Journal of Aging and Identity, Vol. 7, No. 3, September 2002 (© 2002)

Reconfiguring Older Bodies in the Prison Time Machine

Azrini Wahidin[1,2]

It is by mapping an area that the geographer comes to understand the contours and formations of a place. The "place" in this case is the prison world. This article serves to map moments in prison demonstrating how "old" female bodies are performed under the prison gaze. In this article I will illustrate how older women subvert, negotiate, or invoke discourse as a means of reinscribing the normalizing discourses that serve to confine and define older women's experiences in prison. Female elders in prison become defined and confined by regimes of femininity and ageism. They have to endure symbolic and actual intrusions of physical privacy, which serve to remind them of what they were, where they are, and what they have become. This article will critically explore the complexity and contradictions of time use in prison and how they impact on embodied identities. By incorporating the voices of elders, I hope to draw out the contradictions and dilemmas which they experience, thereby illustrating the relationship between time, their involvement in doing time, and the performance of time in a total institution (see Goffman, 1961), and the relationship between temporality and existence. The stories of the women show how their identities are caught within the movement and motion of time and space, both in terms of the time of "the real" on the outside and within prison time. This is the in-between space of carceral time within which women live and which they negotiate. It is by being caught in this network of carceral time that they are constantly being "remade" as their body/performance of identities alters within it. While only a small percentage of the female prison population in the United Kingdom are in later life, one has to question why criminological and gerontological literature fail to address the needs of a growing significant minority.

KEY WORDS: old bodies; identity; time; prison.

[1]School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, Darwin College, University of Kent, U.K.
[2]Correspondence should be directed to Dr. Azrini Wahidin, School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research, Darwin College, University of Kent at Canterbury, U.K.

> Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of the content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one: the definition is a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.
>
> —Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

It is by centralizing the concept of corporeality that one comes to understand (Wahidin, 1999) how elders negotiate prison time. By focusing in this article on the lived and real experience of carceral embodiment, one can draw out the capillaric and disciplinary nature of time in prison. This article critically explores the complex and contradictory nature of time in prison and how time in prison is used to somatically rearrange the identities of older women in prison. The focus of this article will be on inserting the words of female elders[3] into debates on time, the body, and identity in prison.

This article will draw upon a Foucauldian analysis demonstrating how discourses act upon and inscribe the aging female body. The carceral prism places the aging body in a political field where power relations have an immediate hold upon those under the prison gaze. By examining the total institution, I will demonstrate how time as a technique of discipline is used by the prison to mark the body. The aim of time discipline is to train it and by its own construction emit socially defining and confining norms (Foucault, 1977; Butler, 1990). Inevitably, in this process of prison time-discipline, the corporeality of time, the use of time in prison transcends the dualisms between subject/object and mind/body. By understanding the multi-faceted nature of time and the aging body, we can come to understand how time is a constituent part in the construction of our identities. Frank (1991) argues that the embodied agent becomes a producer of society, while at the same time, it is society that creates the embodied agent. Thus the article will demonstrate how elders in prison negotiate and employ strategies of subversion to challenge the prison gaze.

Examining how female offenders survive the prison time machine will reveal how the prison apparatus inscribes the aging body. However, as I will argue, older women in prison are not passive objects; they find ways of governing the capillaries of time through the performativity of time and the use of the prison masque. Butler (1987) contends:

> that gender is not written on the body as the torturing instrument of writing in Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" inscribing itself unintelligibly on the flesh of the accused. The question is not: what meaning does that inscription carry within it, but what cultural apparatus arranges this meeting between instrument and body, what interventions into this ritualistic repetition are possible? (p. 186)

By reimagining the boundaries of the body, we can begin to understand how time-discipline "inscrib[es] itself unintelligibly on the flesh of the accused." This can

[3]The data from which this is drawn arises from research done by Azrini Wahidin, *Life in the Shadows—A Qualitative Study of Older Women in Prison, 2002*, unpublished doctoral thesis.

be done through looking at both the meanings of its inscription for women and the disruptive agentic repetitions in the daily practices in which women engage.

The focus of this article will be on inserting the words of female elders[4] in prison into debates on time, agency, and identity. The voices of the elders will show how prison time works as a somatic identity cipher remaking the identities of older women in prison. Looking at the role and meaning of time allows us to understand how female elders in prison are compelled to reiterate the identity "prisoner" within the discipline of "the time of incarceration." I make no claims that I will provide an exhaustive account of the meanings of time. What I will attempt to do is to make visible the time-frames in prison. It is through the voices of the elders that time can be made visible.

This article draws on doctoral research conducted on older female prisoners in the United Kingdom. This research was based on 35 tape-recorded, semistructured interviews at the various female prisons ranging from a maximum secure prison to an open prison. The sample represents approximately a quarter of the prison population of women over age 50 at the time of the research. The participants' ages ranged from 50 to 73 years. This article purports to shed light on the social aspects of temporal reference in prison.

LOCATING THE FIELD

During the course of the research, 16 prisons were contacted[5] and visits made to both male and female prisons, including the elderly unit at HMP Kingston and the only female prison in Northern Ireland. I approached individual institutions rather than the Home Office; access was contingent on the discretion of the governor. I had to become familiar with the "value" and implications each pathway may have for the elders and the research. Each level in the established hierarchy contains its own currency, requiring a different approach, and has its own advantages and disadvantages in terms of the research process.

BODIES DO MATTER

> The body may be preoperative, transitional, or postoperative; even "seeing" the body may not answer the question: For what are the categories through which one sees? The moment on which one's staid and usual cultural perceptions fail, when one cannot with surety read the body that one sees. (Bordo, 1989, p.18)

If the body is isomorphic, where does the story of the human body begin? What is, in fact, meant by the "body" (Berthelot, 1986)? One can simply argue that the body

[4]Data is from Wahidin (2002). I applied grounded theory complementing the thesis orientation to feminist theorizing and Foucauldian thought. This research was the first of its kind in the United Kingdom.

[5]At the time of writing there were 16 female prison establishments.

is "present," "lived," "real" and "experienced." The body in terms of its biology is always in the process of becoming. Cells die, mutate, and regenerate. It can be argued from this proposition, then, that the body never becomes but is left as an unfinished project, in a state of transition.

The more we problematize the body, the less sure we can be of what the body is and what the body represents (Featherstone, 1991; Frank, 1990, 1991). The body in its material form has been taken for granted, absent or forgotten in gerontological literature (Oberg, 1996), until the body begins to break down mechanically. Thus the role of the body in gerontology has for some time focused on the failing body and the political response to the aging body, but not how typifications of age, aged masculinity, or the aged female body serve to regulate and define the spaces that elders use.

The purpose of this article is not to provide an exhaustive account of the body in gerontological and sociological literature, but to highlight how the body on entering the carceral prism renegotiates the disciplinary techniques of time. I argue that the project of the self in a post-modern society is in fact an unfinished project, but one which is increasingly central to the modern person's sense of self identity. Nonetheless, writing about body and time in prison poses a series of challenges relating to the issue of human embodiment, the body, and body-image. The body is written upon, inscribed by variables such as gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, and by series of inscriptions which are dependent on types of spaces and places. However, as Shilling (1993) argues, the more we know about (our) bodies, the more we are able to govern, modify, and in the que[e]rying of gender norms highlight how gendered and ageist discourses serve to confine and define older women in prison.

Bryan Turner (1995) emphasizes several key processes that work upon and within the body across time and space. This can be dependent upon the type of space, from the Benedictines' religious time-ordering to time, work, and discipline and to the deployment of transgressive or body-versive performativity. It can be argued that the body in its corporeal existence is complex in its design and can be reduced neither to biology nor to the dictates of capitalism (Giddens, 1981). The role of the body in gerontological, sociological, and criminological literature is central to understanding how the body becomes "educated," constituted within a given time, space ordering, and regimes of femininity and ageist discourses. To date, this has not been fully explored in relation to secure settings. In other words, the body has to be contextualized within its polymorphous state of positions within and between a number of different discourses: the biological and the social, the collective and the individual, that of structure and agency.

I shall show how prison time-ordering is written upon the body as well as demonstrate how the body is not separate from the body subject (Merleau Ponty, 1996) but is intertwined. In other words, the works of Butler (1990), McNay (2000), and Foucault (1977) show how time in prison operates upon the object and

subject body. Furthermore, by understanding the multifaceted nature of time, we can understand how time is a constituent part in the construction and performativity of our identities.

Que[e]rying the role of the body through the penal time machine allows one to move away from the two perspectives which locate the body within the naturalistic and the social constructionist framework (Frank, 1990). The phenomenological perspective adds a richness to the literature by examining embodiment and the corporeality of the body in all its guises. It places the body not as a passive materiality that is acted upon but one which negotiates the capillaries of power, enabling the body to be always in the process of becoming through the experiences of embodiment. This perspective moves away from a purely professional discourse and centers the role of the body as "real," "lived," and "experienced." The phenomenological perspective of Merleau Ponty (1996) should be seen as an effect of a broader concern with the understanding of everyday life. Moreover, in a postmodern culture, the prospect of an endless life has been revived through consumer images of perpetual youth and the blurring of traditional lifecourse boundaries (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1991).

The body is thus a contested site within which gender norms, age-related expectations and the disciplinary nature of the prison realm operate a nexus of binary oppositions. Drawing the role of the body moves one away from the perspectives which locate the body within the naturalistic and the social constructionist framework (Frank, 1990). For example, it can be argued that women body builders, women who have eating disorders or women who self-mutilate are resisting normalized forms of hegemonic femininity by reinscribing and transgressing the limits of their body. Shirley, a 58 year old woman who has been in prison 15 years, is among those who reverse the gaze:

> Those that leave the handcuffs on, I'll embarrass them in the hospital. I would hold my hand up and make sure that everybody in the hospital saw them. The screws take them off because they are embarrassed. I don't let them get away with it. You just have to play them at their own game, don't you?

The above example demonstrates how the jailer's tools, the symbiotic nature of punishment is experienced and managed by the elder as she moves from the private sphere of the prison to the public arena of the hospital. The process of being punished in a public space, the hospital ward, can be subverted by reversing the public gaze onto the jailer. Rather than surreptitiously cloaking the visible signifiers of punishment, her counter-technique is to make them public. This is a good example of how "profaned bodies" of elders constructed by the juridical stare and purloined looks of the outsider gaze can be reversed. The above demonstrates how the aging body is a resource which can be managed and processed in a variety of ways, thus disturbing the techniques used to somatically create the prison-made inmate.

The performance of the body as illustrated in the discourses of the elders is indicative of how the body is a discursive site of power to be produced, acted upon, negotiated, and received. These techniques create the space for resistance, enabling power to be positive yet at the same time negative. The above example illustrates how power is in a state of flux, providing the disempowered a means of controlling the viewer's gaze and the officer's actions. It is the polysemic nature of the body in all its guises that the performance is not solely one to counter/resist/subvert hegemonic prison discourse. It is rather a relationship encapsulating the multivaried technologies of carceral, corporeal, and self inscriptions based on what went on before, the present, and immediate past. It is a game which can, in this case, bring women in later life from the shadows or the back rooms of public spaces to the center stage.

Such activities could be said to differ from other forms of the body project—body building and dieting involve the celebration of the ideal physique rather than the subversion of hegemonic norms of femininity. The example above demonstrates how elders in the study became the object of their own gaze, in order to maintain a degree of control over their bodies in an environment where private lives become public property. In becoming the object of their own gaze they become powerful in being, "invisible as the source of the gaze" (that is, the one who is looking without being looked at) (Tseelon, 1995, p. 68). Through these modalities of power, these bodily practices are in effect transforming their gendered habitus and in turn creating identities and spaces which transgress the boundaries of what it is to be an elder female in prison.

DOING TIME

The use of the word "time" is deliberately ambiguous. In order to understand prison time I will demonstrate the multiple temporalities used in prison. Time is used against elders in prison as an additional form of punishment, and in turn reappropriated by elders through techniques of resistance. Here, I will explore how conceptions of time in prison are structured and controlled, and how they are resisted by elders in prison. I will interrogate the meanings of time in prison and explore how it becomes dispersed and contested. By using the words of elders to explore the meaning of time I attempt to make time visible and examine how prison time becomes "body time": a time of the construction of identities.

By interrogating prison *time* we can see how time-discipline is based on intensifying efforts, in the move towards maximizing speed and efficiency, rehabilitation through disciplining the body via the art of time governance (Foucault, 1977). It is through time-discipline on the outside that time use in prison illustrates the complexity of time in terms of its temporality; the distanciation of time, space, and time use in prison. Furthermore, one can argue that time in prison affects the prisoners' identities, which are not simply bounded by physical or geographical

boundaries of prison time but by "time-space walls on all sides" (Binswanger, 1986) These walls are mutable, transgressive, existential, and reliant on memory and personal narrative (Castorialdis, 1991). At the same time, identities have the ability to reach beyond physical time-space boundaries, an ability which becomes crucial to prisoners in resisting the effects of dislocation from a familiar time and space order (Berthelot, 1986; Deleuze, 1973). To survive, elders in this study phantasmically grasp onto the familiar through fantasy, as illustrated by Anita Anwar, 51, an inmate for two years:

> You have to try and visualize and remember. Like at nights, when I start to say my prayers. It is as if I go home. I go through my front door, and I go round the house and then finally go up stairs and into the bedroom, and I get into my own bed. Being with the person that you love, you don't forget how that feels. But you forget, what it's like to just get up and go and have a *bath*. *Or a shower*. *To cook a meal*. *Or* just to put the kettle on and make a drink. Instead of having to drink out of a flask. A lukewarm drink out of a flask. *Just to be able to choose what you eat. Eat when you want to eat and food that you want to eat.*

BEING UP AGAINST THE CLOCK

Time use in prison is embodied in the institution's philosophy, practice, and types of punishment which are under the prison gaze inflicted upon the body. Time is neither tangible nor real but an ontological curiosity that divides "reality" into seconds, minutes, hours, days, and years. However, in its myriad forms, the capillaries of time in prison govern possible "freedoms," representing the "past," "present," the "now," and possible futures. This exploration will take us into the triple-edged world of prison time, which is a measurable, tradeable commodity, a form of "currency" and further punishment. After being in prison just two months, Joan, 61, argues that prison time is "quite different because you're *watching* the clock inside prison whereas you don't necessarily *look* at the clock on the outside. I mean the clock was there and you might glance at it, but here *clock time means everything*."

Time constructed under the disciplinary gaze inscribes the body so that the body carries the projection of prison onto bodily time (Falk, 1985). "Watching the clock" but not necessarily "look[ing] at the clock" shows us the bio-power at work within quotidian practices of acknowledging that "clock time means everything" (Wahidin & Tate, 2001). The penal inscriptors of time change the rhythms of the body, most evidently seen in the cessation of menstruation and in growing susceptible to age-related illnesses (Biggs, 1997). Elders describe these indicators as evidence of the aging process and their physical deterioration under the penal gaze. The process of penal time reinvents the body, which in turn carries its own evidence of time passing and time in progress, yet, is experienced as time in stasis whilst in prison. Time passes and stands still as elders are temporally and spatially isolated from wider society. Their normal patterns of life are both materially and ideologically severed. This time of incarceration, time standing still yet passing

away, permeates the self through the severance of life threads to the outside world, creates a new temporal order.

In terms of "the outside," the prison structuring of time usurps the time ordering of what was known and familiar. Molly, an elder who has served the longest time in prison of the cohort (20 years), poignantly describes the severance of outside life threads, as not seeing "a whole anything," as the space of the prison cut her "off completely from the outside world":

> We were in this old castle, the windows are way up at the top, so you never saw out unless you were on the top floor. You never saw a whole sparrow. So you never saw a whole tree or a whole sky, you *didn't* see a whole anything, it was like a patchwork quilt. It shut you off completely from the outside world.

One must stress that matters of time, work, privacy, freedom and deterioration are also serious issues for those on the outside; however, they lack the salience they have for the elders in the study. It is not purely their sense of time passing which is problematic but their relationship to the prison world.

The analysis of time in prison, in effect, becomes a discussion of the presentation of identities in, through, and by time. However, time in prison is constructed within the boundaries of the institution, imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rules. Prison time becomes meaningless as elders find ways of surviving it. The routine of daily activities comprise a single rational plan which has been designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution rather than the needs of individuals. It is the use of time as imposed that eliminates choice, which in turn disables the self to create meaningful and symbolic relations with prison time and external time. Time as discussed above has been constructed to discipline and bring about the social death of the outside self through temporal and sensory deprivation (Cohen & Taylor, 1972).

In the voices of the women we hear that in order to survive the new order, they create transgressive spaces in which they can suspend the outside world but in an unprecedented fashion float between the prison and the outside world. In order to survive, elders in the study take on an automatic mode of functioning regulated and punctuated by the calls for signing the check list, medication, and meals.

Although aware that their prison time consists of time in waiting, and that the lost time can never be replaced, this period of new time, of postwork, postmenopause brings new freedoms, new roles, new opportunities, and new fears (Hockey & James, 1993). Molly, 53, although "raring to get out and to start living," eloquently describes her anxiety about being released:

> When we get out, that's when we start our sentence. That's when we really start our sentence. Are we going to be accepted? Will we be found out? Will they find out what we did? Will we be able to assimilate without too much difficulty? *That's when it starts*!

Literary texts, biographies of ex-offenders, and memoirs of revolutionaries often have addressed the question of time in prison. In some form, everyone does time and is a server of time in the doing of time. The landscape of time blurs

the edges of the life course into a running stream of the past, the future, and the present.

THE INTERPOLATION OF THE AGING FEMALE BODY IN PRISON

Questions of age, the experience of age and the passing of time confront us all on a daily level (Biggs, 1997). This section examines how elders negotiate, internalize, relate to the abstract gauging of age in relation to their subjective experience of the aging process (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1991). In other words, it explores the subjective interpretation of the experience of aging, as distinct from prescriptors of chronological age.

Age in prison becomes an exacerbated variable which defines elders and their role in relation to younger women. Elders in the study find that their age becomes embedded in a nexus of gendered "expectations." They are posited as caregivers (maternal figures), disciplinarians, yet in the same vein they become invisible as individuals because they are perceived to lack traditional feminine markers (of sexuality and fertility-reproductive capabilities). Women in later life are homogenized under the punitive gaze, but under this blanket lays a series of contradictions and differing needs that becomes subsumed under the operational needs of the prison female estate.

On the one hand, female elders are *not* treated as objects of knowledge, and on the other, they are treated as a particular age cohort that brings certain qualities to the prison environment. Elders in prison find themselves placed in a nexus of prison expectations; they are expected to nurture, control, and guide the younger women. Within the prison estate it is common practice to separate older men from younger men, but, as yet, there are no facilities to separate older women from younger women, and this difference appears to be based on socially constructed roles of femininity and masculinity. The essentializing discourse of femininity locates the elders as caregivers, nurturers, and teachers of morality. The separating of older men from younger men is based on discourses which serve to construct a masculinity which eludes the above, but with one distinction, that older men are predatory in nature and thus are more likely to corrupt younger men. It is within this space created between the expectations of the disciplinary machine, the interpolation of age by the prison estate, that other techniques of control and punishment emerge. This space opens up a room for women in later life, as Flo (59, imprisoned 15 months) argues, potentially to be victimized and:

> To [be made fun] of behind your back and [to be]call[ed] names. To me—for an older woman [being] in prison is lonely. It's a lonely time for an older woman because they don't take an older woman on like, you know? You can start a conversation [and they] ignore you and just walk away.

Foucault's account of the relationship between penal practice and disciplinary society is important in understanding how discourses and subjugation are not

only confined to the criminal justice system and overt disciplinary techniques of control but pervade all areas of life, "with the aim of producing and shaping an obedient subject" (1977, p. 33). Foucault uncovers the ways in which knowledge and power are constituted in each other, and especially the ways in which this mutual interdependence effectively exercises discursive practices of social control. "Power and knowledge directly imply each other. . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Technologies of carceral power are inseminated in the process of regulating, and manufacturing a type of human behavior which in turn accelerates the aging process by rendering invisible the needs and voices of women in later life (Rose, 1990). The comments of Anita, 51, who has been imprisoned for two years, are a good example of the effects of punishment on the body, showing how she has become alienated and at times separated from her body:

> Inside I don't feel old. But my body feels old. Health wise–I have no energy and my bones ache all the time. When I was at home on a morning I'd be as bright as a button. Looking forward to the day. But here, it's such an *effort*. You seem to be *dragging* your body around all the time. You are *conscious* of *your body*. You know, it feels heavy all the time. *Your heart is heavy all the time*. Your feelings are all—there is no light heartedness. [all italics added]

It is her body which feels old. It is her body which she is conscious of, dragging her body with her rather than it being part of her. She describes how internally/subjectively she is reminded of a certain time before prison, distinguishing between the young/old; then/now; freedom/deprivation of liberty; agility and heaviness and melancholia. The loss of freedom, loss of time spent in prison becomes couched in terms of the performance of the body then (before prison) and now. For Molly, imprisoned for 20 years, it has meant that her health:

> *Deteriorated badly*. There is nothing else I can say. The sheer boredom in prison. I came in to prison at nine stone, which is one stone overweight than I should have been. I was a healthy person; I was active, I played a lot of games, badminton and tennis. When I came to Penjara I went from nine stones up to sixteen stone. That was sheer comfort eating. I have rheumatoid arthritis, which has meant that when I have gone out and all the things I have dreamed of doing whilst all these years inside, I just can't do now.

For others, the techniques of power employed by the carceral realm become a tool to negotiate, resist, modify, and in a sense arrest the effects of the system, the sentence, and the environment in its process of metamorphosing the body under the prison's gaze. Wan-Noor from Holland, who at 51 found herself in a British gaol, says, "And when they say don't let them grind you down it's true."

The gendered body in prison is a discursive site in which power is produced, acted upon, engaged with, and received. These aspects of power allow spaces for resistance to emerge, enabling power to be positive and at the same time negative. The excerpt below shows how, through adversity, Myra Hindley was able to enlist the help of others given the lack of provision for those elders who are immobile or disabled. Claire, age 54, recollects how women in general with age-related illness are not catered to the prison environment by giving this example:

> Like when Myra was here, I think she could have perhaps done a little more than she perhaps did. I was on the yard when she broke her hip about two years ago. She was in hospital for a few weeks, and then she came back here and was in her cell. Really she should have been on a prison hospital wing. But there are no facilities for that, here at Penjara. I think that's really bad to say it is a long term wing. I was saying about Myra, when eventually Myra came back to the wing she was put on the two's[6] 'cause we have no cells on the flat here. It wasn't ideal, people were having to carry her flask and people were getting fed up of carrying her things up for her.
>
> I mean eventually she got stronger and I think perhaps she could have done a little bit more than she did. But it was with difficulty. She had crutches to begin with, then we got her onto a stick. Um, but it wasn't ideal. She should have had a cell on the flat. Um, this is the problem with anybody who is *infirm and in prison*, I suppose. God I hope it never—listen to me (laughs).

The role of the body, the way it looks rather than the way it feels, is important in how women in later life resist the positing and institutional inscriptions written on the body. This was clearly articulated when Wan-Nita stated:

> I'm going to get a job in a gym, so that when I go out of jail I'll be quite fit. I want to, that's what I focus on you see is that I'll be fit. I won't be *fat* and *old* when I get out.

The interrogation of the meaning of age as constructed by the carceral environment is key to understanding how women in later life are defined, confined, and constituted by versions of femininity. For others, their lives before prison govern and inform their performing roles in prison, positing younger women in prison under a benevolent gaze. Beatrice, a 62-year-old grandmother imprisoned for 28 months, found herself in trouble for the first time. The statement below illustrates that although in prison, a mutually benefiting relationship can and does emerge across generations.

B: I'm always looking at these girls and thinking how young they are and I think about my grandson straight away—comparing them. And if there is any way that I could help them I do. The two young girls came on our house and I said, "don't do that," don't go mixing with those women, and if there is anything you want come and ask me. And if I can help you, I will.

A.W.: So you look after them?

B: Yes, yes. I think I do. But they say they look after me now. (Laughs)

Although prison homogenizes women in terms of their criminal label, it is the women who recognize the differing needs of women through various stages in the life course. At 53, Anida had been in prison four months when she commented:

> In Polari, if they saw you walking up a landing with say a mop and bucket, a youngster will come along and take it off you and say, "let's take this down to your room for you" or something like that.

The experiences and the tacit knowledge of life before prison, the life threads of familial responsibilities, motherhood, becoming a grandparent, the role as a

[6] *Two's* is a term used to denote the second landing. *Flat* is used to denote the ground floor.

caregiver inseminate life in prison, which in turn enables or disables the success of performance of survival on the prison stage. Anna, 50, who had been in prison 4.5 years, argued that she enjoys the maternal role:

> Well really, I like to do it anyway because these kids in here the same age as my own children. That could be one of my children, you know, in prison. I'd like to think that, I mean God forbid, but you know, say one of my kids went into prison. I'd like to think they'd got somebody they could talk to, you know somebody who could help them.

Central to this discussion is how the inscription of age, femininity, and time are placed on the rhythms of the body. The body is constantly operating within fields of temporality, in which mobile networks of relations produce and transmit power/knowledge to the object vis-a-vis the subject (Butler, 2000; Wahidin & Powell, 2001). Thus the body operates within fields of power and within the realm of signs. It has been argued that time and identity in prison consist of a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play at various times, whereby existing in "different and even contradictory discourses" (Foucault, 1982, pp. 100–102). The Foucauldian lens allows an analysis that goes beyond domination and subornation, and truth or deception, or them and us. It has been argued throughout that the aging body is a resource which can be managed in a number of ways in order to construct a performance of the self.

THE PERFORMATIVITY OF THE PRISON MASQUE

The women in the study recount how like Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, they entered an inexplicable new world to which different rules apply, and also more literally entered this realm in part through changes in the way that they were defined by the penal jigsaw, their reflexive self, and the younger women. The above discussion demonstrates that the performance of the body is not solely to receive punishment. As I have shown, the body can counter/resist/subvert hegemonic penal and ageist discourse without fully encapsulating the multivaried/multifaceted technologies of corporeality and self. The body is a "visage," a collection of signs to be interpreted. It becomes a façade (cf. Goffman, 1983), which at the same time both conceals and expresses the inner being. It is by centralizing the voices and the experiences of the elders that the elders illustrate and interrogate how the architecture of the prison recodes their now "profaned" bodies, as elders who have offended their gender and age role expectation. The effect of constructing behavior as "outwith," marginal or excluded once in prison defines the boundaries of what is considered to be "within" sexuality, domesticity, and femininity, thus allowing society to claim legitimacy to what is deemed as "natural"/"normal."

In order to survive the carceral prism, elders create strategies of subversion. They transgress space-time walls by bringing into play, a masking motif. Women in later life use the mask motif to examine the relationship between the social world of the prison, expectations placed by the system upon them, the other women, and

themselves. The inscriptions placed upon the body and the performing outward mask that the women form under the carceral gaze in order to "make do" enable the women to counter/resist and subvert hegemonic penal discourse. Furthermore, they encapsulate the multivaried technologies of corporeal, carceral, and self inscriptions.

The meanings and experiences of living beyond the walls, inside and outside of prison connect women in later life to the outside world by which they manage meanings and nuances of time discipline of the prison world. Identity management is vital in order to survive the inmate culture by providing a means to recede from the prison gaze. This tacit knowledge recreates women in later life as knowing agents within a system which attempts to suppress the sense of self by recreating meaning with the aim to "produc[e] and shap[e] an obedient subject" (Foucault, 1977, p. 5).

Although the prison inscribes an invisible code similar to the body idiom described by Goffman (1963), the body resists, negotiates and is a receptor, generator, and interpreter of the social meanings produced externally and internally by the elders in the study. The women respond to the writing on the body by the penal scribes by utilizing a masking insignia. The mask motif mediates the relationship between the appearance and the essence, not to separate identities but one in which the governance of identity boundaries blur, separating and creating new possibilities for the body to transgress. It can be argued that the body becomes a resource that can be managed in a variety of ways in order to construct and protect a version of the self before prison and the disciplinary gaze once in the carceral realm. The mask becomes a shield not only from the intrusive glare of the prison machine, but a survival strategy, a coping mechanism to survive a turbulent and violent environment. One can argue that the mask is an extenuation of refracted selves, an outward facing mask that creates a sartorial face. The outward mask manifests itself in a multivariable way. The body is a malleable receptacle, that is acted upon, receives but also produces mechanisms which aim to reinforce, preserve, and protect elders even in the most extreme conditions. Molly recalls her induction into prison life:

> At Durham we had to slop out it was disgusting. We were potty trained again. We had a bucket of cold water, you had your flask and if you came on—*god help you*. There was nothing you can do about it. You couldn't clean. You couldn't do *anything*. You can't have a woman who is on and not clean. Privacy was non-existent—because the officers could come round when you were sitting on a bucket. It was disgusting—it was so degrading. We had to be searched every single week and all your belongings, clothes were on the corridor for all to see. [italics added]

Although aware of the inscriptions placed on the outside of her body through the violations and assault on her sense of identity via personal and intimate intrusions, she is aware that with the passing of time, prison life has scorched her body. Punishment is not only the deprivation of liberty but, from the voices of the elders, is the continued assault while in prison. Molly explains:

> I expect people to find fault with me all the time. I am on the defensive all the time and thinking I have to justify myself, which I would never have done. Like a teacher, you give your orders and command respect, and I lost everything like that.

As the carceral reality ambushed her physical and spiritual being, she resisted the penal recoding of her body by retreating from her body to the recess of her mind:

> They took away all my self-esteem, self dignity. At least they can't take away my mind, they can't take away my academic achievements. They can take everything else away. But it is hard to respect yourself when you have to undress in front of people. It is hard when you have to be searched every single week, and your possessions are touched by people and every letter is looked through. Day after day you are reminded you can't be trusted, you can't have any responsibility, it wears away after twenty years. I don't think I'll ever really lose that.

Although ground down by the system, the governance of the self subverts the institutional gaze, sealing an inward face. The strategies of subversion that she employed provide a means to covert the inward face from the prying juridical gaze by immersing her prison world into an abstract world. Other women cope with the prison regime by reinventing and distributing the humiliating and degrading experience into one which temporarily enables them to control the prison gaze, the violation, and the situation. Alison, 54, has developed coping strategies during her nine years in prison:

> The [first time you] strip off. It is a *really degrading thing*. For a long time it used to bother me. If I knew I was due for a search, I'd think, *"oh God, they'll be coming in a minute. They'll be coming and I have to take my clothes off*." You see how I have changed. I've changed and I've become stronger and I think to myself, "I whip it off." And they say, "Don't take your bottoms off before you put your top back on." I think, "Well, *blow you* because what's the difference I'm being stripped stark naked." So I just throw everything off now. I can't say I like doing it. But it's my *bravado*. If you do it like that really quickly I feel as if *they* take a step back. They are *more embarrassed than I am*.

The presentation of self in this instance (a woman controlling a strip search) is in the meaning attributed to the mode of survival in prison. The strip searches are a degrading technique of punishment, reinforcing the lack of control elders have over those who survey, gaze, police, and govern the most intimate surfaces of the body. The profaned bodies as constructed by the corporeal reality of the prison world negotiate the disciplinary gaze into purloined looks. The performance is a process of negotiation that clearly illustrates how elders can regain control. This performance becomes a series of tactical game-like moves to ensure survival. It becomes an end in itself and a means to an end. I emphasize that the outward mask does "not necessarily imply a deep and abiding identification with that appearance" (Goffman, 1983, p. 51). The mask motif enables elders in prison to "stand outside themselves looking at their own creations, knowing that they are real, but knowing also that they have made them" (Edgely & Turner, 1975, p. 6).

The internal mapping of the prison landscape cultivates and structures the meaning of imprisonment for elders, which is quantitatively and qualitatively

different from that of younger women. The process of being denied, rendered invisible by the penal jigsaw, is a complex process of recoding the body by cultivating and shaping the women's identities. Women in later life find that once in prison, space, bodily space has to be reconfigured. The environment places all women regardless of age, ability, mobility, nationality in a social structure that attempts to cultivate clones, and which discriminates and further excludes women in later life who are in prison.

Others in the sample unwilling to play the game or battle with the carceral machine survive the onslaughts on their identity by withdrawing completely from officers and the other women. The "practices of the self" (Rose, 1990) are used to negotiate the change in environment and preservation of their relational but sartorial faces (i.e.: having many masks is not the same as being false, manipulative, or deceptive). The sartorial masks create networks between how the women are constructed by the prison, the transitory and volatile population, and finally how they affirm continuities with the self and their lives before. Yet at the same time, they are aware that through active disengagement, they are reconfiguring how they present their needs in a system where their voices often are unheard.

What happens to women in later life who go through the experience of prison? As the outside world recedes, preserving their outside identity becomes an issue of protecting their sense of self worth by creating a prison performance. Surrounded by fear, the abstract and intimate intrusions of the penal gaze, the women survive by removing themselves to the periphery of prison life. This enactment of self withdrawal reflects the deeper crisis of the legitimacy of the penal system. The crisis lies in the system failing to understand the differing ideological, physiological, and psychological needs of women in later life. As elders retreat into living life behind the shadows, fearful of the women, the officers and being in the wrong place at the wrong time, the serving and the doing of prison time become a lonely existence. As they withdraw from the prying gaze they simultaneously withdraw from help in order to do their time quietly with minimum interaction with the structure of the prison jigsaw. This withdrawal reflects a tacit "knowing" of the unpredictability of the environment; the disrupting of boundaries encourages women in the study to withdraw, recreating themselves as knowing agents.

As argued above, the body is a dynamic, nebulous in form and always in the process of becoming. The contours of the body outline a visible but transitional object. But as Butler (2000) argues, there is no surety of what the body is. One can argue from listening to the voices of the elders that the body becomes the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and interpolated and, as such, can never be purely understood. The body is in situ, placed within various temporal and spatial fields of power. In Elizabeth Grosz's words (1994, p 20), the older female offending body is a "transitional entity." Through a Foucauldian lens one can examine how power is produced, generated, and negotiated in terms of the inscriptions placed on the aging body.

The application of Foucault brings a richness to networks of power, and the use of Butler's concept of "performativity" in relation to the composite role and configuration of the body shows that the internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, positioned through the gender stylization of the body. In this way, it shows that what we take to be an "internal" feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and is produced through and by certain bodily acts.

In concluding this discussion, I have argued that elders in prison are defined and confined by typifications of femininity and ageist discourse in prison; it is through the iterability of performativity which is a theory of agency, that one cannot disavow the use of power in the condition of creating its own possibility. By incorporating the voices of elders, I have drawn out the contradictions and dilemmas which they experience, thereby illustrating the relationship between time and their involvement as "servers of time" in "doing" time (Goffman, 1961, 1963). In living through time, the body in its materiality becomes almost a medium, which power operates through and which it functions. My purpose has been to illustrate through the voices of the women that the body is neither brute nor passive, static in being but is interwoven with and constitute of systems of meaning, signification, and representation that the elders through the performativity of the body negotiate the prison gaze. It is imperative to understand how elders, once in prison, enter into a zone of marginality, where needs become subsumed under the operational requirements of the prison. Although resourceful, the women find themselves in the direct line of the mechanics of the prison machine, which fails to encapsulate difference, need, and ability, in order to live useful, law-abiding lives after release.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to acknowledge and thank Kate Rose for her comments on this article.

REFERENCES

Berthelot, Jacques. (1986). Sociological Discourse and the Body. *Theory Culture and Society 3*, 155–164.

Biggs, Simon (1997). *The Mature Imagination: Dynamics of Identity in Midlife and Beyond.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Binswanger, Erwin. (1986). Dream and Existence (J. Needleman, Trans.). In K. Hoeller (Ed.), Dream and Existence [Special issue] in the *Journal of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*. Seattle.

Bordo, Susan. (1989). The Body and Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault. In A. Jaggar & S. Bordo (Eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. (Pages 1–20)

Butler, Judith. (1987). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* Oxford: Clarendon.

Butler, Judith. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. (2000). *Gender and Agency–Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory*. New York: Routledge.

Castorialdis, Cornelius. (1991). *Philosophy, Politics and Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, Stan, & Taylor, Laurie. (1972). *Psychological Survival: The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Deleuze, Gilles. (1973). *Proust and Signs* (R. Howard, Trans.). London: Lane.
Edgely, Simon, & Turner, Bryan. (1975). *Life as a Theatre. A Dramaturgical Sourcebook*. Chicago: Aldine.
Falk, Pasi. (1985). Written in the Flesh. *Body and Society*, *1*(1), 95–105.
Featherstone, Mike. (1982). The Body in Consumer Culture. *Theory, Culture and Society*, *1*, 18–33.
Featherstone, Mike. (1991). *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage.
Featherstone, Mike, & Hepworth, Mike. (1991). The Mask of Ageing and the Postmodern Lifecourse. In M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth, & B. Turner (Eds.), *The Body, Social Process and Cultural Theory*. London: Sage.
Foucault, Michel. (1977). *Discipline and Punish–The Birth of the Prisons* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Allen Lane.
Foucault, Michel. (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry*, *8*, 777–795.
Frank, Arthur. (1990). Review Article–Bringing Bodies Back. *A Decade Review in Theory, Culture and Society*, *7*, 131–162.
Frank, Arthur. (1991). For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review. In M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth, & B. Turner (Eds.), *The Body: Social Processes and Cultural Theory* (pp. 60–78). London: Sage.
Giddens, Anthony. (1981). Agency, Institution and Time-Space Analysis. In K. Knorr-Cetina & A.V. Cicourel, (Eds.), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro and Macro Sociologies* (pp. 161–174). Boston: Routledge and K.P.
Goffman, Erving. (1961). *Asylum–Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
Goffman, Erving.(1963). *Behavior in Public Places–Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press.
Goffman, Erving. (1983, February). The Interaction Order–The American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address. *American Sociological Review–Official Journal of The American Sociological Association*, *48*(1), 60–75.
Grosz, Elizabeth. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Hockey, J. & James, A. (1993). *Growing Up and Growing Old—Ageing and Dependency in the Life Course*, London: Sage.
McNay, Lois. (2000). *Gender and Agency–Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist Social Theory*. London: Routledge.
Merleau Ponty, Maurice. (1996). *The Phenomenology of Perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge.
Oberg, Peter. (1996). The Absent Body–A Social Erotological Paradox. *Ageing and Society*, *16*, 701–719.
Rose, Nikolas. (1990). *Governing the Soul*. London: Routledge.
Shilling, Chris. (1993). *The Body and Social Theory*. London: Sage.
Tseelon, Efrat. (1995). *The Masque of Femininity: The Presentation of Women in Everyday Life*. London: Sage.
Turner, Bryan. (1995). Aging and Identity: Some Reflections on the Somatization of the Self. In M. Featherstone & A. Wernick (Eds.), *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life* (pp. 245–262). London: Routledge.
Wahidin, A. *The Performativity of the Prison Masque, Living Life Behind the Shadows*. British Society of Gerontology, September 17–19, 1999, Southampton University.
Wahidin, Azrini, and Tate, Shirley. (2001, April). *Time and the Geography of Exclusion–Time Given, Time Taken Away*. Paper presented at The British Sociological Association Jubilee Conference: Manchester Metropolitan University.
Wahidin, A., & Powell, J. (2001, March). The loss of aging and identity: Social theory, old age and the power of special hospitals, *Journal of Aging and Identity*, *6*, 31–48.
Wahidin, Azrini. (2002). *Life in the Shadows: A Qualitative Study of Older Women in Prison*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Keele University.