 Steps had become a way of life.

The 12-Step approach to recovery provides a very singular way to overcome drug use and to move beyond the stigmatized identities of "addict" and "criminal." This approach is too constraining for some, especially for those who do not identify as "addicts" and who do not see the need to end casual use of drugs, particularly alcohol and marijuana. Rather than write these women off as moral failures or individuals who are not ready to get serious about their recovery, as a society we should provide additional recovery scripts that more fully resonate with their lives. Dodes and Dodes (2014) note:

Any substantive conversation about treatment in this country must reckon with the toll levied when a culture encourages one approach to the exclusion of all others, especially when that culture limits the treatment options for suffering people, ignores advances in understanding addiction, and excludes and even shames the great majority of people who fail in the sanctioned approach. (P. 2)

While Dodes and Dodes (2014) acknowledge that AA and NA are helpful for some people, in part through the camaraderie and community that 12 Step meetings engender, they take issue with the monopoly of the 12-Step approach because it does not work for many people. Providing multiple forms of treatment is especially important when “fail[ing] the sanctioned approach” (Dodes and Dodes 2014: 2) results in further criminalization, such as re-incarceration and mandated stays in residential treatment facilities. As Tiger (2013:137) points out, “Our faith in sobriety as the cure for the disease of addiction has caused much harm, far more than drug use has caused.”

Offering multiple approaches to overcoming drug use would require our social institutions to abandon the moral judgments they levy against *certain* drug users (i.e. low-income and poor people and people of color living in disadvantaged communities) and to recognize the social factors that contribute to problematic drug use, rather than dismiss these factors as excuses that “addicts” use to justify ongoing use. According to Tiger (2013:140), “Drug policy...must attend to the vulnerability that surrounds some drug users’ lives...A humane approach to habitual substance use could address the vulnerability without punishing it or pretending it is the result of individual, not systemic, factors.” Harm-reduction is one such approach. Unlike the 12-Step logic, it does not view a weak, flawed self as the cause of drug use, and it does not identify abstinence as a goal. Rather, this approach “accepts that people use drugs and attempts to minimize the harms associated with these drugs, including the harms caused by the criminal justice system” (Tiger 2013:144). Harm-reduction rejects moralistic, judgmental, and punitive approaches to drug treatment in favor of working with drug users to minimize their

vulnerability. For instance, strategies include providing free needle exchange services to heroin users to limit the risk of spreading disease through shared needles and providing safe spaces where people can use without the threat of arrest (Tiger 2013).

As I noted in Chapter 3, when I mentioned harm-reduction as a treatment approach to a director of an organization that works with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, she explained that such an approach would actually be a disservice to women, since the punitive institutions that regulate their lives, specifically parole, probation, and Child Protective Services, judge them based on an abstinence model. Effectively, the 12-Step model is the only game in town, and regardless of whether the approach resonates with their lives, women must abide by it or face repercussions. Multiple approaches to drug treatment, however, could provide women with more options and mitigate the negative consequences of drug use. For instance, rather than relapse signaling the beginning of a downward spiral that leads to “criminality” and “immorality” because women have come to understand themselves, and have been judged by the criminal legal system, as powerless over their drug use, approaches like harm-reduction could empower women to manage their drug use while viewing themselves as capable, moral actors. This more complex conception of self could allow women access to the range of identities that exists in between the “‘clean/dirty’ dichotomy” (Harris and McElrath 2012:814) but is erased by the dominant 12-Step logic.

Decouple “Criminal” and “Addict”

As I noted above, many of the recovery homes and programs women discussed throughout our interviews provided unparalleled, critical support and helped women

work toward goals they identified as important, such as ending drug use, earning a high school diploma or GED, finding housing, finding a job, and strengthening relationships with their families and children. Yet, creating more and better recovery homes, alone, is not the answer. We need to eliminate the need for recovery homes. One way to move toward this goal is to break the link we have created between “criminality” and “addiction.” In other words, we need to decriminalize drug use. As a society, we have constructed lifelong punishment as a response to drug use for certain people (since race and class privilege allow some to avoid criminalization and punishment). We can deconstruct this present reality, but doing so is a question of political will.

Current calls to increase the availability of drug courts and other “helping courts,” such as domestic violence, prostitution, and mental health courts, as well as the use of community corrections simply will not undo the damage that mass incarceration has wrought on disadvantaged communities throughout this country. Under the guise of therapeutic interventions, these newer arms of the criminal legal system serve to extend the punitive reach of the carceral state (Haney 2010; Kaye 2010, 2012, Miller 2014). Based on his historical and ethnographic research of drug courts and mandated residential drug treatment facilities, Kaye (2010) concludes:

[O]ne of the most serious dangers of drug courts, [is] that in forefronting treatment and (re-)converting the criminal justice system into a therapeutic institution, it will lend legitimacy to (or at least soften opposition to) the devastating realities of racialized class control and intensive punishment for minor crimes that the War on Drugs represents... Arguably, then, the existence of drug courts plays a significant role in diverting political dissatisfaction with the War on Drugs away from possibilities for further reform, including harm reduction and public health approaches to the regulation of illicit substances (including perhaps decriminalization for some, particularly marijuana). (P. 51)

Similarly, based on her qualitative research on drug courts, Tiger (2013) stresses an important distinction:

Drug court advocates are not arguing for the decriminalization of drugs and do not see drug courts as a way to dismantle the criminal justice system's control of drug users. Rather, they are arguing the opposite. It is because of criminalization of drugs that addicts can get the treatment they need. (P. 139)

And based on her ethnographic research of a drug treatment program in a women's prison that used the habilitation approach, McCorkel (2013:224) asks, "[W]as the cure worse than the disease?"

This growing body of sociological scholarship indicates that simply tweaking how we criminalize drug use and punish drug users is an insufficient goal for those working within a social justice framework. Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007:242) explains that "many remedies proposed for the all-purpose use of prisons to solve social, political, and economic problems get caught in the logic of the system itself, such that a reform strengthens, rather than loosens, prison's hold." Supposed kinder, gentler, well-intentioned punishments are just that, punishments. Meaningful, impactful reform requires examining how the criminal legal system operates as a system of racialized social control and fundamentally changing it. Following Gilmore (2007:242), we also must ask, "What are the possibilities of nonreformist reform – of changes that, at the end of the day, unravel rather than widen the net of social control through criminalization?" As a starting point, we must dislodge the underlying racist, punitive logic that drives the criminalization of drugs. This logic is responsible for the increasing number of women

caught up in the system and subjected to lifelong consequences of being labeled as “criminals” and “addicts.”

Social Transformation

“Nonreformist reform” (Gilmore 2007:242) requires that we move beyond projects of personal transformation to focus also on social transformation, just as some of the women who participated in this project did. For many of the women I interviewed, however, personal transformation occurred in a depoliticized context. While some of the more helpful interventions women identified conceptually acknowledged systems of inequality, specifically those based on gender, race, and class, these interventions still disconnected women’s individual experiences from a larger context in practice. In line with the 12-Step logic, transformation had an individualistic focus, which raises the question – what is the cost of focusing on individualized or personal transformation?

Recall Sarah’s comment from the last chapter about the “trauma” incarceration causes, even when it offers treatment. After praising the drug treatment program in which she participated while incarcerated, Sarah commented, “For me, jail was a trauma. A good recovery, but a trauma recovery.” The cost of this treatment was that Sarah now had to heal from the experience of imprisonment. Megan Comfort (2012) found a similar sentiment among the young men she interviewed, who compared their experiences of incarceration to college. Comfort (2012) concludes:

In the neoliberal era of collapsing or defunct social services, meager labor markets that look askance at would-be workers without high school diplomas or professional skills, and a correctional ethos that chides those at “rock bottom” to pull themselves up by the bootstraps, redemption through imprisonment resonates as a tale of lemonade squeezed out under

duress from the bitter, subpar fruit a deregulated society thrusts upon its most needy denizens. (P. 318)

The reflections of the young men in Comfort's research, Sarah, and other criminalized people offer a stark commentary on the lack of resources available to socially marginalized groups and the resulting vulnerability they experience. They raise additional timely questions: How is recovery that is not traumatic possible in the neoliberal era? What are spaces for critical consciousness raising and avenues to connect personal transformation to social change?

Abolitionist projects. Dislodging the punitive logic that undergirds the criminal legal system and its various manifestations requires multiple projects dedicated to prison abolition. As Davis (2012) notes, abolition is a project of building up, not just tearing down. Building upon W.E.B. DuBois' (1935/1998) concept of "abolition democracy," Davis (2012:115) explains that "thinking specifically about the problem of prisons, using the approach of abolition democracy, we would propose the creation of an array of social institutions that would begin to solve the social problems that set people on the track to prison, thereby helping to render the prison obsolete." Further connecting the legacy of slavery with the present era of mass incarceration, Davis (2012) points out:

Prisons have thrived over the last century precisely because of the absence of those [material] resources and the persistence of some of the deep structures of slavery. They cannot, therefore, be eliminated until new institutions and resources are made available to those communities that provide in part the human beings that make up the prison population. (P. 116)

Ending mass incarceration and the harms associated with it requires nothing less than refashioning the state, that is, ending the configuration of the neoliberal state that relies

on punitive social welfare and penal policies to regulate social marginality (Davis 2012; Richie 2012; Wacquant 2009; 2012a, 2012b). In abolitionist visions, a refashioned state invests in public institutions, like education and healthcare, and social services so that resources and treatment are not connected to punishment. Based on her current research with “ex-prisoner activism organizations,” Bumiller (2013:75) notes that these “campaigns...reject the logic of the penal state and demand state responsibility for the less well off.” This type of work connects individual wellbeing with social equality.

A number of organizations in Chicago are doing prison abolition work in direct and indirect ways. Project NIA has become a leader in this work. Project NIA’s mission is to eradicate youth incarceration. To this end, the small initiative builds collaborations with organizers throughout the city to lead grassroots efforts to raise awareness about and challenge police violence, criminalization, and incarceration of youth and adults. The initiative’s efforts include protests, marches, rallies, research reports, policy work, art projects, popular education workshops, and a host of public events and projects. Throughout all of these efforts, Project NIA consistently draws connections between racism, sexism, poverty, and incarceration to advance a critique of criminalization that demands social change and refuses to blame individuals.

Also in Chicago, Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP) and the Mental Health Movement have been raising awareness about the need for a trauma center on the city’s South side. Organizers point out that residents of the predominantly Black South side are deserving of comprehensive medical care and that people have died due to the length of time it takes ambulances to travel to trauma centers located outside of their

communities. Organizers argue that the lack of a trauma center on the South side reflects the city's blatant, racist disregard for residents' lives. Similarly, members of the Mental Health Movement have put pressure on city officials, particularly Mayor Rahm Emanuel, for closing six of the city's 12 community mental health clinics. The closings were concentrated in Black and Latino communities and resulted in larger caseloads at the remaining clinics, decreased quality of care, and longer commutes for people who rely on these services. Finally, the Chicago's Teachers Union (CTU) has led a wide coalition of people in protesting Emanuel's closure of nearly 50 Chicago public schools in June of 2013, again predominantly located in Black and Latino communities. Together, these groups are drawing connections across issues and, in the process, advancing critiques of how the state's abandonment of certain communities is rooted in racism, classism, and the growing reliance on criminalization as a response to social problems. Project NIA, STOP, the Mental Health Movement, and the CTU all point out that the state's choice to disinvest from public institutions and social services coincides with its reinvestment in police, jails, and prisons.

While continuing and expanding these abolitionist efforts, it is important to center incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people as leaders in this work. Doing so will create spaces for people to overcome the stigmatized identities of "criminal" and "addict," while recognizing that they should not have been subjected to such labels in the first place. Rather than frame personal transformation as a project that individuals must undertake to overcome past mistakes, we need more spaces that allow for personal transformation while connecting it to organizing for social transformation. In short, we

must nurture politicized personal transformation and push for a collective vision of abolition.

APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT FLIER

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

My name is Chez Rumpf. I'm a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago, and I'm conducting a research project for my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to understand women's experiences with incarceration and reentry. Specifically, I'm examining the ways women receive help from different places and people before, during, and after incarceration. I'm also examining the ways women are limited, restricted, and even harmed by various places and people before, during, and after incarceration.

Participating involves completing two to three **in-depth, one-on-one interviews**.

- Each interview will last about 1 ½ to 2 hours.
- The interviews will cover topics such as your experiences with the criminal justice system; incarceration experiences; reentry experiences; family relationships; relationships with your children; significant friendships and romantic relationships; education; employment; safety; and experiences with places that have provided assistance.
- You will receive a \$20 gift card for each interview session.

You will have the option to include **photography** in your interviews.

- You will receive a digital camera and memory card at the end of the first interview.
- I will ask you to carry the camera with you and take photographs that communicate your experiences of incarceration and reentry.
- We will discuss these photographs and what they mean to you as part of the second and third interviews.



Pete Yahnke www.justseeds.org

If you are interested in learning more about this research project and may want to participate, please contact me:

Chez Rumpf
PhD Student
Department of Sociology
Loyola University Chicago
 Personal phone [REDACTED]
 Email: crumpf@luc.edu

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

“Seeing the State: Women, Incarceration, and Social Marginality”
Cesraéa Rumpf – Department of Sociology – Loyola University Chicago
Interview Guide

Introduce the study: Thank you for taking time to speak with me today. For this project, I’m talking with women who have spent time in jail or prison. One of the things I’m interested in learning about are the ways women get help from different places and people. I’m also interested in learning about the ways women are restricted by various places and people. Although we’ll probably talk about a wide range of topics, I’m wondering if we can start there.

ASSISTANCE

- » Tell me about the places where you get help. (For example, Public Aid office, social service agencies, housing, schools)
- » Tell me about the people who help you. Who has helped you the most?
- » How does the help you receive today compare to the help you received before you were in jail/prison?
- » I know that if people have a record, they can’t get certain things, like public housing, for example. Can you tell me if and how that has been a problem?
- » Tell me about the places that bring problems for you.
- » Tell me about the people who make your life difficult.

CHILDREN

- » Tell me about your children.
- » Where do they live? Who takes care of them?
- » How do you support them?
- » How did being in jail/prison change your relationship with your children?
- » When did you have your first child? How old were you? How did you feel about this pregnancy?
- » Do any of your pregnancies stand out as particularly memorable or problematic for any reason? Tell me about that.
- » Have you ever had any involvement with child protective services (CPS)/DCFS? If so, tell me about that involvement.

- » How did becoming a mother change you?
- » How do you view yourself as a mother today?

ROMANTIC/DATING RELATIONSHIPS

- » Tell me about the father(s) of your child(ren).
- » What other important relationships have you had with a partner?
- » Tell me about your first dating/romantic relationship.
- » Are you currently involved in a dating/romantic relationship? If so, tell me about that relationship.

FAMILY

- » What is your relationship like currently with your family? [*NOTE: Get a sense of whom interviewee considers family.*]
- » Tell me about your relationship with your family growing up. Who took care of you?
- » Tell me about your home. How did you feel about your home?
- » Were there place, agencies, or systems that were involved with you or your family when you were growing up (positive/helpful or negative)?
- » When did you leave home? What were the circumstances?
- » How have your family relationships changed over time?
- » Have you talked about the fact that you were in prison with your family? If yes, what do they say? Can you give me an example of one of these conversations? If no, why not?
- » What would you change about your relationships with your family if you could?

FRIENDS

- » Tell me about any especially important friendships you currently have.

INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

- » Tell me about the first time you were arrested. Walk me through the arrest.
- » Walk me through what happened after the arrest. What happened with this case?
- » Tell me about the first time you went to prison?

- Tell me about your experience in court, with your lawyer/public defender, with the state's attorney/prosecutor, with the judge. What stands out?
- Did you accept a plea bargain or go to trial? Tell me about that process.

» Tell me about the most recent time you went to prison (if incarcerated more than once).

LAST INCARCERATION EXPERIENCE

Thinking about the last time you were in/your time in prison...

» Walk me through your first day in prison.

» Walk me through one of the best days.

» Walk me through one of the worst days.

» Tell me about the guards.

» Tell me about the other women who were locked up with you.

» Tell me about some of the difficult times in prison. How did you cope?

» Did you participate in any programs/services while you were in prison? Tell me about them.

- If you could change anything about these programs/services, what would you change?

» Who helped/supported you while you were locked up? How did they help you?

» Who visited you while you were locked up?

» Tell me about your relationship(s) with your child(ren) while you were locked up.

» Tell me about your relationships with family, friends, partners while you were locked up.

» How did you see yourself while you were in prison? Can you give me an example of a time when you talked about your view of yourself with someone?

» How did being in prison change you? Can you give me an example?

» What did you learn from your time in prison? Can you give me an example?

» If you could change anything about your time in prison, what would you change?

POST-INCARCERATION

- » Walk me through the (last) day you were released from prison.
- » Are you currently on parole? If so, tell me about being on parole.
 - What are the conditions of your parole?
 - Tell me about your parole officer.
 - Walk me through the last time you met with him/her.
 - Walk me through the first time you met with him/her.
 - What do you think of him/her?
 - What is his/her role/purpose? How do you know this?
 - What have you learned from him/her?
 - How do you think he/she views you? Can you give me an example of how you know that?
- » I'd like to know what your daily life is like. I'm especially interested in the people, places, and agencies you come in contact with. Thinking about this week, can you give me a list of:
 - The people you've spent time with?
 - The places you've gone to?
 - The agencies you've gone to?
- » Tell me about your current housing situation.
- » What problems have you faced since your release?
- » What expectations did you have about "reentry"? Where did these expectations come from?

- » Are there ways you feel more powerful today than you used to?

SCHOOL

- » Tell me about school.
- » Are you in school currently? If yes, tell me about that.
- » How was school for you when you were growing up?
- » When did you finish your schooling? What were the circumstances?

EMPLOYMENT

- » Are you currently working/making money? If so, tell me about your current work.
- » *If not working:* How do you feel about not working currently?

» What other jobs have you held? What jobs are especially memorable or important to you?

SAFETY

» When are times when you've felt especially safe in your life?

» When are times when you've felt unsafe?

» How safe do you feel currently? For what reasons?

CONCLUSION

» How would you describe yourself today?

» Tell me about your concerns for the future.

» Tell me about your goals/hopes for the future.

» Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Verify:

Age

Race/ethnicity

Educational background

Employment/occupation (title and part-time/full-time)

Income amount

Children (# and ages)

Number of incarcerations

Time since released

Clean time

Pseudonym

APPENDIX C
PHOTO INSTRUCTION SHEET

One focus of this study is to understand how “the state” impacts women’s lives. When I say “the state,” I am referring to agencies, institutions, and people that do things like set laws and policies, enforce laws, put policies in place, monitor people’s behavior, and provide social services.

Some examples of “the state” are:

- Police
- Courts (whether you go there for help or have to go there after being arrested)
- Judges
- State’s attorneys
- Public defenders
- Jail/prison (including guards and people who provide services here)
- Parole officers
- Public assistance offices (for example, welfare, TANF, food stamps, WIC)
- Unemployment office
- Social Security office
- Public health clinics, free health clinics, sliding scale health clinics
- Agencies that rely on government funding (for example, some substance abuse treatment facilities, some non-profit organizations or social service agencies)
- Child Protective Services (for example, DCFS)
- Schools

These are just some ideas to get you started. What really matters for this study are your ideas. I want to know what you think “the state” is and where you see “the state” affecting your life.

Instructions: I am providing you with a digital camera and a memory card. Please use the camera between now and our next meeting to take photos that show where you see “the state” in your life. Also, please take photos that show what led up to going to prison, your experiences in prison, and your experiences of reentry after being in prison. Some things to think about are:

- Where are places you go for help? Think about places where you have to fill out paperwork or are interviewed.
- Who are people who support and help you – now and in the past?
- What are things you can’t do because you were in prison? How do you know you can’t do them? Why can’t you do them?
- Where are places you have to go? Think about appointments you have. How do these places make you feel?
- When do you feel limited or restricted?
- When do you feel powerful or in control?
- When are you reminded of jail or prison?
- What contributed to your being locked up?

- Who has been affected by your being locked up?
- What photos could you take to show the things we talked about today?

If possible, try to write down any thoughts or feelings you have when you take the photos. For example, why are you taking this photo? What are you trying to say with this photo?

Important things to keep in mind:

Please do not feel like you have to do everything. Take photos of what is important to you and what you want to show me. If you do not want to take photos, please do not take them. You can stop at any time. Just let me know at our next meeting.

Also, do not take photos of anything that could be used against you by someone. For example, do not take photos that show a violation of your parole, such as being with people you are not supposed to see or going places you are not supposed to go. Do not take photos of any illegal activities. Do not take photos anywhere where cameras are not allowed, such as courts.

Please keep in mind that the photos you take for this project should be used only for our interviews. For example, photos should not be posted on any social networking sites.

Finally, please do not take any photos that might jeopardize your safety. For example, if want to take a photo of another person, ask them for their permission. If someone does not want their photo taken, do not take the photo.

If you have any questions, concerns, or problems, please contact me:

Chez Rumpf
Department of Sociology
Loyola University Chicago
Personal phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: _____

Our next meeting is on: _____ (date
and time) at _____ (location). The purpose of
this meeting is to select about 10 photographs that we will discuss during our next
interview.

Our next interview is on: _____ (date
and time) at _____ (location).

APPENDIX D
PHOTO RELEASE FORM

My signature below verifies that I, _____
(print name), agree that Cesraéa Rumpf owns all rights to the photographs I create as part
of the research project “Seeing the State: Women, Incarceration, and Social Marginality.”

(Signature)

(Date)

My signature below verifies that I, _____
(print name), reviewed the photographs that I created as part of the research project
“Seeing the State: Women, Incarceration, and Social Marginality” with Cesraéa Rumpf. I
have given permission for how and when Cesraéa Rumpf can show each photograph,
such as in presentations or publications. I also understand that I am not able to make
requests at a later date for copies of my photographs or to request that any of the
photographs be deleted.

(Signature)

(Date)

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VITA

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