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PRISON SUBCULTURE

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Introduction

The aim of this work is to describe the subculture that exists in prison, its peculiar organization and unique way of life. The hypothesis I posit is that life in male prisons can be usefully described and understood through concepts taken from the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966, 1991): "*bricolage*" and "totemism." These concepts are used to explain the dangerous, tribal-like atmosphere of prisons. However, an analysis focusing solely on the primitive nature of prison gangs does not do full justice to the complexities of prison life. Therefore, the primordial and quick-to-anger brotherhoods of prison gangs need to be understood not only as racially motivated tribes, but also as moneymaking organizations. This means that no prison gang can be understood purely as some sort of supremacist power group, but must also be seen as a "business" appropriating capitalist structures from the wider social formation. This raises the possibility of prison gang ideologies working as some sort of a "mask," as a recruitment tool for disenfranchised individuals who, instead of supporting what in their mind is a noble cause, do the dirty work for high-ranking prison Godfathers. I support my claims by examining two separate prison contexts: the first is the complex prison gang scene that developed in the 1950's in California State Prisons, the second is the history of the Number Gangs that dominate prisons in South Africa. These two settings are rich with material that demonstrates the organizational principles at work in the prison subculture. This work focuses solely on male prisons. The latter is because the organization of female prisoner subculture into so-called "pseudo-families," something very different from male prisons (Tunstall 2011: 14-16), is deserving of a paper of its own and would not receive adequate analysis here. My work is structured as follows:

To begin with I turn to the work of Michel Foucault (1975), who documents the "birth of the prison" or its rise into the standardized, taken-for-granted form of punishment we know today, and compares it to other forms of punishment that existed. In doing this I can't but refer to Foucault's understanding of the history of punishment, and may therefore be criticized in going off on a tangent; however, this is necessary, especially when later discussing his concept of "discipline" and its relation to "totemism" in prison gang organization. Following Foucault, the concept of "subculture" and the

notion of "prison" need to be clarified and made explicit. Beginning in the 20th century, prison life has been a popular area of research. James B. Jacobs (1979) traces one distinct investigative lineage, beginning with Donald Clemmer in 1940, and proposes a new object of focus in studying prison life to help explain certain phenomena the old research couldn't. The next section traces the historiography of research into prison and prisoner subculture, mentioning well-known authors and theories. In demarcating the lines of my inquiry I have chosen the two aforementioned contexts to comment on, and the next part of this work involves describing them. What follows that is the heart of this paper and involves the application of the concepts of "*bricolage*" and "totemism" in explaining prison subculture.

Prison life is over-organized; in reaction to what Erving Goffman (1957) calls "mortification" upon entering the "total institution" of prison, a new inmate, stripped of his independence and humiliated, reacts in a set number of ways, ranging from losing touch with reality to rebelling against prison authority. One way of rebelling is functioning as a member of a prison gang. As we shall see, male prisons with heterogeneous demographics are organized around race and ethnicity; they are self-segregated. Furthermore, within this racial self-organization inmates can and are divided into gangs (or classified as outside of a gang). Prison gangs organize themselves around cultures that they relate to through shared race or ethnicity. These can be viewed as totemic paradigms, semantic groups of kinship accompanied by various myths, ideologies, values and symbols. These paradigms are expressed in various ways, the most obvious being through tattoos, but can also be seen in prison gang rituals. Prison life is concerned with enclosure, with restricting possibilities; therefore, the prison world means the inmate is inevitably a *bricoleur*. The art of *bricolage* involves making due with what you've got, manipulating the "technical plane" (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 17) of your physical surroundings at the level of experience to give new functions to everyday items which happen to be at hand. This aspect of prison life only adds to the tribal savageness: *bricolage* can transform the harmless into the dangerous.

But this is not enough to understand prison life. The final part of this paper looks at the possibility of prison gang ideology, based on totemistic tendencies, as being nothing more than a way of masking or legitimizing the functioning of a criminal

organization. Time and again you hear disillusioned ex-gangbangers recall the moment they realized that the gang they belonged to doesn't stand for what they claim it does, or how political leanings of particular groups are ploys used to recruit members, hide criminal activity or simply feed the ego of a powerful leader. In many cases prison gangs' ideologies are simply fronts showing that most of these groups are not in the business of politics, but of organized crime and moneymaking.

1. Discipline and Punish

Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) documents the history of punishment, its changes in form and how imprisonment has become its standardized method. Before getting into Foucault's characterization of prison, its different models and its function, I'd like to refer to Foucault's work in order to give a little context. First, I'll look at the forms of punishment other than imprisonment that Foucault describes. After that I will bring out what Foucault has to say explicitly about imprisonment as a form of punishment. Finally, I'll bring out the goals, functions, criticisms and principles of prisons presented by Foucault before moving on to other theorists of prison life. Foucault's theories are concerned with power relations, power being the ability to affect someone else's actions; you have power over someone if you can make him do something he wouldn't do without you demanding it. For Foucault, power is exercised directly on the physical body; it gives a biological organism an economic use, makes him productive. Foucault calls this a "micro-physics" or an "economy" of power. Power relations exist in every aspect of life as strategies, tactics, techniques or functionings, and are wielded by specific institutions or individuals, but are not an inherent part of them (all Foucault 1975: 24-31). Foucault's understanding is far more nuanced, but this brief introduction will do for the purpose at hand.

1. 1. Other Forms of Punishment

Beginning in the mid-18th century, the art of punishing underwent great reforms. Foucault (1975: 3-7) begins the book by comparing the execution (drawing and quartering) of Robert-François Damiens (who attempted to assassinate the King of France) in 1757 to a timetable drawn up in 1837 pertaining to prisoners and their everyday activities. This is important because it shows the change in styles of punishment, a morphing of forms that took place in a span of less than 80 years, where the "…entire economy of punishment was reconstituted" (Foucault 1757: 7). This is a change from public execution and torture to private incarceration, something that didn't just stay isolated in France; according to Foucault the change in the penal system spread throughout all of Europe and North

America at around the same time, in the late 18th to early 19th century (Foucault 1975: 7). During this time period, Foucault sees three competing modes of punishment competing against other, only one of which won (namely, imprisonment) (ibid. 131). Let me briefly sketch the first two modes of punishment out.

The first form of punishment is the one that dominated before and up to the 18th century reform of the penal system. This type of punishment was focused on two things: the body of the offender and punishment as a spectacle (Foucault 1975: 9-10). Foucault (1975: 32-69) describes it thoroughly. It involved "…corporal punishment painful to a more or less horrible degree" (ibid. 33). For serious crimes there was banishment, flogging, the *amende honorable*, penal servitude, judicial torture and death; for minor crimes there were warnings, prohibitions, fines, compensation to victims, and so on. What is important to note is that every punishment, whether explicitly corporal or not, contained in its application an element of pain, of bodily harm. This is the era of pillories, scaffolds, gallows and the wheel, of branding and flogging, of drawing and quartering. A non-corporal penalty such as a fine could involve the offender also being branded. All these forms of punishment affect the body directly and leave a mark on it. Even investigations into crimes involved a smidgen of torture. For the guilty, torture is a quantifiable amount of pain correlated with a certain crime that marks the body of the offender. This mark can also be one of infamy, of public humiliation. This is what Foucault means when he says that punishment of this kind must be a visible ceremony: "the spectacle of the scaffold." The *amende honorable*, the pillory and especially the execution were public displays where the audience played a huge role. "The guilty man is the herald of his own condemnation," writes Foucault (1975: 43). Public spectacles were "theatres of hell" (ibid. 48) with the function of recoding authority, oriented towards the spectators. Therefore, the old penal system was based on torture, was a ceremonial, ritualized public spectacle punishing the body of the offender to show the might of the sovereign.

Beginning in the mid-18th century many called for a reform in punishing. Tyrannical force exerted on bodies became revolting and shameful, for many reasons (Foucault 1975: 73). The calls of the reformers were part of a changing social context, including expanding demographics and a newfound focus on commerce and industry. Private

property (ownership of capital), industrial production and concern with profit became the name of the game (Foucault 1975: 75-77). Foucault notes that after this change in the economic system, illegality changed forms and became less violent. There were less murders and physical assaults, and more theft, illicit commerce and counterfeiting. Criminals were no longer a part of large groups of roving bandits, but became small groups or lonesome individuals peddling stolen goods from the backs of stalls; illegality centered on fraud, not blood (Foucault 1975: 75-77). This change occurred because of the newfound importance placed on ownership of property and the accompanying crackdown on open forms of illegality, formerly tolerated and accepted as ways of life of the lower classes; open delinquency became skilled and hidden delinquency (Foucault 1975: 74-75, 82-89). Torture and physical pain needed to be dismissed as the main form of punishment. The goal of the reformers was to create a "homogenous circuit," a pyramid of consistency better than the chaotic judicial system supersedable by the King's authority (Foucault 1975: 78-82). The reformers needed a unit of measurement in regards to punishing, which was the concept of "humanity" (ibid. 73-75). Punishment needed to change forms and move away from the body because power needed to be applied in a different way in order to control the masses that committed property crimes. It became all about punishing in a better way and was the birth of a new policy of punishment. Power needed to be regulated for it to be of use (Foucault 1975: 82-89).

Punishment becomes generalized and is formulated by the reformers as a "punitive semio-technique" (Foucault 1975: 103). Punishment no longer works through physical force exerted on the body, but through play between networks of signs and representations. The importance of the sovereign fades and committing an offence is now seen as betraying your pact with the rest of society. In ruling on a crime, judges no longer simply rely on the old triad of knowledge (that of the offender, of the offence and of the law), but take into account other factors, such as the heredity, habitus and psychology of the accused. Judges are philosophers. The first principle is that people should see more disadvantage than advantage coming out of committing a crime. This doesn't work through seeing an execution, but through a series of representations existing in the general public. The impression left on the people by these representations must be vivid enough to act as deterrents. There is a need for a common taxonomy correlating every

possible crime with its punishment, on a graded scale of severity. This is the principle of a common truth for all, of equality. Yet, there must also be room for individualization: a rich man stealing for kicks as opposed to a beggar stealing out of need, a crime of passion versus a planned murder, a first offender compared to a recidivist. The law must also be enforced vigilantly (all Foucault 1975: 92-103). "The art of punishing, then, must rest on a whole technology of representation" (ibid. 104). Crime and punishment must fit together as naturally as possible: an arsonist shall be burnt at the stake, a murderer executed, a usurer fined, a thief shall have his hand cut off, a poisoner shall have poison thrown in his face, a kidnapper shall be imprisoned himself, and so on. Punishment needs to attack the underlying causes of criminal behaviour, its duration needs to be modulated and it needs to be oriented towards the society it harmed. If formerly the focus was on attacking the body, now it was on treating the *soul*. The reformers imagined a "punitive city", where thousands of theatres of punishment were occurring simultaneously; this is how the semio-technique of punishment functions, as a complex of legible signs linking crime and punishment (all Foucault 1975: 104-114). Imagine strolling through the city and seeing some form of punishment on every street corner (an abductor hanging in a cage on Main Street, a vainglorious official in a pillory by the central square, a chain-gang of vandals scrubbing the walls of City Hall). This is what was envisioned as the new form of punishment.

1.2 Prison as Punishment

Even though the reformers envisioned a semio-punitive method, in a span of twenty years (circa 1790-1810) imprisonment became the standardized, homogenous grey mass of punishment. The reformers criticized it because "… it is incapable of corresponding to the specificity of crimes… it has no effect on the public… it is useless, even harmful to society… it is costly, it maintains convicts in idleness, it multiplies their vices" (Foucault 1975: 114). Prisons have no representative value (as opposed to imprisoning someone who imprisoned another). They are dark and secretive, a place where warders could impose arbitrary punishments (Foucault 1975: 114). Yet, beginning around 1810, the prison becomes the all-encompassing middle between fines and death, the third way in

punishment (ibid. 115). Forced labour, the convict-ship, penal servitude and detention, which were used representatively, are really all forms of incarceration. Foucault notes that it was during this time period that "…a great prison structure was planned, whose different levels would correspond exactly to the levels of the centralized administration… according to a whole penal, administrative, geographical hierarchy" (1975: 115). The French version is as follows: *maisons de police*, for each commune; *maisons d'arrêt*, for each district (*arrondissement*); a *maison de correction* for each department; *maison centrales* for serious crimes; and finally convict-ships (Foucault 1975: 115). Think of American county jails, state and federal prisons. The punitive theatre (based on the semio-technique), which was meant to replace the scaffold, was itself replaced by the prison in one fell swoop, by numerous enclosures hiding mysterious punishments, "…monotonous figure[s], at once material and symbolic, of the power to punish" (Foucault 1975: 116). Before the early 19th century imprisonment was seen as ineffective, as the despotic and repressive tool of the sovereign (Foucault 1975: 118-119).

The answer to how prison became the standard method of punishment lies in what Foucault calls "discipline" (1975: 136-138). In the new economic system of the 17th century, emphasis was placed on squeezing out every last drop of productivity: bodies needed to be trained, made more rapid, efficient, machine-like and regimented. Utility and docility became key, no more layabout classes with their open illegalities. Discipline was a new form of power with the function of controlling bodies by making them more useful and obedient through the control of their movements and gestures in time and space. It is how individual mechanisms are corrected (all Foucault 1975: 135-141).

There are four characteristics of discipline. First off, it is "cellular", as in a prison cell. It involves the distribution of bodies in space, enclosure in a place heterogeneous from all others, the individualization of these bodies in relation to others (their partitioning; each individual has his own space and vice versa), the splitting up of "diffuse circulations and dangerous coagulations," keeping tabs on all individuals so that no disappearance is unmarked, the creation of a system of presences and absences for surveillance and communication, the creation of functionally useful sites (encoding architecture for a specific purpose) and the organization of individuals into hierarchies, ranking them (all Foucault 1975: 141-149). Second, discipline is "organic." It controls

activity through the use of timetables (the creation of a rhythm and the imposition of activities onto that rhythm, which is then repeated a certain number of times), the duration and elaboration of an act (it correlates bodies with gestures, makes movement efficient, links up anatomy with chronology) and teaches manoeuvres (the articulation of a body-object relation). Basically, it codifies your activity so no time is wasted (all Foucault 1975: 149-156). Thirdly, discipline is "genetic." It separates instruction into successive segments, into units to be learned, into training and practice, building up skill over the course of concrete, temporal divisions of greater and greater complexity; it focuses on serial time, on the step-by-step, on the process; it is the accumulation of time and the genesis of the individual, a linear progression; it's about making you able to contribute to society (all Foucault 1975: 156-162). Finally, discipline is "combinatory." Its goal is to create a well-oiled machine greater than the sum of its parts, one big efficient unity. It is tactical (militaristic), meaning it constructs a mechanism out of distributed individuals and codified activities accumulated over time, which is monitored and commanded, like an army (all Foucault 1975: 162-169). The goal of discipline (made up of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatory aspects) is to control bodies, and it functions through constant surveillance, an all-seeing gaze. Discipline creates a "norm" and punishes not only conscious deviants (troublemakers), but also those who aren't able to keep up. People are placed in hierarchies and then tested as part of an examination. Every subject not up to par must therefore be corrected, or normalized (all Foucault 1975: 170-194).

Let me give an example that will come in handy later. Disciplinary coercion spread and created the "disciplinary society"; from monasteries and militaries to schools, workshops, factories, hospitals and the roving police force. At University, I am a student. I write my tests in a space that is monitored, in a room encoded for that very purpose and where I am individualized in relation to other writers, later to be hierarchized depending on my results (the cellular). There are a set number of lectures, lasting a set amount of time, that I am obligated to attend; I walk in and say hello to the lecturer, then take a seat; I have to master the use of a pen to write down what the speaker is saying; later, I have a set amount of time to write my test (the organic). At this point in time, there are some fundamental concepts I'm expected to know, acquired over the years and previous

courses (the genetic). Later, my position in the hierarchy, my codified activity (my acceptable behaviour) and my knowledge (in the form of excellent results) may allow me to be subsumed into some sort of academic pantheon where I work together with other teachers under the eye of a supervisor (the combinatory). However, if I light my desk on fire, or simply fail the test, then I have deviated from the norm and I face expulsion (punishment). I will return to this example in the last section of this work.

In terms of punishment, prison became the standardized form because as an institution it was the perfect place for subjecting bodies to discipline, for observing and correcting offenders. Prisons distributed bodies into cells, controlled their behaviour and codified their activities. It involved punishing and gradually correcting, making reinsertion into society possible. Prisons are the ultimate form of discipline because you never leave it as you do school or work for the day; you're always watched. Inmates are always judged and hierarchized, their "recovery" monitored; they are constantly being coerced into falling in line with the norm, the "norm" being unique to the productive society and it itself something manufactured (all Foucault 1975: 187-194). To sum up the three types of punishments, Foucault has a set of useful triads (1975: 131). Punishment changed hands, moving from sovereign to society to an institution; went from working through marks (left on the body) to signs (circling in the social body) to traces (of the corrected individual; the only proof you have of the effects of punishment is seeing a former criminal who turned his life around after being "cured"). It changed forms from ceremonies to representations to disciplinary exercise and changed locations, going from the scaffold to the punitive city to the prison. There was a movement away from punishing the body to treating the soul, and this treatment was itself divided between the semio-punitive method and imprisonment, the latter which became the standard.

1.3 Functions, Maxims and Criticisms of Prisons

With this said we can look at what exactly characterizes the prison. The advent of the prison was the movement of disciplinary power into the penal system; prison is therefore characterized as a disciplinary ideal. Because of our social context, we don't see any punitive option other than imprisonment. This has been attributed to humanistic reforms,

but these reforms themselves are simply products of the disciplinary society (Foucault 1975: 231-232). There is more equality in our new social body; it is the beginning of equal rights for all. By committing a crime you break the social pact and infringe on rights. Therefore, the first function of prison is the deprivation of liberty, taking away *your* rights (Foucault 1975: 232). At the same time, it is not simply meant as a cruel method of repression. The second function of the prison is the transformation of individuals. Its goal is to purge abnormalcy from man (Foucault 1975: 233-235). Following a phrase from architect Victor Baltard, Foucault characterizes prisons as " 'complete and austere institutions.' " Prisons are "omni-disciplinary." The point is that prisons control every aspect of a prisoner's life, ranging from his mental state to his physical wellbeing, his behaviour and attitude. In prison discipline is unceasing and uninterrupted, there is a neverending regulation of time, space and activity (Foucault 1975: 235-236).

The prison fulfills its goals in three ways. First, through its use of isolation. An offender is separated from other offenders and from the troublesome context that caused him to offend. Dangerous, mysterious associations and congregations of convicts must be separated. Dark solitude also allows for reflection on the crime. You begin to hate it and thinking of it invokes sharp pain, tugs at heartstrings. The individual repents and reforms himself after a period of long, deliberate isolation. The latter is also useful for warders or chaplains who want to impose upon a subject the maximum degree of authority (Foucault 1975: 236-237). Secondly, the omni-disciplinarity of prison creates rhythms, which are followed by convicts for years at a time. The most important of those activities imposed upon rhythm is work; it is obligatory, it teaches the value of labour and how to use ones own hands for good; it instills pride in creating, cultivates skills and lets inmates earn some money (Foucault 1975: 237-244). Finally, prisons as institutions need to have the ability to modulate penalties: their duration, quality and content. This means prisons need to have some level of autonomy, separate from the punishment laid down by a judge (Foucault 1975: 244-248). A system of rewards and punishments for behaviour, the idea of parole and probation and different cell units are all examples of prisons, in order to deprive of liberty and transform, needing to have control over their own "house."

Therefore, isolation, work and the modification of penalties are how prisons fulfill their functions of taking away freedom and normalizing individuals.

Though they are often used synonymously, Foucault differentiates between a "prison" and a "penitentiary." The way I've (and Foucault himself) used and will continue to use the term "prison" can be seen as being closer to the concept of a "penitentiary" the way Foucault describes it. The prison institution needed to become an autonomous mechanism with the ability to modify terms of imprisonment. A prison is simply a place for imprisoning (a cell), but a penitentiary has the functions of depriving and transforming (correcting, healing). This is done through isolation (the prison cell), work (the workshop) and modulating penalties in order to "cure" deviants (the hospital). The modern day prison and its functions need to be understood more as a penitentiary (a cell-workshop-hospital complex) than as simply an architectural form that holds bodies (Foucault 1975: 247-248). The prison industry as such becomes an autonomous branch of penal justice, what Foucault calls the "carceral," a subdivision of the judicial branch of power (ibid. 247).

The functions of prison (deprivation of liberty and transformation of individuals) and the ways in which it achieves them (isolation, work and the modulation of penalties) are summed up into seven universal maxims by Foucault (1975: 269-270):

1) The principle of correction. The goal of incarceration is the reformation and rehabilitation of the individual.
2) The principle of classification. Inmates must be separated and housed according to their gender, age, crime and threat level. Recidivists must be treated differently than first time offenders.
3) The principle of the modulation of penalties. Punishment should be individualized to reward or punish further. Administrative segregation, parole, probation, etc.
4) The principle of work as obligation and right. To purge idleness, teach skills and give the inmate an opportunity to earn wages, working must be mandatory and must instill into the inmate a sense of duty.
5) The principle of penitentiary education. Educating convicts in religion, morality and labor will allow them to be of use to society.

6) The principle of the technical supervision of detention. Chaplains, warders, instructors, doctors and all others working with the inmates must be competent; all prisons must contain within them all proper services.

7) The principle of auxiliary institutions. After release convicts must have somewhere to turn to and must be under constant surveillance in order to facilitate rehabilitation. The concept of parole officers, halfway houses and other similar forms emanates from this principle.

It is all fine and dandy to speak about the virtues of prison, but ever since its birth it has been a lightning rod of criticism. One of the first criticisms hurled at the prison was a political/economic one. Did the government care more about inmates than its law-abiding citizens who were unemployed? Was cheap prison labour stealing jobs? There were many protests outside prisons and a strong polemic criticizing prisoners' wages. Many believed they were being treated inferior to convicts. The response they got was that the effect of prisoner labour on the economy was negligible and that work as such was inherently good and rehabilitated prisoners (Foucault 1975: 239-244). Another criticism levied was at isolation; how much of it was justified? Did it lead to madness and only worsen criminality (Foucault 1975: 239)? The main direction critics took was seeing the prison as dysfunctional. Out of all the prisons and all their cells the quantity of crime either stayed level or increased; prison didn't decrease the crime rate or act as a deterrent. Penal detention was seen as the cause of recidivism (habitual reoffending); most convicts were understood as being former inmates, and as they are recirculated into the social body each year without being corrected, society became more and more dangerous. The prison itself was seen as causing delinquency. Prisoners felt exploited and began to hate and blame the system itself: its arbitrariness, the abuse of power, the inefficiency of warders, the violent constraints, the useless and dangerous existence of prison life. As an add-on to this, in a disciplinary society recidivism was inevitable; after being released ex-cons are always monitored. Documentation of past crimes and conditions of release haunted every freed convict, affecting work opportunities and necessitating falling back in with wrong crowds. Finally, prisons were the perfect milieus or the ideal breeding grounds for groups of delinquents to organize, to hierarchize, to pledge loyalty to one another. They were

seen as clubs where offenders learnt morality from other inmates, to hate the system and find brotherhood in a criminal enclosure. They learnt how to manipulate the law, avoid its rigors and how to create social groups of delinquents. Prison either didn't punish crime, or didn't correct individuals (all Foucault 1975: 265-268). I may have used the past tense in describing these issues, but these problems have not disappeared. Prisons as meeting grounds for shady characters who organize themselves into criminal fraternities is an early definition of prison gangs and the inmate subculture.

For Foucault, prisons create a new category of person: the delinquent. This person differs from the offender. The latter is the subject of the law, found guilty or not; judgment is passed on a specific instance; a digital either-or. The prison, it's complete austerity and discipline, meant the individualization of the guilty; this is the creation of a person's biography (their habitus, heredity, psychology). The delinquent's entire life is judged. He is classified as a deviant and criminals are posited without specific instances of crime; the analogue more-or-less. In creating the norm of the law-abiding citizen, of the responsible grown-up and of the sane rationalist, disciplinary institutions created the deviant forms of the delinquent, the strange child-like adult and the madman. This lead to the birth of the "human sciences", fields like psychology and criminology (see Foucault 1975: 251-257, 271-282). This is what underlies Foucault's famous power-knowledge combination: new power (discipline and its process of individualization) means new knowledge (the human sciences), important because it lays the groundwork for research into all forms of subcultures, like the one existing in our new prisons. All ethnographical research into prison life is only made possible by our new societal organization, which itself created it.

This lengthy write-up of Foucault brought out imprisonment as simply one form of punishment and compared it to other kinds before describing the prison's rise into the natural, standardized punitive form (discipline/austerity). Finally, the functions, principles and criticisms of prisons were brought forward, followed by the context created that lead to the beginning of research into prison life. The following section focuses on giving more standard definitions of the prison, first going back to underlying Foucault's underlying models, and then to American and South African contexts. Then I will define the concept of "subculture" and explain why prison life can be viewed as one.

2. Defining Terms: "Prison" and "Subculture"

Before we get to the heart of the issue, it is important to define terms. For the sake of clarity the concepts of "prison" and "subculture" are defined and delimited in the next sections.

2.1 Understanding Prison

This first section is broken down into two subsections, one focusing on Foucault's models/history of the prison and the other on its more standard definitions in the USA and South Africa.

2.1.1 Prison Models

Foucault states that there are a few important models of prison which served as inspiration for the form we take for granted today. Their creation is itself a part of the changing social context, a turn towards discipline (1975: 120).

The first model, lying at the base of modern punitive imprisonment, is the Rasphuis of Amsterdam, opened in 1596 (see Foucault 1975: 120-121). It was meant for juvenile offenders who, instead of being punished by flogging or something similar, were locked up and made to work. Instead of a beating, the Rasphuis was the first prison-facility with the goal of rehabilitation. It was also the first facility which allowed a modulation of the penalty; it had in its functioning the earliest known version of rewards for good behaviour and the concept of "parole." Work (rasping wood) was obligatory and paid; it was done in common. The same social principle was also seen with the sleeping arrangements. Isolation in a cell was only reserved for punishing further transgressions committed within the prison. "A strict timetable, a system of prohibitions and obligations, continual supervisions, exhortations, religious readings, a whole complex of methods used to 'draw towards good' and 'turn away from evil' held the prisoners in its grip from day to day," with the function of "pedagogical and spiritual transformation… [which would become] so characteristic of the second half of the 18th century" (Foucault 1975: 121). For

Foucault, the Rasphuis is seen as the basic figure underlying all prisons, which developed their own nuances (Foucault 1975: 121).

The second model is the *maison de force* of Ghent, Belgium. The main idea of this facility consisted in reconstructing the usefulness of idlers. Crime was seen as emanating from the idleness of beggars, and not artists or labourers. If you were taught to enjoy working and feel pleasure from a laborious life, you wouldn't feel the need to steal. The *maison de force* attempted to reconstruct *homo oeconomicus* out of an idler. In working and earning money an inmate's morals were corrected and he took pride in his work (all Foucault 1975: 121-122). More commonly the *maison de force* of Ghent is known for its unique architecture, which influenced later prison design.

The third model that put its spin on imprisonment was the English one, exemplified by the reformatory (not meant in the traditional sense as a youth correctional centre) at Gloucester. The goal of this institution was also economic, but its contribution to punitive imprisonment, based on Christian monasticism (monkhood, asceticism), was simultaneously developing a "religious conscience" in the inmate (Foucault 1975: 123). This was achieved through the introduction of isolation into prisons. Isolation meant a person would enter into themself after feeling the terrible shock of lonely existence and rediscover God. It was a space of reflection with the function of making an inmate transform himself after feeling the weight of his actions. Combined with labour and religious teaching, isolation corrected the criminal (Foucault 1975: 122-123).

The fourth model was the Walnut Street Prison of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, opened in 1790. This was very similar to the *maison de force* and the reformatory. Opened and run by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), it involved strict timetables, labour, order, isolation, possibility of parole, constant surveillance and a high dosage of religious and moral teachings. What made it unique was the high level of documentation of its inmates. This was one of the first prisons where inmates were classified according to their threat level. Eternal solitary confinement existed for the most dangerous and incorrigible habitual offenders (all Foucault 1975: 123-126).

In Foucault's eyes British philosopher Jeremy Bentham conceptualized the most important prison model in the late 18th century: the Panopticon. Its description: "…at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide

windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy... Visibility is a trap" (Foucault 1975: 200). The Panopticon was a designed version of a prison where power functioned automatically because of one-sided communication (an asymmetry between seeing and being seen). In fact, it was not even necessary that a guard be on duty inside the watchtower, because how could an inmate know? When mentioning the coming-into-being of a disciplinary society, Foucault was thinking of the Panopticon (Bentham also envisaged a panoptic society). For Foucault, society and its institutions became dominated by panopticism (think of modern CCTV, for instance). Basically, all institutions took on the characteristics of prisons. The Panopticon is disciplinary power in its pure form: "…the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form" (see Foucault 1975: 205, 200-209). The reason that prison became the standardized form of punishment was because it was the ultimate form of discipline, meaning it was simply because prison is the most panoptic institution. This is because the disciplinary functions of observing, normalizing and testing work best in the panoptic model. Whether you call it complete austerity, omni-disciplinarity or panopticism, the same point stands.

2.1.2 Modern Understandings

In the United States of America there is an important distinction to be made between "jail" and "prison." Jails hold people accused of a crime (under any law, federal or state) that have not yet been sentenced and are awaiting trial, those who can't make bail or those who have been found guilty of a misdemeanor and sentenced to less than one year. A misdemeanor is a "lesser" crime, something like shoplifting or uttering threats, with a maximum sentence of one year in jail. Jails are traditionally under the jurisdiction of counties, usually understood as the administrative division between states and cities. Prisons, on the other hand, hold those who have been tried and found guilty of a felony

and have been sentenced to more than one year. A felony is a serious crime, such as murder or rape. Certain crimes, like drunk driving, can be upped from misdemeanors to felonies in certain situations, such as repeated offences, or, like robbery, on the amount stolen. The two main divisions of law in the United States are federal and state, which have implications for prisons. A person convicted of a federal crime is sent to Federal Prison (controlled by the national Federal Bureau of Prisons or BOP), and a person convicted of a state crime to State Prison (controlled by a state's Department of Corrections). The types of inmates being sent to either kind of prison are not more or less violent. A person convicted under military law is also sent to Federal Prison (Andrus & Richards 2004: 1). In the US, there is a plethora of terms that are used interchangeably with "prison": "penitentiaries," "correctional institutions," "reformatories," "detention centers" or "work camps" (ibid. 1).

As Foucault noted, the Walnut Street Prison was an important model in the history of prisons because of its methods of classifying inmates and completely segregating the most problematic ones. Built like a conventional prison it housed prisoners in large rooms that were overcrowded and dangerous, a place where assaults were common. It had no rehabilitative value. Its innovation came with the design of a new cellblock, called the "Penitentiary House." Cells were small and held single individuals, and along with the corridors were designed so no communication was possible (Lehman & Phelps 2005, Andrus & Richards 2004: 1). Based on Walnut Street's new cellblock, new prisons soon opened in Philadelphia (Eastern State Penitentiary, or Cherry Hill, in 1826) and Pittsburgh (Western Penitentiary in 1829). These prisons exemplified what is now known as the Pennsylvania System or Model (Andrus & Richards 2004: 1). In 1817 the Auburn Penitentiary was opened in New York State and became the basis for the Auburn System/Model of imprisonment (ibid. 2004). The architecture of the Auburn prison was based on the individual cellblock (Lehman & Phelps 2005), and introduced the traditional architectural form of cells arranged into tiers stepping out onto corridors. In the Pennsylvanian form, cells were like sepulchres completely separated from others (Foucault 1975: 238, Andrus/Richards 2004: 1). Connected with their architecture, the main difference between these two systems lay in the principle of isolation, in segregation as opposed to congregation. Foucault (1975:

237-239) and Andrus/Richards (2004: 1) summarize the difference well: the Pennsylvanian system is based on absolute isolation while the Auburnian model emphasizes isolation to a degree. In Pennsylvania, some inmates were isolated at all times. Their strict regimentation (working, eating, sleeping, exercising) was always done alone. The point was in making a man find conscience and God within himself. The cell was like a tomb: in it, man finds that it is only the walls that are bad and that humans are good (he rediscovers love). It is a resurrection based on Catholicism and Quaker ideals (the term "penitentiary" comes from the Quakers and their ideal of penance). On the other hand, the Auburn system was meant as a "microcosm of society." Meals and work were done in common during the day; isolation was for sleeping, for the night. Everything done in common was monitored strictly. Communication was strictly "vertical" (with authorities) and not "horizontal" (among inmates, which was forbidden). The Auburn system attempted to recreate the hierarchy of society, to create productive persons. Solitary confinement (absolute isolation in "the hole") was a further punishment and not a fact of everyday existence. The two models were in conflict over many principles: medical (isolations link to insanity), architectural (which form allowed optimal surveillance?) and religious (what role did religion play in rehabilitation?). In the end, the principles and architecture of the Auburnian system won out: its effectiveness in rehabilitation was better than the Pennsylvanian system (Lehman & Phelps 2005), and economically speaking it could house more inmates in less space and therefore with less cost. The Auburnian model's use of cellblocks (units of prisons composed of cells) became the dominant way of distributing prisoners, different from individualizing "tombs" and large rooms; many prisons were constructed with large cellblocks to house inmates. For most prisons long-term absolute isolation is not accepted. The Auburnian principles of nightly isolation and non-communication between inmates are also not usually upheld in modern prison environments.

Prisons are classified according to their security level, which has traditionally been minimum, medium and maximum. Each provides a very different experience for inmates (Tunstall 2011: 5-7). Minimum-security prisons resemble dormitories, with free movement, no razor wire or fences and usually contain nonviolent or white-collar criminals (ibid. 5). Inmates are locked in at night; if an inmate is guilty of a "walk-away"

he is to be transferred to a higher level facility (Andrus & Richards 2004: 3). Medium-security prisons "…have added security features including double fences, gun towers, and internal control architecture that resembles higher-security institutions" (ibid. 3). Movement is controlled and timed; written permission slips specify exact lengths it should take to move from one part of the prison to another (Tunstall 2011: 5-6). There are two distinct types of medium-security prisons: the first is composed of many separate buildings (administrative offices, factories, housing units) and a large recreational yard, the entire complex being fenced in. The housing units are divided into cellblocks (with their subdivisions, called "pods", a large room for recreation with stairs and two tiers of cells) (Andrus & Richards 2004: 3-4). The second type of medium-security prison resembles a large barn; it functions like a "human warehouse," the inside being like a large dormitory full of bunk beds. This is again a new meaningful world for prisoners; these types of prisons are nicknamed "bus stops," "pig pens," or "dog kennels" (Andrus & Richards 2004: 4). Maximum-security prisons "house the most dangerous inmates… [they have] the strictest of security measures and are surrounded by high concrete walls with armed security towers and armed perimeter security… [they have] several security features, such as cameras, motion detection systems, and various alarm systems. Inmate contact with others is very limited. When the inmate is moved out of his cell, [he] is secured with several restraints, [including] handcuffs, a belly-chain, a black-box around the handcuffs… thumb-cuffs, leg-cuffs, a stun belt, and/or a protective face-shield. The inmate is escorted by correctional staff… the inmate move is videotaped" (Tunstall 2011: 6). Bentham's Panopticon is rare as an architectural form, but it lives on through alarms and cameras. There are three main types of max-security prisons (Andrus & Richards 2004: 4-5): the first are the so-called "Big Houses", 19th-20th century fortress-like structures with enormous cellblocks. The second are the New Generation prisons, which resemble factories; they are enclosed by thick chain-link fence with rolls of razor wire and possible electrical current, along with cameras and sensors. Cellblocks are divided into highly monitored pods with fewer freedoms than medium-security ones. The final type of max-security prison is the Supermax. These are really the only prisons in the US that apply the Pennsylvanian principle of absolute isolation; inmates are kept in their small cells at least 23 hours a day. They are constantly monitored; the constraints of the

maximum-security prison are multiplied. These prisons are meant for the worst of the worst. A former warden of ADX Florence called it "… a clean version of Hell" (60 Minutes: 2009). Most medium and maximum security prisons contain special cellblocks such as the Segregated Housing Unit (the SHU or "the hole"), protective custody, an AIDS unit, a gangster unit, and so on (Andrus & Richards 2004: 4).

Foucault stated that the coming-into-being of prison as the standardized form of punishment spread throughout Europe and North America, but the same pattern is also present in South Africa. This is most likely due to European colonization. Between 1807 and 1834 when slavery was abolished and black people were emancipated, incarceration for a certain time period corresponding to the seriousness of a crime became accepted and widespread; deportation and torture lessened (Oppler 1998). With slavery a thing of the past, there was a newfound labor shortage. This coincides with an early form of the "pass system" (a major characteristic of Apartheid, its main enforcer of segregation), wherein non-whites had to carry internal passports which they could be called upon to present at any moment when travelling through "white areas." If you didn't have your pass on you, you were imprisoned. The pass system also had laws against failing to pay certain types of taxes, also punished by imprisonment. The latter was a way of acquiring a workforce, who performed tasks such as building roads (all Oppler 1998). Throughout the 19th century, South African penal procedure became intertwined with the large farming and diamond-mining industries. These mega-institutions sometimes created their own *ad hoc* prisons in various makeshift compounds and outposts. All prisons were sharply segregated. Throughout the 20th century the South African government also made convicts available to farmers and mine owners (all Oppler 1998). After World War II and the era of Apartheid, all prisons were officially to be segregated, not just racially (white European and black African Bantu), but also into different divisions of the Bantu tribe; this was the policy of "differential development" for all ethnicities and their subdivisions, which was produced by the complex classification systems of the Apartheid government (all Oppler 1998). During Apartheid, all prisons became closed off to the media and public. This was controversial when, beginning in the sixties, many political prisoners (like Nelson Mandela) were sent off to prison. After Apartheid ended, the African National Congress (ANC) created a comprehensive plan for integration of prisoners and a

new methodology for reintegrating them back into society. There were new focuses on prisoners' health, on prison management and on open inspection (all Oppler 1998).

Like the US, South Africa separates sentenced and non-sentenced prisoners, men and women, adults and children, in their incarceration facilities (Muntingh 2006: 21). The same classificatory scheme and accompanying characteristics of minimum-, medium- and maximum-security prisons also exists, but minimum-security prisons are incredibly rare (Matshaba 2007: 21, 28-30). Generally, all the same understandings of prison as I brought out when discussing Foucault and the principles of prison, or when I was describing the American prison system, apply to South Africa as well, with minor variations, as in all countries; details like the difference between medium-security "pods" and "pig pens" in the United States is not needed. The point of elaborating and going into details was to show the homogeneity of prison experience, the different meanings and experiences that an inmate could have depending on where he is incarcerated. The differences in prison types are also not always very clear-cut. An example of similarities between the US and South African penal system can be seen when looking at the first maximum-security prison in South Africa. This was Robben Island (1959), as inescapable as Germany's Colditz Castle or the American Alcatraz, characterized as Supermax or Maxi-Maxi (Matshaba 2007: 32). The same conceptions of certain special cellblocks (such as disciplinary ones) in prisons and classification of inmates according to threat level (a tradition beginning in Walnut Street Prison) are also applicable. Again, I stress that the entire prison complex (prison experience, prison architecture, prison divisions, etc.) of different countries is not uniform (when studied synchronically), but you could say the same about different American States. Still, general lines can always be drawn. Now I will clarify the concept of "subculture" and attempt to explain why prisoner life can be seen as one.

2.2 What is a Subculture?

Subcultures can be seen as groups of people who are represented (whether by themselves or by others) as different from a core culture and its mainstream values. The difference

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can be seen as lying in the group's interests and practices: what they are, what they do and where they do it (Gelder 2005: I). Groups as diverse as skateboarders, New Agers, street gangs and Trekkies can be categorized as subcultures. Ken Gelder, subcultural theorist and editor of *The Subcultures Reader* (which brings together the history of and ideas concerning subcultural research) notes that subcultural theory as such is a fairly recent development (with its origin in the 1940's (2005: 1), falling in line with the evolution of the human sciences as per Foucault), but inquiries into alternative lifestyles have a long tradition; Gelder cites written works dating back to England as far as four and a half centuries ago. This is important because as the prefix "sub-" indicates, subcultures are part of a larger formation. They are "…in relation to and function within a broader system" (Gelder 2005: 1). Gelder traces two "precursory logics" or implicit histories of subcultural research, which is significant because these logics have shaped how the relationship between the mainstream and the alternative has been seen, how we classify and understand "deviants" or "delinquents". Basically, how we conceptualize different social groups. This has to do with power relations. It's important to note that there are two points of view in play when speaking about subcultures: inside and outside. From outside, as seen by non-members, the workings of a particular group of people may be seen as disorganized and normless, as chaos; but from the inside, from the perspective of members, subcultural workings are highly organized and norm-based systems (Gelder 2005: 2-3); they are seen as cosmos. Gelder comments that this is "…[the production of] social groups that are also anti-social" (ibid. 2). While defining themselves from the inside, subcultures are classified by the outside.

The first "precursory logic" or implicit subcultural history can be found in writings originating in England's Elizabethan era, but also in other European and American literatures up to and including the 20th century. The first wave of commentaries upon alternative lifestyles were extremely negative and critical of them: members were seen as outside of class, labour, law and property (again, the importance of a Foucault-like disciplinary society and "norms"). Large cities like London, New York or Paris became infested and infected by a certain type of itinerant people (correlating to Foucault's description of the change in illegality, into a new secretive and skilled criminality). From this comes a whole typology of deviant bohemians: beggars, brothel

keepers, coney-catchers/conmen, discharged soldiers, doxies, gamblers, guttersnipes, jailbirds, palliards, pickpockets/cutpurses, pimps, prostitutes, rogues, rufflers, street-sellers, swindlers, whip-jacks and so on. They were Marxist lumpenproletariat, meaning they lacked class-consciousness. They also didn't work, meaning they were non-productive, and compounding this they were parasitic criminals, anti-commonwealth and dishonest. Most importantly, they were seen as vagrants, as tramps, defined by their homelessness. Lacking any ties to property they were wanderers instead of settlers, vagabonds instead of citizens and nomadic instead of civilized. Therefore, the first "precursory logic" is negative and anti-romantic, seeing deviants who were outside of the norms of class, labour, law and property. These deviants were always characterized as existing on the "edges", on the fringes or margins, or in the "underworld", in darkness, in the subterranean realm (all Gelder 2005: 2-6). They were classified as peripheral and chthonic, as outside of daily life.

The second way of looking at subcultures has roots in 19th and early 20th century sociology, as a response to mass culture. The latter's production and consumption entails standardization and homogenization of individuals, destruction of "natural" ties between people. In Gelder's view, a useful distinction is made in 1887 by Ferdinand Tönnies between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). Relationships in "communities" are based on family, on folk culture, on friendship and neighbourhood, on unity of spirit. Oneness, organic solidarity between people, togetherness, socialization. Relationships between members is seen as natural or real. This type of community was prominent pre-industrialisation and was based on loyalty and simplicity, governed from the inside. On the flipside, the relationships in "societies" are cast as artificial and mechanical, based on money and division of labour. "Societies" are governed from uptop: the mass media, a centralized government, proprietors of capital, globalists. There is an alienating effect, a feeling of isolation or atomization, while simultaneously a feeling of homogenization or massification. People don't take part in life together, but simply co-exist. At the same time as you are individualized you are blended in, losing a sense of unity with a particular social group and the common interests belonging to it. A "community" is kind of an ideal middle ground between these two processes of urban modernity. A "community" can be seen as a tightknit extended family, while a "society"

is reminiscent of a modern-day company. The relation to subcultural theory is that subcultures can be seen as social groups purposely emphasizing their difference. As a response to atomization and massification subcultures create a feeling of togetherness and flaunt their deviance. Therefore the second "precursory logic" of subcultural inquiry is seeing subcultures as social groups, organized around kinship, unity, organic solidarity and non-artificiality (all Gelder 2005: 6-9).

In relation to the wider social context they exist in, subcultures have been seen as negative or criminal brotherhoods. The two "precursory logics" that Gelder has brought forward in no way clearly describes every subculture; they are simply the ways in which subcultures have usually been seen. Take skateboarders: classified as roving gangs of punk kids with too much time on their hands that use urban space in a deviant manner (illegally), they are groups of unproductive vagabonds, usually members of the working class, sharing a common interest. However, subcultural membership is not limited to one particular class; there are many upper class New Agers or Teddy Boys. Nor is it limited to criminality or the lack of a job or ownership of property. These are simply ways subcultures have been conceptualized. The main thing to remember is that subcultures are social groups who are, in one way or another, represented as distinct from mainstream orthodoxy. It is also not true that all subcultures have been viewed as negative; the very same skateboarders have been viewed romantically, as free from the clutches of the urban sedentary lifestyle.

A slightly different way of conceptualizing subcultures is expounded by Milton M. Gordon (1947, in Gelder 2005: 46-50). He states that, after defining the level of national culture, sociologists tend to break it down into separate units, such as class, race/ethnicity, gender, religion and area of residence. Gordon argues that it is better to understand all social formations as "worlds within worlds", as combinations of many factors. For example, people are not affected separately by ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status, but by their interrelatedness, their combination; a male, middle class Jew isn't just a male, middle class Gentile plus Judaism (all Gordon 1947: 47). Subcultures are more than cuisine, language use and style; they are combinations of many things, a way-of-life more than the sum of its parts. Gordon emphasized the concept of "subculture" because it was seen as the best tool for analysing different social

organizations. Other categories, like race, ethnicity or gender, classify people too broadly, making sweeping generalizations and assuming a homogeneous group and experience of life (Gordon 1947: 47). A person who spent time growing up in both Canada and Estonia is not a Canadian and not an Estonian, but an Estonian-Canadian, a member of a certain subculture who feels a connection and group solidarity with other members wherever he encounters them. You could ask how can a Canadian-Estonian feel solidarity with an American-Estonian, but not a Canadian-Pakistani or a Russian-Estonian? The answer is a common line, a common background, organic similarity and mutual translatability. Will an Estonian-Canadian ("more" Estonian) feel solidarity with a Canadian-Estonian ("more" Canadian)? It depends. These various contemplations have lead a new wave of theorists to discard the concept of "subculture"; theirs is the "post-subcultural approach," with roots in the 1990's (Gelder 2005: 12-13). The focus is on the fluidity and fragmentation of identity and a focus on postmodern individualism (ibid. 12). This is because in Gordon's view, everybody belongs to a subculture. This means he uses the concept of "subculture" more broadly than others. This is a conceptual problem, one of terminology, and this work makes no theoretical claims on the differences between "subculture" and "counterculture," for instance, or even what "mainstream culture" is composed of. For the work at hand what is meant by "subculture" is the communal aspect, the organic totality and relatability of social groups that may be viewed as strange, deviant or distinct from certain core values of the majority (like the Golden Rule, or the law). I also agree with Gelder in that post-subcultural relativism is inadequate for describing social formations.

The next section explains why this understanding of "subculture" can be applied to prison life.

2.3 Prison Life and Subcultural Theory

Before I begin to describe prison subculture, I need to explain why prison life can be understood as a subculture in the first place. This is indeed naïve of me, but I feel compelled to do so. Understood as Foucault's delinquents or Gelder's deviants, most prisoners fall into the classic "precursory logic" of marginal persons outside of class,

labour, law and property. They are viewed negatively to the utmost degree, as the lowest of the low. Subcultures are social groups, which means socialization is needed; this is what creates solidarity, a feeling of oneness. Prison life is seen from the outside as a dangerous chaos, but from the inside prisoners have their own social structure and codes. This life is always classified as brutally violent. Shankings and prison rape are just two aspects of prison subculture that have become part of everyday folklore, brought to consciousness in media portrayals of prisons ("Don't drop the soap!!!"). But does every prison have its own subculture? Are there universals of the prisoner subculture? For example, does a Supermax prison focused on perfecting the isolatory principle of the Pennsylvanian model contain one? The entire point of these prisons is to sever communication between prisoners; without socialization, there can be no social group. Let us take United States Penitentiary, Administrative Maximum Facility (known as ADX Florence) in Colorado. This "clean version of Hell" contains about 500 prisoners, a rogues' gallery as diverse as former Soviet spy Robert Hanssen, Oklahoma City bomber Terry Nichols, the Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, various Aryan Brotherhood and Mexican Mafia leaders, and (foreign) terrorists such as Zacarias Moussaoui, the Shoe Bomber Richard Reid, and Ramzi Yousef (60 Minutes 2009). With no contact between any inmates, can it be said that ADX Florence contains within it a prisoner subculture? Maybe only from the point of view of inmates who have been released (which is itself extremely rare) from Supermax, who then run into each other on the street: they share a common bond, some kind of solidarity. But, again, is this a subculture? As we have seen, subcultures are more than things-in-common; they are total ways-of-life. So, it would seem not. However, ADX Florence contains within itself many representatives of diverse subcultures. Gordon (1947: 3) makes a distinction between "…separate sub-cultures and separate units of the same sub-culture." Unit H in ADX Florence is the terrorist unit, containing about 40 terrorists, many with links to Al-Qaeda (60 Minutes 2007). Three members of the Aryan Brotherhood and various leaders of the Mexican Mafia are scattered throughout the prison as well (History Channel's Gangland: Aryan Brotherhood: 2007). In their isolation these inmates still belong to subcultures, just not a distinct ADX Florence prisoner one. This is how to understand how the same prison gang can exist in different prisons with slight variations (adjustments to specific

environments), akin to members of the same street gang banging in different cities. The process of institutionalization into a Supermax prison is not interactional (except with some staff members), but is mostly based on autocommunication in isolation (things like "prisoner's cinema," the light show phenomenon reported by prisoners kept isolated for long time periods of time, or religious conversion and prayer). Isn't it still possible to claim that ADX Florence contains the subculture of "Unit H terrorists?" Possibly, but only because of the prior existence of a certain "terrorist subculture" that has nothing to do with ADX Florence. They are units of a prior subculture; without socialization there is no new social group. This is why the prime breeding grounds for Foucault's bands of delinquents are medium- and other maximum-security prisons, where "horizontal" communication between inmates is usual and the context of prison socializes individuals into a new type of world, one much more vicious than the ones found in minimum-security facilities. But in this case, if minimum-security prisons contain a watered-down version of what is commonly understood as the prisoner subculture, doesn't that mean that this subculture is brought into prison from the "outside?" These questions lead to the debate between two explanations for the prisoner subculture, between the "deprivation model" and the "importation model," and the attempts to synthesize them that followed. The next section looks at these in the course of reviewing the historiography of research into prison life and prisoner subculture, and attempts to see if there are universal aspects of the latter.

3. Historiography of Prison Subculture Research

James B. Jacobs (1979), professor at NYU School of Law and specialist in all things crime, points out two main trends or lines of inquiry into prison life, both of which I will examine and describe in the following.

3.1 Prisonization, the Inmate Code and Argot Roles

The first branch of research into prison life began in 1940, when Donald Clemmer's *The Prison Community* was released. Clemmer spent most of his life working for different penitentiaries, the BOP and then heading the District of Columbia's Department of Corrections. He is considered the first real ethnographer and ethnologist of prison life. His text introduced the concepts of "prisonization," "the inmate code" and "argot roles," concepts that were then further developed by Gresham Sykes, sociologist, criminologist and professor, in 1958's *Society of Captives*. The tradition stemming from these two works was very popular, but eventually stagnated around the 1970s (Jacobs 1979: 2-3).

Prisonization is the way citizens become socialized into prison life. Clemmer defines it as the way "[inmates appropriate] in greater or less degree ... the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary" (in Dobbs & Waid 2004: 1). It's the process in which "inmates are socialized into the subculture" (Tunstall 2011: 2). "Just as we all assimilate to the norms, customs, and laws of our society, inmates must assimilate to the self-contained community of a prison. However, since the values of the prison are discordant with societal values, prisoners must readjust and learn new norms, rules, and expected patterns of behaviour" (Dobbs & Waid 2004: 1). Here we can see that Foucault's "norm" is itself contingent: an individual and behaviour classified as delinquent or marginal on the outside can be a fact of everyday existence on the inside. How does prisonization work its effect on "fish" (first-timers), or even seasoned cons? Prisonization affects everybody, but to what extent is based on certain variables (Dobbs & Waid 2004: 1). First, the institution itself, its form (architecture), security level and "orientation," like whether it's a special institution for drug addicts, and so on (ibid. 1).

Second, social aspects such the length of the sentence, state of mind of the individual, will to work, level of acceptance of role in prison hierarchy and extent of healthy, social relationships on the outside, a support circle (ibid. 1). The least prisonized inmates are those who have some kind of healthy relationship inside, like with other inmates or guards, and who have stable personalities and shorter sentences; the most prisonized inmates are those who are already somewhat "unhinged," with long sentences and unhealthy relationships. Prisonization is a deeply personal process (ibid. 1).

The "folkways, mores, customs, laws, values, patterns of behaviour, norms, rules and general culture" that inmates are prisonized into is called "the inmate code." Tunstall (2011: 2) writes: "A significant aspect of the inmate subculture is the inmate code, an unwritten guideline that expresses the values, attitudes and types of behaviour that more experienced convicts expect and demand from the newer and younger inmates." Socialization is key, the sharing of the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, language, roles and laws of the inmate world. Slowly but surely old values erode and a person becomes prisonized into the inmate code, the dos and (primarily) don'ts of prison life. Sykes and Sheldon L. Messinger (1960) classified five tenets (principles/beliefs) underlying the entire inmate code (from Jacobs 1979: 3): "1) don't interfere with inmate interests; be loyal to your class - the cons, 2) don't lose your head; play it cool and do your own time, 3) don't exploit inmates; be right, 4) don't weaken; be a man, 5) don't be a sucker; be sharp."

What lies at the origin of the inmate code, and the process of being socialized into it? A great debate rages between two models, the "deprivation model" and the "importation model." The former, also known as the "indigenous origin model," explains the development of prison life as being a product of the deprivation of inmates. This is the position held and developed by both Clemmer and Sykes (Tunstall 2011: 3). Clemmer's version states that upon entering prison, a man is reduced from a civilian with his own identity to an anonymous figure, a statistic wearing the same uniform as all others (in Tunstall 2011: 7). Subjected to prison's unceasing discipline, eventually men begin to accept it. "[For Sykes] inmate culture is to be understood as a series of accommodations or adjustments to the degradations of prison life" (Steinberg 2004: 13). Sykes (1958, in Tunstall 2011: 8 and Dobbs & Waid 2004: 2) famously brought out five

"pains of imprisonment" that lead to the creation of the inmate subculture: 1) deprivation of liberty (eating, sleeping, exercising, washing, etc. is controlled), 2) deprivation of goods and services (nothing but the essentials are given), 3) deprivation of heterosexual relationships (a sense of masculine self may be lost), 4) deprivation of autonomy (inmates resemble infants, reliant on others) and 5) deprivation of security (a fear of being (sexually) assaulted). We can look at the criticisms of prisons brought out by Foucault, where prisons were seen as creating delinquents, as well as opportunities for them to band together and create "clubs," based on common hatred of the system. Deprived of all aspects of agency, inmates respond with their own code.

The most obvious aspect of this code is the creation of "argot roles." The social structure of men's prisons is hierarchized, with some positions holding more power and status (Tunstall 2011: 10). These positions are called "argot roles" because researchers have used prison argot (commonly understood as the language of criminals) in naming them. "There are specific social roles which some inmates assume or are forced into. Inmates roles are prison lifestyles or forms of ongoing social accommodation to prison life" (Schmalleger & Smykla 2009: Chapter 10). Many researchers have developed typologies of inmate roles (Tunstall 2011: 10-11). I'll briefly present two. The first comes from Gresham Sykes (1958), each of his 11 "ideal types" in a binary or ternary relationship with another or others, each relationship set corresponding to one of his five deprivations. Based on deprivation (1), Sykes differentiated between "rats" (inmates who would betray other inmates) and "center men" (those who wouldn't); based on (2) there were "gorillas" (who take goods and services by force) and "merchants" (those who barter); for (3) Sykes brought out "wolves" (masculine inmates), "punks" (those forced to perform homosexual acts) and "fags" (who played the role of women); for (4) there were "ball-busters" (who caused trouble for the staff) and "real men" (dignified, well-respected inmates); finally, for deprivation (5), there were "toughs" (violent for the sake of it) and "hipsters" (who uttered threats but never backed them up).

Frank Schmalleger and John Smykla's (2009) typology is slightly modified by Gordon Tunstall (2011: 11-14). The 13 types in this classification are general social roles found in prisons. They include:

1) The "real man," a well-respected inmate who knows the inmate code, does his own time, doesn't interact with prison staff, solves his own problems, and doesn't have much conflict with other inmates.

2) The "mean dude," a feared inmate with high social standing in the prison hierarchy who gets his way through intimidation and the violence which he is quick to use. Other inmates avoid him at all costs, for he is characterized as "scary, cold, cruel and unsympathetic."

3) The "bully," another intimidator who uses verbal threats, but hardly ever gets violent or backs his words up.

4) The "agitator," an inmate who in response to the boredom of prison life stirs up controversy, causes conflicts and makes problems on the prison yard. He pits inmates against other inmates and against staff by riling them up.

5) The "hedonist," an inmate who exploits all the pleasures that exist in prison, however few they may be, including goods and services like drugs and homosexual relations. He wants the easiest jobs and is involved in gambling and illegal trade.

6) The "opportunist," an inmate who takes advantage of his incarceration, educates himself, learns a skill and improves his life. Other inmates treat him suspiciously because he gets along well with staff and follows the rules of the prison.

7) The "retreatist," an inmate who in response to prison life retreats into himself and becomes depressed, neurotic (phobias, manias, OCD, anxieties) or psychotic (catatonia, schizophrenia, delusions, hallucinations, word salad). He may attempt suicide.

8) The "convict," an inmate who knows prison life inside out. Prison is the home he is most comfortable in. He is well respected for either his long stays in, or his many trips to, prison.

9) The "religious inmate," a God-fearing inmate who either converted or re-found his religion in prison. He preaches, creates religious associations, gets along well with religious staff and tries to convert or proselytize others. Other inmates and staff view him suspiciously, suspecting he is using religion to manipulate prison rules.

10) The "legalist," the prison house lawyer or legal beagle, who fights cases, sends out writs and works towards early release for himself and other inmates, for which he gets recompensed accordingly.

11) The "radical," an inmate who blames his incarceration, lack of skills and lack of education on the system, on society and criminal justice itself. He claims he is a political prisoner, a slave.

12) The "gangbanger," a member of a prison gang dependent on it for protection, goods and services.

13) The "punk," a weak, young, and small inmate who can't fight off stronger, more imposing men. He is forced into sexual relations and sometimes engages in a mutualistic relationship where he exchanges sex for protection. Punks are often bought and sold.

Argot roles, or the idea of a social structure unique to prisons and caused by conditions of imprisonment, are the basis of the deprivation model. The Sykesian understanding of the inmate code and argot roles has been described as "structural-functional" (Irwin & Cressey 1962: 142).

Another theory that can be viewed as similar to the deprivation model is sociologist Erving Goffman's concept of "total institutions" (1957). Total institutions can be understood in the same way as Foucault's omni-disciplinary or completely austere panopticism. Goffman's theory is very similar to Clemmer and Sykes' understandings, where the process of "mortification" mentioned in the introduction is what creates the prisoner subculture. Mortification is the humiliation, debasement, shame and degradation a person feels upon entering the total institution of prison, where all agency is lost. A man is stripped of all he was, all he is. He is ashamed, grinded down to nothing. He is totally enclosed, sequestered and quarantined. This is similar to Foucault's comparison of lepers to plague victims (1975: 195-210). Lepers were banished from society, sent off to colonies residing on various islands. Their influence was severed from society, which remained "pure." On the other hand, the plan for plague-stricken towns was to shut them down. People were told to stay in their houses; everyday an inspector of the neighbourhood would make the rounds at specific times and check up on the sick; he

would then report to a higher power, like the mayor. Leaving the house was punishable by death; all movement and food rationing was controlled, monitored. Like the prison, the plague-stricken town was an ideal form of discipline. Prisons make lepers (the sick or deviant) into plague victims (subjects of absolute power). Goffman's nuance of prisonization lies in positing what the "plague victims" must feel, cooped up and stripped of all autonomy. This feeling is that of mortification. The inmate is constrained, stigmatized and made to feel inferior. He questions his existence. Prisons are just one type of total institution, old folks homes and asylums being other examples. In the prison setting, inmates react to mortification in a set number of ways, ranging from total appropriation of prison rules to total intransigence (see Steinberg 2004: 13-15 for the application of Goffman to the Number Gangs, which I will return to later as well).

The importation model (or hypothesis) grew out of criticism of the deprivation model. The former's roots lie in John Irwin and Donald Cressey's 1962 article "Thieves, Convicts and the Inmate Culture" (Jacobs 1979: 3). Jacobs (1979: 3) mentions: "their argument… [was] that prisoner subculture is rooted in criminal and conventional subcultures outside the prison." The model posits that the inmate subculture can be understood as behaviour originating from crime-ridden neighbourhoods, streets and criminal family members or groups that is brought into prison by inmates, and that the prison code is simply a continuation of criminality on the outside (Tunstall 2011: 8). From Dobbs and Waid (2004: 2): "… [the claim is that] the inmate culture was derived not from within the prison but from offender characteristics and experiences prior to incarceration; hence, these were the key components of the dynamic relationships developed within the walls of the prison… the importation model departs from the [deprivation model] in that it does not characterize the prison as a closed social system organized around common values… it is thought that the prison is composed of multiple subcultures that rival each other with respect to values and norms… [which] are derived from subcultures developed on the outside that are imported into the prison, as well as social-demographic characteristics and criminal career variables, such as time served in institutions and offense record. Therefore, instead of viewing the inmate as solely influenced by common processes, the importation model proposes that the inmate culture is comprised of conflicting groups with origins that exist outside institutional walls."

Irwin and Cressey (1962: 145-148) describe three different groups relating to prison. The first they call the "thief" subculture. Basically, all career criminals (experienced/sophisticated/professional crooks) have some sort of underlying understanding of "rightness" or "solidness" pertaining to their field. These are understood as core values, such as always keeping your cool or never talking to the cops. In his lifetime, a thief is bound to end up in prison, likely more than once; the idea is that, even though a perfect "thief" is an ideal construction, most members pay lip service to people who are seen to be good followers of this criminal code. Therefore, upon entering prison, the criminal values possessed by "thieves" are already in existence, meaning they are not produced by diverse deprivations. Cressey and Irwin do allow for the influence of the prison context in positing the "convict" subculture, based on competition for limited resources inside "environments of incarceration," but maintain that even though it flourishes in prison settings its origin is in dispositions of those who are likely to be criminals, the " 'hard core' lower class," similar to Foucault's delinquents or Gelder's deviants. On the outside, "thief" and "convict" subcultures might never cross paths. The third group Cressey and Irwin posit is not a subculture *per se*, but the set of one-time offenders, from any background, who find themselves in prison and who carry the values of their lived experience. The "importation model" argues that there is no prison subculture that comes into existence due to institutional deprivations, but that it is a heterogeneous field of different subcultures coming from outside and intersecting inside of the prison, a veritable den of thieves.

Recent theorists see both models as valid and attempt to synthesize them. This is called the "integration model." It doesn't focus solely on the "pains of imprisonment," but also factors in the backgrounds of inmates while still acknowledging the role the context of prison plays. The integration model allows for more sophisticated research into prison life by studying the reciprocal effects of the models on each other (Dobbs & Waid 2004: 3). Again, prisonization is the socialization of individuals into the prison world. This world (subculture) definitely has its own code with its own unique roles based on power relations (dominant-submissive, strong-weak). The process of socialization into this world and a particular role in it is highly personal, based not only on psychological and physical strength, but also on the institution itself (its orientation, security level,

characteristics of staff and inmates, and so on). The existence of the prison world comes from reactions to deprivations and humiliations (rape is taking back sex and power; stealing goods shows strength and autonomy), but also on the disposition of the criminals themselves, imported into the prison from various worlds on the outside. We saw that minimum-security prisons are lax, "watered-down." Dobbs and Waid (2004: 1) also mentioned two aspects of prisonization: one into the institution itself, and the other into the inmate subculture. Upper class businessmen inhabiting low security prisons are prisonized both socially and institutionally, but even though there are some institutional rules they must follow, their "inmate code" may not be much different from polite interaction in the outside world (what they are used to). This seems to validate the integration model; both the demeanours (the social tendencies) as well as the deprivations (the institutional losses) of the inmates create a unique world. As we have also seen, the ADX Florence facility cannot be said to contain a prisoner subculture unique to it because of lack of socialization, which is interpersonal. Yet, it's obvious that institutional prisonization (getting used to your material cell and prison rules) occurs. On the one hand, various criminals (like hardcore terrorists) carry their subcultural values into the prison, and on the other hand, the panopticism of ADX Florence "prisonizes" these individuals into its institutional order. The latter may not create a subculture, but it is still prisonization, if socialization is changed and understood as autocommunication, an I-I communication scheme where the sender and the receiver of the messages are the same person, only shifted in time and context (as opposed to separate senders and receivers separated in space); like Buddhist monks reading the peaceful rhythm of their surroundings, the inmate facing the weight of isolation (as in the monasticism of the Pennsylvanian system) autocommunicates and has a religious conversion, or sees some sort of light show, or has strange dreams and existential angst (on autocommunication, see Lotman 2010: 127-148). The separation of prisonization into institutional and social versions may be the key in validating the integration model.

But we are not out of the woods yet; the next section will look at the second wave of studies into prison subculture, a path that was blazed by Irwin and Cressey's move away from studying "prisonization," "the inmate code" and "argot roles."

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3.2 Race Relations in Prison

When Cressey and Irwin started taking into account the role that the backgrounds of inmates play, they paved the way for a new type of research into prison life (Jacobs 1979: 3). Jacobs (ibid. 1) criticizes the old guard for ignoring perhaps the most important aspect of prison life: racial segregation, discrimination and polarization. Basically, the main organizational feature of prison life is racial. Clemmer and Sykes, for instance, hardly ever mentioned race, and even though Cressey and Irwin also didn't mention race explicitly in 1962, the importation model started the research into social factors outside of prison, eventually leading other theorists (including Irwin himself) to explore the importance of race in prison (Jacobs 1979: 2-4). Jacobs (ibid. 1) writes: "Blacks, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and members of other racial minorities now constitute the majority of American prisoners. Behind the walls, white, black and Spanish-speaking inmates exist in separate conflict-ridden social worlds." Jacobs is flabbergasted at the "color-blind approach" of various researchers who ignored the most salient aspects of prison life.

In an American context, the history of race relations in prison can be traced back to the history of segregation of white and black prisoners. After the Civil War many plantation-like prison farms were constructed (like the (in)famous Angola) in Southern states, and during the Great Depression many industrial prisons resembling factories were built in Northern states (Andrus & Richard 2004: 1-2). Traditionally, in mixed-race prisons like these, work assignments, sleeping arrangements and extracurricular activities (like sports teams) were all divided into racially homogeneous groups; many prisons were also filled with only one race (Jacobs 1979: 4-5). Most warders were white and from rural areas, and the values of white males would therefore dominate; though likely that most weren't "vulgarly racist," it is also likely that blacks were seen as a "lower social caste" (ibid. 5-6). The beginning of the civil rights movement on the outside eventually seeped into American prisons in the form of the Black Muslim movement, around 1950; active proselytization of black inmates into a group which preached black power, superiority and nationalism followed (ibid. 6-7). The Black Muslim movement was a set of "ideological and organizational tools" used to challenge white hegemony (ibid. 7).

Donald Clemmer was head of the D.C. Department of Corrections, and he, along with many others throughout the 50's, 60's and 70's, reported the disturbances made by Black Muslim prisoners: they were highly uncooperative and flaunted institutional rules by congregating and praying constantly (ibid. 7-9). Attempts to crush them failed; they had extremely high group solidarity and preached for equality of race and religion. Figures associated with the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers and the Black Guerrilla Family, such as Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver and George Jackson, were directly influenced by Black Muslims in prison (Jacobs 1979: 8). The prison institution was understood as a continuation of black repression by white society (ibid. 8).

The black nationalism of the Muslims drastically changed the organization of prison social structure. Blacks were empowered and no longer accepted a subservient position. If one of Sykes' tenets of the inmate code was "do your own time," the creation of politicized groups of minorities did away with this. Time could be served as part of an organization with communal interests (all Jacobs 1979: 8-9). "Thus, the Muslims contributed to the balkanization of prisoner society, a salient characteristic of prisoner subculture ever since" (ibid. 8-9). The Muslims also won various federal court cases pertaining to religious freedoms, such as the right to religious diets and instructors (ibid. 9). All of this contributed to an ever-growing tension between white and black prisoners, which by 1970 had become the obvious feature of prison life (ibid. 9-10). Militancy and ethnocentrism also blossomed for Mexicans in prisons, especially in California, and for Native Americans in Northern states (Jacobs 1979: 8-11); racial-ethnic ideologies supplanted criminal ones (Irwin 1970, in Jacobs 1979: 10). There was an asymmetry between the mainly white prison guards and the majority-minority prison world, which only furthered interracial tensions (Jacobs 1979: 10-11). Racial-ethnic self-segregation became the first rule of prison organization (no sitting, talking, sharing or even looking at other races, punishable in extreme cases by death), with each racial group vying for supremacy (ibid. 11-13). This basic organizational structure remains unchanged to this day. This is the most obvious in California, which I will get to in the next section. Most violence was linked to interracial conflict. My understanding is that this is the time Mexicans, whites and blacks began to organize themselves around totems, expressed in ideologies, language use and tattoos. The prison context became heavily polarized around

racial lines. The following is all from Jacobs (1979: 13-19), when he notes that around this time in the history of prison life, white prisoners became highly prone to exploitation. Jacobs himself spent time researching Stateville Penitentiary in Chicago, where three large black groups vied for dominance, where Latino inmates were protected by members of the street gang the Latin Kings, where a very small Mafia clique kept to themselves, and where whites failed to band together and were in a very precarious predicament. Intraracial relationships dominate and further divide the gulf between different races, but intraracial hostilities occur on a different level, one based on power relations, one that is secondary to interracial warfare. Because of their high numbers when banded together, blacks in many prisons were the most influential group. Their norms included defending fellow brothers, not forcing sex on blacks and the acceptability of exploiting whites. But even in prisons where blacks were the minority of the inmate population, they still held dominance. Jacobs explains this by referring to concepts of "blackness" and "whiteness," the former being an acceptable form of showing group solidarity and having a real existence in the US, with the latter usually characterized as "extremist" and unacceptable, for historical reasons. Whiteness has no ideological or cultural significance. In prison, minorities already have group solidarity drilled into them, while the norms of white inmates are along the lines of "every man for himself" and "trust no one." Jacobs illustrates this by showing that white-on-black sexual assault behind bars is non-existent, while "punks" are usually white. The latter aren't able to organize. The only white groups able to form and fight back are those who already had some sort of solidarity on the outside, such as mafiosos or the "okies" and "bikers" who are reputed to be the founders of the Aryan Brotherhood. This is another check in the importation model's column.

What is the significance of studying race relations in prison? First, does it invalidate the concepts of "the inmate code" and structural-functional "argot roles"? Jacobs (1979: 20) argues that, if an inmate code did exist, it likely wasn't adhered to in the same way by separate races, and that some sort of inmate solidarity against prison guards was unlikely in the face of racial division; also, the tenet of "do your own time" was not accepted by the political Muslims. Jacobs (ibid. 20-21) also notes that argot roles as such are prone to the same criticism. Prisoners can be looked at as one set, but it's important to note that often this set is fragmented, containing inmate cultures that might be very similar, but not

equal (ibid. 21). The two ways in which prison subculture can be studied, either abstractly/holistically/inclusively or divisively/racially/in terms of conflict, are dependent on the concrete case, on which approach is more applicable (ibid. 21). In Jacobs view the next generation of prison subculture research should focus on the racial aspects of prison, on how racial conflicts are controlled, on racial alliances, on the relation of the society outside of prison to life inside, on the influence of the specific region (North/South/East/West), and so on: "The view of the prison as a primitive society, governed by its own norms and inhabited by its own distinctive social types, was always somewhat exaggerated. Racial divisions are not the only cleavages that exist within the prisoner subculture, but in many contemporary prisons racial politics set the background against which all prisoner activities are played out. Taking race relations into account will help correct the overemphasis on the uniqueness of prisons and will lead to a fuller understanding of the prison's role as an institution of social control. No prison study of any kind can afford to overlook the fact that minorities are overrepresented in the prisoner population by a factor of five, and that prison, ironically, may be the one institution in American society which blacks 'control' " (Jacobs 1979: 24). This adds further complexity to the understanding of prison life. Prisonization and the accompanying experiences of prison life are based on the race of the individual coming to prison. Prisonization and its nuances are still valid understandings, they must simply take this extra factor into account. The mortification of a black inmate might be intensified by the fact white guards are watching him, for instance. The inmate code as a holistic guideline needs to be reformulated as well; prison needs to be seen as containing various inmate codes which may be different from each other (like black solidarity versus white individuality). Argot roles must face the same criticism; the dominant side of the various structural-functional pairings seems to correspond to certain races more than others. Or maybe the structural approach can only be applied intraracially (if at all). The race relations approach to the study of prison subculture also gives more credence to the integration model, your skin colour being something obviously acquired from outside. As different races are thrown together, they organize based on outside factors and go into relationships with other racial groups on the inside.

This section is obviously very USA-centric, but a race relations approach wasn't

applicable in (pre-)Apartheid South Africa; the organizational structure of South African prisons will come to light in the next sections, focusing on the prison gangs of California and South Africa and explaining them, along with prison life, using Lévi-Straussian "totemism" and *bricolage*."

4. Overview of Some Prison Gangs

This section gives a historical overview of the gangs to be analyzed later. These gangs were chosen because of the level of documentation surrounding them, because of their notoriety.

4.1 Californian Prison Gangs

As we have seen, racial divisions became dominant in prisons in the 1950s. This has drastic implications in the context of the Californian prison scene, and lead to the birth of four notorious prison gangs. I will look at each of these in turn.

The Mexican Mafia (abbreviated MM) was born around 1957 in the Deuel Vocational Institution. Luis "Huero Buff" Flores was a member of a street gang serving time for murder. At the time, most Mexican street gangs were at war with each other over turf; when their leaders eventually found themselves in prisons there was bitterness and violence. Huero Buff's plan was to create a prison gang with the goal of controlling the prison system, one that united various warring street gangs, "buried the hatchet" and created a united front. He accomplished this through race-based rhetoric (the preaching of racial-ethnic unity), but mostly through the promise of large monetary gain. Their name comes from the Italian Mafia, which was the largest organized crime syndicate in the US at that point. The MM's primary symbol became the Black Hand (*la Mano Negra*), taken from the Italians' (in)famous use of the symbol in early 20th century extortion letters. After the gangs founding, Huero Buff stepped back. Because the prison gang was composed of leaders of various street gangs, there was no hierarchy. Every street gang leader was a member, known as a *Carnale* (brother) who, in being accepted into and following the MM's code of conduct, had autonomy over his own street group and had equal standing with other *Carnales* in the prison gang. The MM is quite unique in this sense. As time passed, members wanted to reject the notion that they were copycats of the Italian mob, so they decided on a second name, one with a distinct Hispanic flavour: *la eMe* (Spanish for the letter "M"). In an attempt to crush the MM, members were sent

to San Quentin State Prison, in hopes older inmates would stop them. Instead, two MM members found the two biggest guys on the prison yard and murdered them. From that point on, the MM spread and became the most powerful prison gang in California, if not the entire Southwest US. In 1967, there were 50 *Carnales* (made members) in the California prison system, the worst of the worst, the most vicious and violent of all inmates, recruited especially for their brutality. Small numbers didn't matter if you were intimidating, if you were known as the toughest warriors in the entire system. In 1968, at the age of 39, Yugoslavian Joe "Pegleg" Morgan became a *Carnale*, in one of the most interesting and extremely rare cases of interracial gang acceptance. He was accepted because of his contacts in Mexican drug cartels and for his reputation (youngest inmate ever in San Quentin, 17 years old for murder). Over the years the group became a multimillion-dollar crime organization, dominating the prison drug trade, as well as other criminal avenues. This involves taxing profit made by almost all Mexican (even all Hispanic) street gangs in Los Angeles. This culminated in 1993 when paroled MM members told hundreds of LA street gangs that a portion of all drug sales is to be kicked back to MM prison gang members. The reasoning was that, as Cressey and Irwin pointed out with their "thief" and "convict" subcultures, a gangster is likely to be incarcerated at least once in his lifetime. This is inevitable. The MM runs prisons. If you refuse to pay, retaliation will hit at one point or another. This is how a core of about 200 "Godfathers" behind bars (usually for life) control (tens of) thousands of gangbangers on the streets. Following this meeting, many street gangs added the number "13" to either their name or to their graffiti, *la eMe* being the 13th letter of the alphabet. The MM also laid down the law of no killing innocent women and children (I emphasize the word "innocent" and the subjectivity of its application). The Godfathers behind bars earn enough money to send their children through college and to support their families for decades (all from History Channel's Gangland: The Mexican Mafia 2007, featuring interviews with gang specialist Richard Valdemar, detective Christopher Brandon, author and MM specialist Tony Rafael, and ex-member Ramon "Mundo" Mendoza).

The Aryan Brotherhood, or the AB, formed around 1964 in San Quentin and Folsom State Prisons. Compared to the MM, the AB's origin is not so clear-cut. Jacobs mentioned groups of bikers and okies (Oklahomans who had travelled to California in

search of work) as being the founders, and this is generally considered to be accurate. In response to the newly politicized minority prison gangs and the proliferation of gang warfare, many different white groups formed. Some had a neo-Nazi ideology, some were Peckerwoods. Many of these white groups decided to band together and create the "Diamond Tooth Gang" (because of the glinting glass they wore in their teeth), eventually deciding on the AB moniker. By 1975 they were present in most California State Prisons. Due to the white "Pegleg" Morgan, the AB had become allies with the MM, a partnership lasting to this day. Like the MM, every member had an equal vote in gang business, such as accepting a new member. The same method of sending members to other prisons with the goal of squashing them followed the exact same pattern: the murder of an inmate on the day of arrival to show power, and the consequential growth of the prison gang. 1975 was also the year Michael Thompson entered the prison system as an enormous but unaffiliated "fish," not knowing what to expect. In Folsom two black inmates challenged him to a fight on the yard, where he managed to shank both of them. He was almost immediately invited into the AB. Thompson, Barry "the Baron" Mills, Tyler "the Hulk/Super Honkey" Bingham and Clifford Smith were the most notorious leaders or made members at this time. Like the MM, only the toughest were initiated into the actual gang, but a list of associates kept swelling. In Illinois, the murder of two prison guards by two AB members in the same day lead to the creation and proliferation of Supermax prisons (like ADX Florence), in 1983. Following the ascension of other criminal organizations, such as the Hells Angels and the MM, the AB aimed to become a moneymaking enterprise, and beginning in the mid-80s they successfully entered into the drug trade. Following the MM, the AB changed its structure, creating councils of 12 members who oversaw the group's activities in the Federal and State Prison systems. Each council was itself monitored by a three-man commission. Smith and Thompson were California commissioners, Bingham and Mills the Federal commissioners. Around this time a schism entered the gang, based on a new policy of targeting the families of members who had "snitched." Therefore, punishment was vicarious and affected the innocent. It was at this point Thompson and others decided to leave the gang and become informants, revealing secrets ranging from communication systems (like the use of the Baconian cipher) to unsolved murders. This was the beginning of the end for the AB, and

even though they remain active, most of their power has been taken away, especially due to a 2002 RICO case (see National Geographic Explorer: The Aryan Brotherhood 2007, History Channel's Gangland: Aryan Brotherhood 2007 and Grann 2004 for interviews with Valdemar, Thompson, ex-members Bob Overton, John Greschner and Casper Cröwell, as well as various other law enforcement officials and district attorneys).

La Nuestra Familia (Spanish for "Our Family," abbreviated NF) is another Californian Latino prison gang, which was developed in response to the MM. Other than moneymaking, the MM developed to unite Mexicans in the Californian prison system, to defend them from blacks and whites. Eventually, however, the oppressed became the oppressor. The MM was composed of *Sureños*, or Southerners, Mexicans from the southern part of California, mainly LA. They saw *Norteños*, or Northerners, as an inferior class, mainly because they were farmers (which became a pejorative term). Northern Mexicans became victims of abuse for the Southerners in the prison system. Therefore, circa 1968 in Folsom and Soledad State Prisons, the NF originated. They were a band of farmers who grouped together to fight the MM. In the same manner as the MM and the AB, the NF expanded. The North-South dichotomy is still a primary organizational model of Mexican prison gangs in California, at a secondary level following the division between races. Much like the MM exert control over all *Sureño* street gangs, the NF entered into a similar relationship with *Norteño* street gangs. The NF also has their own leadership structure, where prison-based *Carnales*, known as "generals," issued orders to (possibly street-based) "captains," who issued orders to "lieutenants," who issued orders to the rank-and-file *Norteños*, the regiment. Any communication outside of this chain-of-command was strictly forbidden. In the mid-80s they followed the same trajectory towards becoming a large for-profit organization, controlling street- and prison-based narcotics sales. They are still at war with the MM, and by extension are on hostile terms with the AB. In the early 2000s the NF was hit hard by RICO charges, which caused a leadership vacuum and lead to much infighting. Still, they are alive and kicking and powerful (all Kurt Sutter's Outlaw Empires: *Nuestra Familia* 2012, including interviews with law enforcement and ex-members including Johnny Martinez and Angel Botello).

The **Black Guerrilla Family** (BGF for short) grew out of the Black Muslim revolutions touched on earlier. W.L. Nolen and George Jackson founded the gang in 1966

at San Quentin State Prison. They are sometimes called 2-7-6, because these numbers correspond with the letters "B," "G" and "F." They were part of a broader Black Nationalist movement, with members having connections to various other black or radical left organizations, such as the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, the Symbionese Liberation Army and Weather Underground. Jackson himself was known for his role as a Soledad Brother and as part of the San Quentin six (a situation which ended with his death). They were said to be possibly the most political out of all the Californian prison gangs, with an ideology based around Marxism and Maoism and therefore a focus on the revolutionary power of the suppressed black people, with a striving towards embodying new social ideals (vanguardism), but the diverse members of the group fragmented the idea of a single uniform movement. Their original goal was to empower blacks and overthrow the US government. They have been described as "paramilitary" in their structure, with a "supreme leader" commanding a "general" commanding a "captain" commanding a "lieutenant" commanding common soldiers. They are now a force in prisons nationwide, controlling the drug trade (with no real political ambitions). They are ferocious rivals of the AB and (to a lesser extent) the MM, and have somewhat of a truce with the NF (see Robert Walker's Gangs or Us page on the BGF, Minn Yee's 1973 work on George Jackson, and the aforementioned documentaries which give tidbits of information on them).

These four groups were dominant in the California prison system for decades, and their interrelations were the backdrop of most of the violence that occurred in Californian prisons. These relations can be summed using a Greimasian square, where the diagonal arrows are in a relation of "contradiction" (MM-NF and BGF-AB), the block horizontal lines in a relation of "contrariety" (MM-BGF and AB-NF) and the dotted vertical lines in a relation of "complementarity" (MM-AB and BGF-NF):
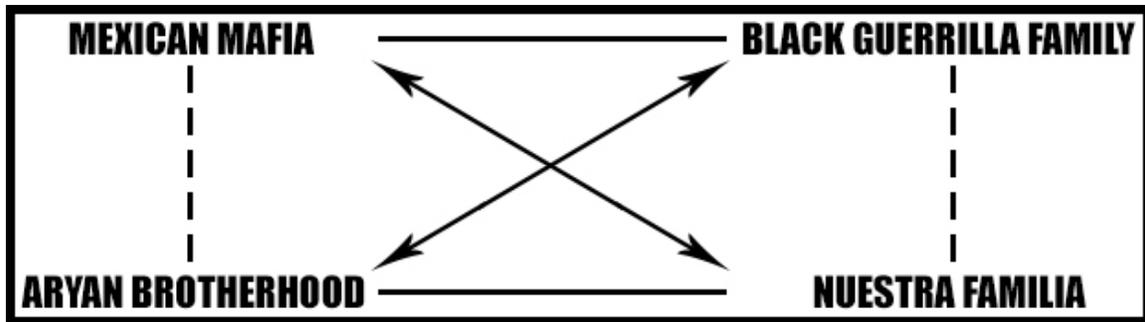
So in the shifting context of prison and of fluid prisoner allegiances, this construction can be seen as a general template for understanding prison gang relations in the recent history of California. The next section looks at the prison gangs of South Africa.

4.2 The Number Gangs

Jonny Steinberg is a South African author who documented the history of South African prison gangs, called the "Number Gangs" or simply the "Numbers," which are all based on one figure, that of Nongoloza Mathebula, a Zulu bandit of late 19th and early 20th century Johannesburg. Nongoloza's story has been part of an oral tradition passed down to our modern day, a century old narrative that still dictates the structure of the South African 26s, 27s and 28s (which together form the Numbers) (all Steinberg 2004: 1). Steinberg (ibid. 4-5) distinguishes between the historical and the mythical Nongoloza. The historical version (born Mzuzephi Mathebula) was a feared bandit, a leader of a gang called the Ninevites (based on the Biblical city of Nineveh who rebelled against God) because Nongoloza imbued his gang with an anti-colonial, anti-governmental ideology (Steinberg 2004: 4). His gang was made up of young lumpenproletariat, marginalized delinquents who refused to work for white mine owners (ibid. 4). The Transvaal Republic (also known as the South African Republic), an independent Boer-ruled country that existed in the 19th century, influenced the paramilitary structure of Nongoloza's gang, a strictly regimented group of bandits with imaginary uniforms who robbed everybody, black or white, from caves on the outskirts of Johannesburg and who gained control of the inmate populations in aforementioned makeshift mine-compound prisons (Steinberg

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2004: 4). In his heyday, around 1900, he was said to control an abandoned mine full of beautiful white women, shops, a Scottish bookkeeper and abundant wealth; he was rumored to be unkillable by the bullets of white men, and to possess magic; he was viewed with fear, but also with awe, in folk culture (ibid. 4). Around 1912, after his capture, he told his story to prison officials. By then, however, the Ninevites had a hold in every prison in the country. Nongoloza became mythologized over time, part of a grand sacred narrative that still dictates the structure of the Numbers to this day (all Steinberg 2004: 4).

Steinberg (2004: 5-11) received the story of the mythical Nongoloza from about 30 Numbers Gang members, who disagreed on certain aspects of it, depending on which Number they belong to specifically. He also notes oral narratives are inherently inconsistent and prone to change. I present the story in almost its entirety (with some minor cuts), for I feel the narrative is too fascinating and important to summarize. Here it is, as compiled and written by Steinberg:

"The story begins in an African village somewhere in South Africa, on the brink of industrialization. The 28s say it is a Zulu village. The 27s don't specify where it is, but they insist the village is not Zulu, anything but Zulu. There is an elderly man: the 28s call him Ngulugut, the 27s call him Pomabasa, or Po. He is a wise man and a seer, and he embodies the interests of all black people. During Po's autumnal years, the young men of his village begin leaving their *kraals* to look for work in the gold mines of the new city that the whites have built. Oddly, time and place have changed. The year is 1812, 74 years before gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand. And the place of the gold mines is Delagoa Bay, on the northern-most reach of the eastern coastline, not Johannesburg. The young men leave their *kraals* for the gold mines, but they never return. And so the seer, wondering what has happened to the bearers of his village's future, journeys to the mines himself. He spends time in the single-sex mine compounds where the young black men stay, and he soon discovers why they do not return. The work beneath the ground is not fit for brutes; the young men are dying as they dig up the white men's gold.

So Po flees Delagoa Bay and retreats to a cave somewhere on the outskirts of the town of Pietermaritzburg and gives thought about what to do. His cave is… a place of solitude and contemplation. He spends the first weeks in his retreat inventing a secret language, for he knows that if the young men are to be saved, the whites must not

understand the talk between the men who are to become his followers. Po's cave is a short distance from a perch. Sitting at the perch one day, he looks out over the roads that lead from the hinterland to the mining town. One morning he sees a cloud of dust on the road that comes from Zululand. He descends from his lair, goes out onto the road, and finds a young man in the cloud of dust. He asks the stranger his name.

"Nongoloza," the young Zulu replies. Po asks him where he is going.

"To the mines," Nongoloza answers, "to look for work." The old man shakes his head.

"I have been to the mines," he advises, "and I have seen what happens there. The work will kill you in the years to come." Nongoloza asks the wise man what he should do instead.

"The gold of the white man is good," Po replies. "You must take it, but not from the ground. You must rob it from the white man himself." Po takes Nongoloza up into his cave and the following morning, sitting at his perch, he sees another cloud of dust, this one on the road from Pondoland. The events of the previous day are repeated, but this time the name of the youngster on the road is Kilikijan and he is a Pondo. Po entices him up to his cave, and so things go on until Po has gathered 15 young migrants around him. He instructs them in the secret language he has invented, he tells them of the pay wagons that roll into the mine compounds on Fridays and he teaches them the art of highway robbery. The young bandits are successful at stealing wages but, holed out as they are in their cave, they need other provisions as well, like food and clothes. So Po directs them to attack the colonial army camps that mark the perimeter of the mining town, and this they do. As with the pay wagons, they have success. In addition to pillaging food and supplies, they also bring back with them the accoutrements of warfare: .303 rifles, bayonets, army uniforms and the rank structure of the colonial military.

By now, Po's men are wanted and hunted. The whites advertise rewards for their capture. They must change their ways to avoid detection. So they become nomads, moving from cave to warren, using the hills outside the mining town as their camouflage. They also divide themselves into two groups. Kilikijan takes seven men and robs by day. Nongoloza takes six men and robs by night. For a long time, working in this way, they terrorise the whites, taking their gold and hounding their army. Since the beginning, Po has been instructing Nongoloza and Kilikijan to keep a diary. There is a large rock in the vicinity of one of the caves to which the men periodically retreat. He has told them to

inscribe their activities as bandits onto the rock, to record how they go about their business and live their lives. This they have done. The rock is covered with the record of their short history as outlaws.

Po now brings Nongoloza and Kilikijan together and instructs them to go to a white farmer called Rabie. He tells them that they must buy a bull that grazes on Rabie's farm, and he is very specific in his instruction: there is a particular bull the men must bring back — its name is Rooiland. The two bandits arrive at Rabie's front door and offer to pay for Rooiland. The white man is suspicious. He has heard of the bandits who are roving the outskirts of town. He refuses to sell his bull and instructs the men to leave his property. But they will not go until they have carried out Po's order. So they kill the farmer with the bayonets they have plundered from the white army. They find Rooiland in Rabie's fields and herd him back to the cave where Po is waiting. The 15 bandits throw a tremendous feast as they slaughter Rooiland. Po presides over the slaughter. He tells the men to preserve particular parts of the beast: the hooves, the legs, the eyes, the ears, the tail and, Po says, more important than anything else: the bull's hide. Once the animal has been dismembered, Po calls Nongoloza and Kilikijan to his side.

[Later] Po instructs the two men to take the hide, drape it over the rock on which the band's diary is inscribed, and press it against the rock, until the diaries are imprinted on the animal's skin. The words of the diary, now duplicated — one on the rock, the other on the hide — are to become the law of the gang. Whenever there is a dispute about what bandits ought to do, Po says, consult the hide or the rock, because they are a record of how things were done at the beginning, and how things ought to be done in the future. Nongoloza rolls up the hide and takes it with him. Kilikijan is left with the rock.

As you might expect, this business of the duplication of the record of the law was soon to cause trouble. The old rock on which the diaries were written was large and cumbersome. Kilikijan's outlaw band was always on the move, and had to take the wretched thing wherever they went. One day, high up in the hills, one of the rock's carriers stumbled and it rolled down the side of a valley. Somewhere on the slopes, the boulder crashed into a tree and broke in half. The part of the rock that hit the tree imprinted its content on the bark. The rest rolled down into the Moliva River and floated downstream to be lost forever. Kilikijan made his way down to the tree, peeled off the bark and took it with him. The bandit was now in possession of only half the law. The rest had drowned in the stream. Nongoloza, though, possessed the whole law, for he had Rooiland's hide.

At some point after the rock had been lost, the two bands — Nongoloza's and Kilikijan's — went out pillaging together. I am not sure why. The usual practice was for Kilikijan to work by day, Nongoloza by night. Just as the bandits were about to leave their hideout, Nongoloza announced that he was ill and wanted to rest. He asked that one of Kilikijan's men, a youngster called Magubane, stay behind to tend to him. So 13 went out to plunder and two stayed behind. Kilikijan returned during the course of the afternoon to stumble upon Nongoloza making love to Magubane under a cowhide. Incensed, he raised his sabre and told Nongoloza to get up and fight. Nongoloza demurred. He said it was written in the law that what he and Magubane were doing was permitted. It says on Rooiland's hide, Nongoloza explained, that women are poison and that soldiers must choose wives from the young men in their ranks. This only enraged Kilikijan more, since the bandit had only half the law in his possession. He could never know what was written on the original hide and what Nongoloza added later. Indeed, in years to come, the 27s were to deny that there ever was a hide; according to them it was invented retrospectively by self-interested sodomites. So Kilikijan took a swipe at Nongoloza with his sabre and the two men fought until, it is said, Nongoloza was ankle-deep and Kilikijan knee-deep in blood. Po, who had come down from his lair at the sound of the clashing sabres, appeared on the scene. Horrified that the two bandits had hurt one another, he ordered them to put down their weapons and enquired about their dispute. Being a sage and a seer, the old man did not resolve the disagreement in a simple manner. Instead, he issued the terms of a riddle. He told Kilikijan to go the mine compounds in Delagoa Bay to see if sex between men was practiced there. He refused to be drawn, though, on the significance of the meaning of Kilikijan's findings, whatever they might be. If the gold miners did indeed have sex with one another, what precisely would this mean? He did not say. Po also said something else. Should the two bands of men ever return to his lair, they would find a rock at its entrance. Under the rock they would find an assegai. If the blade of the assegai was rusted, it would mean that Po was dead. Upon entering his cave, they would find his skeleton. Needless to say, that is precisely what came to pass. Neither of the bandits was to see the old man alive again. The adjudicator of the law went to his death without ever pronouncing on the legitimacy of sex between bandits.

Having listened to Po's instructions, Nongoloza and Kilikijan went their separate ways. Kilikijan went to Delagoa Bay to enquire about the sexual practices of the miners. He left Magubane behind; his band was now composed of seven men. Nongoloza

headed to a place called Germiston. He took Magubane with him; his band now had eight men. That is one of the explanations for the numbers 28 and 27. There are others, but this one was repeated to me most often. I am not sure where the "2" in 28 and 27 comes from. Perhaps there were 55 bandits rather than 15. Or perhaps the "2" signifies the two original bandits: Kilikijan and Nongoloza. In any event, the two men were never to talk of their dispute again.

They next met several years later in the cells of Point Prison, Durban. Both had been captured and tried for their crimes; they had been given indeterminate sentences and faced the prospect of spending the rest of their lives in jail. If the two pioneers never again spoke to one another of their dispute, their respective followers talked about it all the time — quietly, and among themselves — for generations, spreading rumours and casting aspersions on the other camp. Both camps agree that Kilikijan did, in the interim, find his way to the mine compounds in Delagoa Bay, and that he discovered that the men there did indeed sleep with one another. The 28s say that this vindicates Nongoloza's statement that the legitimacy of sex between bandits had always been written on the hide. The 27s disagree. Kilikijan's discovery, they argue, only confirmed that sex between men is a foreign practice, one alien to those initiated into bandit life. It arose at the compounds because the work underground was so hard: weak men needed help from stronger men with their picks and shovels, and they gave them sex in exchange. Sex between men is a pollution, a symptom of the unnaturalness of the work white men forced blacks to perform. The dispute is, of course, incapable of resolution. The rock on which bandit law was written has long been eroded by the waters of the Moliva River. And all that remains of Po, the sage, is a mute skeleton… And it was to frame the immediate events that arose in those first weeks when Kilikijan and Nongoloza found themselves together in Point Prison.

There were six inmates in Point Prison. They were *voëls* or birdies, that is to say, members of neither camp, non-gangsters, *franse*, nothings, who sat in a circle and flipped a silver coin. Their leader was a man by the name of Grey. Among the first practices to emerge among the 27s and 28s of the prisons was the confiscation of the possessions of the *franse*. A portion would always be returned, but it was to be the *ndotas*, the Number men, who determined the distribution. When Nongoloza's men demanded from Grey that the six inmates hand over their possessions, coin and all, he refused. Troubled by this disobedience, Nongoloza approached Kilikijan and asked what was up with these recalcitrant men. Kilikijan, who had arrived in prison before

Nongoloza, explained that the flipping of the coin was a form of gambling, that these men were trained in the arts of smuggling and acquiring valuables. During his first days in prison, Kilikijan continued, he had stabbed a troublesome warder. As punishment, he was placed in a tiny dungeon and was fed a spare, saltless diet. The warders' aim was to make him weak. The six gamblers, led by Grey, who was skilled in the art of smuggling and had the cunning to enter into prudent allegiances, had slipped him salt and bread and other nourishment under the crack beneath his door. [Nongoloza was curious and impressed].

27s and 28s offer rival versions of what happened next. According to the 27s, the two men fought over the six gamblers. While the stakes were never openly spoken of, it was quite clear what was going on: Kilikijan wanted to protect Grey and his colleagues from the appetites of the sodomites. Absorbed into the 28s, they would be used, he believed, not just to smuggle, but for sex as well. According to the 28s, there was no such dispute. They say that Nongoloza said to Kilikijan:

 "I give you permission to constitute these men as the third camp of bandits, but on several conditions. First, they will be called the 26s, to show that they will never rise above us. Second, they will be the last camp to form. There will never be a fourth camp in this prison. Every other inmate is a *franse*. And, finally, you will be responsible for their conduct. You will be answerable for them. When they commit a wrong, I will not go to them, I will come to you."

"That is all well and good," Kilikijan replied. "But when you wrong them, I will come to you."

And so the three camps were formed, each with their self-made philosophies of banditry and their collectively assigned roles. The 26s were to accumulate wealth, which was to be distributed among all three camps, and acquired through cunning and trickery, never through violence. The 28s, in turn, were to fight on behalf of all three camps for better conditions for inmates. They would also be permitted to have sex, in their own ritualised manner, among themselves. They were never to touch a 26. As for the 27s, they were the guarantor of gang law; they were to keep the peace between the three camps. They would learn and retain the laws of all three gangs, as well as the laws of the relationships between gangs. And they would right wrongs by exacting revenge: when blood was spilled, they would spill blood in turn. Today, in 2004, that is how South Africa's three major prison gangs understand their origins. In the 26s and the 27s, sex between gang members is formally outlawed and subject to severe and violent

punishment… The 28s, in contrast, are divided into two parallel hierarchies, two lines. There is the gold, or *gazi*, line which is the military line and consists of soldiers who fight the gang's battles. At the apex of the gold line is its first ancestor, Nongoloza. Then there is the silver, or private, line, which is female. At the apex of this line stands its first ancestor, Magubane."

The next section will explain the Numbers Gang's narrative, as well as the basis of the different California prison gangs' organization, using the concept of "totemism."

5. Totemism, *Bricolage* and Illusional Ideology

After applying the concept of "totemism," I will use the concept of "*bricolage*" to explain the prisoner subculture, with the final section looking at the possibility of totemic ideologies functioning as illusions or "masks."

5.1 Prison Gang Totemism

When people hear the word "totemism," they sometimes think of totem poles and of the various indigenous peoples who carve them. Growing up in British Columbia, and visiting the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, this was my case. Thus, totemism is usually grasped at some level as a close relationship between indigenous peoples and some aspect of nature, mainly animals. It seems connected with animism and shamanism. If I was approached randomly and asked to sum up totemism in my own words, I'd respond like this (though more colloquially): totemism is the connection between a group and some aspect of nature, be it a plant or an animal, where the group feels a spiritual bond with that particular object of nature. It's an aspect of their life intertwined with their kinship relations, with their marriage rules (endogamy versus exogamy) and with their social structure (matriarchal versus patriarchal). The totem, the revered spirit-being, may be an apical ancestor, someone the group traces direct lineage from, and may be the base for much of the group's taboos. Basically, I'd explain it as an intensely strong spiritual connection between man and animal.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1991: 16-17) approached the concept of totemism from a structural point of view. For him, totemism began in the opposition of Nature and Culture. In Nature, he distinguished Categories and Particulars, and in Culture, Groups and Persons. This was in order to "…distinguish, in each series, two modes of existence, collective and individual" (Lévi-Strauss 1991: 16). Totemism breaks down into four fundamental relationships: Category-Group, Category-Person, Particular-Person, and Particular-Group (ibid. 17). Each of these relations corresponds to the various forms of totemism anthropologists struggled to classify under one specific concept. Categories can

be species of plants or animals, particulars are single members of that class (a single plant or animal), the group is the entire social body and the person is the individual. So a whole species of animal could be viewed as totems for a whole social group, or a single animal for one individual, and so on through all possible permutations. Lévi-Strauss (1991: 16) wrote: "…take this table as the general object of analysis which, at this level only, can yield necessary connections, the empirical phenomenon considered at the beginning [a specific version of totemism] being only one possible combination among others, the complete system of which must be reconstructed beforehand." He questioned the validity of the concept of "totemism," claiming that it was a construction of researchers. The various forms of what has been called "totemism" don't hint at a uniform system (of totemism), but of general structures of the mind, thinking in oppositions or through differences. That is why there are so many variations (Lévi-Strauss 1991). I chose Lévi-Strauss' works because he provides a critical overview of research into this phenomenon, with valid critiques.

His criticisms aside, for the purpose at hand, the phenomenon of totemism is valid in describing prison gang subculture, for conceptualizing it at a certain level. What do I mean when I say prison gangs are constructed around totems? A social group relating to nature is constrained by the fauna and flora of their particular geographic region. Prison gangs relate not to natural phenomena, but justify and validate present traditions by relating to their racial-ethnic past, to some set of kin. This set is constrained, meaning the chosen groups need to have some characteristics that the prisoners can relate to at present. This is the construction of semantic groups, of totemic paradigms, which then express themselves in various semiotic systems, such as tattoos or rituals. Let me give examples of what could be considered totemic for each of the five prison gangs described.

I'll start with the AB: "The term 'riding for the brand' was an expression of loyalty to a man's employer or the particular outfit he rode for. It was considered a compliment of the highest order in an almost feudal society. If a man did not like a ranch or the way they conducted their affairs he was free to quit, and many did, but if he stayed on he gave loyalty and expected it. A man was rarely judged by his past, only by his actions. Many a man who came west left things behind him he would rather forget, so it

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was not the custom to ask questions. Much was forgiven if a man had courage and integrity and if he did his job. If a man gave less than his best, somebody always had to take up the slack, and he was not admired" (L'Amour 1986: 1). This is the introduction to Louis L'Amour's cowboy story "Riding for the Brand." AB members read this and other cowboy stories by L'Amour, and took from them their most well-known nickname: "the Brand." Michael Thompson explained it as meaning you were now "riding" for the group; Richard Valdemar said the AB were obsessed with the outlaw and gunslinger image (History Channel's Gangland: Aryan Brotherhood 2007). The "Brand" that signified your allegiance to the gang was a tattoo of a shamrock with the number "666" superimposed upon it (with one 6 lying on each leaf of the shamrock) and the letters "AB" surrounding it; this is the "... the true AB tattoo" (Zackasee 2004: 65). Thompson describes the significance of placing the number "666," the number of the Beast, upon a holy symbol belonging to a patron saint. The shamrock symbolized Saint Patrick, who spread Christianity throughout Ireland to the Druids. By placing the Antichrist's number inside of the shamrock, the AB was expressing the fact that their organization was opposed to the teachings of Christianity (Thompson in History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007). The shamrock itself is the most important of all AB tattoos, wearing it and not belonging to the gang being punishable by death (former member Casper Cröwell in National Geographic Explorer: The AB 2007). Other tattoos recorded in this gang include: Nazi swastikas and SS double lightning bolts, the Irish nationalist phrase *Sinn Féin* (meaning "We Ourselves"), the word "Peckerwood" or a woodpecker, falcons and bluebirds, Viking helmets, ships and war instruments, Norse Gods or famous objects of Norse mythology such as Thor's Hammer, plus all sorts of combinations of these (see Zackasee 2004: 56-60 and National Geographic Explorer: The AB 2007). From simply purveying this list, you can see a semantic group composed of Nazis, Irish nationalists, Peckerwoods, Vikings and Norse gods, added to the Antichrist, pagan druids and cowboys, to which you could add the solidary bikers and okies. Even if not consciously or explicitly formulated, all of these entities belong to a shared paradigm: let us call it the "Warrior" paradigm. The set contains members who share characteristics of "whiteness," "toughness" and "fearsomeness." The original prerequisite for joining the AB was Irish blood (National Geographic Explorer: The AB 2007), but this was dropped when the

prison environment couldn't support it. All of these "Warriors" can be viewed as totems or spiritual kin of the AB, including the birds they use to symbolize freedom (bluebirds), Ireland (falcons) or to appropriate what was once an insult (the woodpecker for Peckerwoods).

MM members are reported to speak to each other in the ancient Aztec language of Nahuatl. Detective Christopher Brandon said "…[the MM have] wrapped violent acts in tales of history and culture… [so they can say] we are warriors with culture." The MM has a policy of death for disrespecting *La Raza*, or the Mexican race (all History Channel's Gangland: The MM 2007). Their tattoos include Aztec calendars, gods and warriors, the Black Hand with *la eMe* inside it, *La Raza* in big letters, and their traditional tattoo resembling the Mexican coat of arms, with a golden eagle on top of a prickly pear cactus clutching and biting a snake with the words *EME* and *Mexicana* underneath (see ibid. 2007 and Zackasee 2004: 63-66). Again, intense pride is shown in race and heritage. In fact, going back to the time of the gang's formation, you could say the MM felt some sort of kinship with the Italian mafia they so wanted to imitate. Aztecs, mobsters, true Mexicans, the triumphant eagle, and so on, another "Warrior" paradigm.

The NF is similar in taking pride in Mexican roots, but with the added twist of taking pride in the rural upbringings the MM wanted to put down. Many have the word "Farmer" written in big block letters across their chests (Kurt Sutter's Outlaw Empires: NF 2012). The Civil Rights movement contained within it the *Chicano* movement, which was pride in a unique subcultural group, the Mexican-American. *Chicano* culture, *barrio* life (maybe more for the urban-centred MM), and the creed of *machismo* (Jacobs 1979: 13), an attitude of uncompromising masculinity, form a totemic framework of ideals to strive towards and feel a connection with, for both the MM and the NF.

The BGF, who were even called the Black Vanguard in their early days, obviously draw upon the revolutionary preachings of Black Muslims, Black Panthers, and the Black Power movements of the Civil Rights era. They have been known to call themselves *Jama* or *Weusi Giadi Jama*, Swahili for Family or Black Guerrilla Family (Zackasee 2004: 51). These words are also common tattoos, showing solidarity with the Bantu people. Moreso than tattooing revolutionary figures on themselves, the BGF tattoo the goals they strive for, based on the preaching of their totemic kin. Their classic tattoo

is a carbine longarm crossed with a machete *à la* the two swords of the pirate's Jolly Roger, superimposed over the words BGF; they also use tattoos of a large dragon attacking a prison gun tower and overpowering it (see Zackasee 2004: 54-55). These tattoos represent their militaristic approach and their political vanguardist goals of overthrowing the reigning power structures, influenced by their predecessors in Black (African-American) Nationalist movements, like the Nation of Islam.

Totemism in the Numbers Gangs is most obvious. Each gang traces lineage directly back to the story of Nongoloza, who divided the group into three distinct gangs along judicial and military lines (Steinberg 2004: 1). The Numbers feel kinship with the wise seer Po, with the first "wife" Magubane, with the cunning Grey, and with the fearsome Kilikijan and Nongoloza. Nongoloza's anti-colonial and anti-governmental ideology, his appropriation of the Godless Nineveh, even his copying of the Boer Republic's rank structure, are still the main organizational forces of the 26s, 27s and 28s. The fact that a historical figure has been euhemerized over a span of about 100 years is quite a fascinating phenomenon, as well as the fact that South African prison gangs are so obviously and strictly totemic, basing themselves on the same laws and social structures passed down to them from their newly mythologized leader, even if there is some inner dispute. Steinberg (2004: 11) mentions that in prison, the myth of Nongoloza is almost never told, but that "…it is woven into the very fabric of gang practice," that every meeting or judicial sitting is a set of practices pertaining to the story. Steinberg (ibid. 11) writes: "For instance, in the 28s, Rooiland's carcass is the sacred object around which the structure of the gang is shaped. The emblem of the 28s is a Zulu shield, and the shield's skin is Rooiland's hide. Each substructure of the gang consists of four men and is named, respectively, 'the four points of the ones', 'the four points of the twos' and 'the four points of the threes.' The four points refer to the places in Rooiland's carcass where the legs join the body. The function of every officer in the gang is signified by a part of the bull's anatomy. The magistrate is given the hooves: they are his four stamps — red, green, white and black — with which he marks a member for promotion or punishment. The *gwenza* gets the legs: they are his four pens — also red, green, white and black — with which he notes the record of every member. The *glas*, who communicates the gang's decisions, gets one of the horns: it is to be his bugle, with which he announces the

conclusions to the gang's deliberations. The *draad*, the gang's intelligence officer, is given the eyes, signifying that he sees all that happens… every time a meeting of the 28s is convened, the slaughter of Rooiland is ritually re-enacted. The overcrowded cells in which gang practice unfolds are transmogrified into the wide-open plains of the 19th-century Highveld. The participants of gang practice are transported in space and time; through the metaphors that define their practices, they are Nongoloza, Kilikijan and their 13 followers, the original bandits of early industrial South Africa."

The specifics are not all that important; what to take out of this is the fact that the spirituality of totems is interwoven into the everyday life of *ndotas*. A myth can be defined as something that happens (an event), and then happens again. It is characterized by cyclical time, and its truth-value comes not from its facticity, but from its effectiveness in explaining the world. The fact that the Numbers relive the ritual slaughter of Rooiland at every meeting signifies that they are giving meaning to the predicament they find themselves in. They are attempting to transcend, to make sense of their humanity. Myths go hand-in-hand with rituals; they cannot be understood separately (this understanding of myths comes from Armstrong 2005). The use of totems for all the abovementioned prison gangs conforms to the same principle. Positing yourself and your group as holy warriors crusading against demonic enemies and the injustices of the system gives meaning to a depressing existence. This is the most obvious when looking at the Numbers. The MM has always been more about making money, so this principle is less applicable to them. The Aryans, the NF and the BGF all share the characteristics. For instance, variations on the policy of "blood in and blood out" have been reported for all five of these gangs. "Blood in" means shedding the lifeblood of somebody outside of the gang, murdering them to show your worthiness or manhood. Is this not similar to the psychotic breakdown suffered by the Palaeolithic shaman in his teenage years, when he lives amongst the animals and enters into the spirit-world, descends into the depths of the earth and then climbs up a divine mountain to the gods? Or the initiation ceremony of the hunter forced to leave home, find shelter in the cold, dark world and bring back a large animal? Or the passage into manhood of a boy forced underground to experience nature, then either tattooed or circumcised? (all Armstrong 2005: 9-19). Killing a man for your gang changes you and your whole life. You have now passed over into a closed world

escapable only through death ("blood out"). The "blood in, blood out" policy of prison gangs divides the time of a member's life into two categories: pre- and post-membership. Membership in the gang is final (in theory). After killing a warder, *franse* (Steinberg 2004: 1) or enemy, "making your bones" or "earning your Number" or joining "the Brand," you are profoundly transformed. You have taken part in a sacred initiation ritual, like the shaman, hunter or boy (become man).

Prison gang totemism resembles Lévi-Strauss' Category-Group type, the Category being a totemic paradigm and the Group being the prison gang. This aspect of prison life is obviously related to the sharp contrast between races that is the fundamental organizational base of the prisoner subculture. At the secondary intraracial level, races are then separated according to prison gangs; for instance, the NF and the MM are breakdowns of the Mexican inmate population in Californian prisons. They have similar totemic groups, but the kindred connection to either rural *Norteños* or urban *Sureños* separates the two. The play in difference between mutually exclusive totem-based gangs, as well as the sacrality of various rituals, creates a kind of tribal atmosphere in prisons. This is closely linked to the concept of "taboos." We have seen the bizarre sexual system of the Number Gangs; Richard Valdemar (2011) writes: "In Latino gang culture, eating a banana or wiener by its end… looks like the sexual act of oral sex. This unacceptable behavior in front of sexually supercharged inmates must be punished." The analogy between a banana and a penis goes beyond mere iconicity (likeness), the two objects becoming almost inseparable. Again, this is a type of mythological/magical thinking. AB member Clifford Smith once told a courtroom: "There's a code in every segment of society… Well, we have a different kind of moral and ethical code… It's a lot more primordial" (in Grann 2004: 160). For the MM and the Number Gangs especially, it has been brought out that acknowledging the gang's very existence is punishable by death, as is leaving the gang or revealing its secrets (Steinberg 2004: 1, History Channel's Gangland: The Mexican Mafia 2007). In most American prisons sex offenders and child molesters ("chesters") are kept in separate wings, their offences considered a gross violation of criminal taboos. Prison gangs do have some kind of moral standard they live by, which can include not killing innocents like women and children, or always standing

up for your own race (even if many of these principles along with their applications are contradictory).

Punishment for violation of taboos ranges from beatings (usually with socks full of soap or batteries or padlocks), to gang rape and excommunication, to death. It is always physical force exerted on the body. Beatings are also called "putting in check," and they are done with "love," in order to instruct. Eating a banana incorrectly will get you beaten. A second violation will signify your incorrigible femininity, and group sodomy is the natural punishment, in an almost homeopathic way of thinking ("like cures like"). These acts do not have therapeutic functions though; "punks" are then forced into sexual slavery, branded and stigmatized by "mean dudes" and "bullies," sold by "gangbangers." Any insult to the tribe must be ruthlessly addressed. Beatings as something positive can be seen in certain initiation ceremonies, where seven or eight members of a gang beat on another until the newbie can barely stand (another passage into manhood, another traumatic experience leading to a deep individual change). Ex-NF member Johnny Martinez describes how his initiation beating "…felt good… made me feel accepted, loved" (Kurt Sutter's Outlaw Empires: *Nuestra Familia* 2012, Valdemar 2011, Steinberg 2004: 1).

Valdemar (2011) notes that most *Carnales* or commissioners are alpha dogs with huge egos, sensitive to any insult or what they perceive as "disrespect," which could be anything, including a split second look. Your race must be defended furiously. Valdemar said: "In prison there are only two reasons we look at each other: either we're in love, or we're gonna fight" (History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007). There is power in numbers, power in being physically imposing and power in reputation (many groups, like the AB or MM, only take the most vicious inmates, those with a knack for violence, so the mere possibility of conflict acts as a deterrent).

Martinez and former NF member Angel Botello also spoke about how being a brother meant learning the secret teachings of the gang. The yard was like a school, the University of *la Nuestra Familia*, with its own verbal breakdowns, written essays, critical thinking classes, group discussions and different professors on the yard. "Subjects" included weaponry (making crossbows out of books, making spears), sign language and working on memorization skills. Martinez was taught how to perform a prison-house hit,

and then told to apply his knowledge in a real-world situation. The hit involves three members: the "hitter," the "bomber" and the lookout. The hitter shivs the target, the bomber begins to beat him as a diversion tactic and the hitter either passes the weapon off to a fourth person or ditches it on the prison yard. Martinez passed the course with flying colors, earning himself a spot on the faculty (all Kurt Sutter's Outlaw Empires: *NF* 2012). Gangsters are taught to attack after a basketball game, because blood is pumping and the target will bleed out quicker (Kurt Sutter's Outlaw Empires: *NF* 2012). You can almost imagine a hunter teaching his son the perfect time to attack a wild caribou, and where to strike it. This type of knowledge is obviously systematic, based on logical reasoning and practical goal-orientation. What differentiates the rationalist schooling and prison house apprenticeship is its embeddedness in a totemic, tribal framework. Palaeolithic hunters logically systematized techniques for hunting based on rational reflection, but in order to make sense of the fact they needed to kill beings as much a part of nature as themselves, the pre-hunt, the cutting open of the animal and the subsequent laying to rest of its bones were highly ritualized endeavours (Armstrong 2005: 14). For prison gang members, a murder can be seen as a logical set of steps embedded in the totemic mythology making sense of and justifying their predicament.

Ex-AB member Bob Overton said that following his recruitment members wrote him battle poems, asked him about his life and created warrior manifestos relating to it (History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007). The four California prison gangs accepted only the best of the best, the strongest not just physically, but also mentally. Members are taught "The Art of War"; the AB read Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Nietzsche and cowboy stories (History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007), like the MM, NF and BGF read war, political, philosophical and racial identity books. They are given workout plans; it is said that inmates invented the "burpee," combination pushup and jumping jack exercise, perfect for periods of isolation in cramped spaces. Again, high factors of ritualization are connected to totemic ideals. Ex-AB member Thompson wrote: "Knife fighting, at its best, is like a dance. Under ideal conditions, the objective is to bleed your opponent — cutting hands, wrist, and arms and as the opponent weakens from blood loss, inflicting further damage to the face (eyes) and torso" (Grann 2004: 160). All of the California

prison gangs are reported to have read Gray's Anatomy, knowing exactly where to aim for in a fight, where vitals were. AB members spew quotes like:

"The smell of fresh human blood can be overpowering but killing is like having sex. The first time is not so rewarding, but it gets better and better with practice, especially when one remembers that it's a holy cause." – anonymous, found in an AB manual (in Grann 2004: 160)

"It was like you went to school. You already hate the system, hate the establishment, because you're in jail, you're buried, and you start to think of yourself as this noble warrior — and that's what we called each other, warriors. It was like I was a soldier going out to battle." - Michael Thompson (in Grann 2004: 160)

"You take 20 guys that been in the fire, been on those battlefields, and you can get 1000 guys who are just scrap, just dudes talking the talk but not really walking the walk, and those 20 guys will just decimate 'em." – ex-member John Greschner (in History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007)

"You're taught a warrior serves something greater than himself." - ex-member Casper Cröwell (in History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007)

An Aryan brother is without a care,
He walks where the weak and heartless won't dare,
And if by chance he should stumble and lose control,
His brothers will be there, to help reach his goal,
For a worthy brother, no need is too great,
He need not but ask, fulfillment's his fate.
For an Aryan brother, death holds no fear,
Vengeance will be his, through his brothers still here. – anonymous AB oath (in Grann 2004: 159)

This is the same for all prison gangs. Valdemar (2011) notes the irony in all of this: "Young men who rebel against authority and parental control, who commonly hate school, hate memorizing verses and symbols, hate reading history, hate learning new languages, and hate participating in physical education, enjoy doing all these things for their prison gang leaders." Also (ibid.): "Inmates learn these codes of conduct through extended schooling that takes place during periods of commitment, while serving sentences in juvenile hall (grammar school), youth authority (high school), and state and federal prisons (colleges and universities). This training is augmented by mentoring under gang "*veteranos*" (veterans) and OGs (Original Gangsters) in and out of custody. These systems vary, but most are dictated by the prison gang or threat group that represents the inmate's race."

Tribalism, tattoos, primitive/"primordial" codes, racial-ethnic power blocs, totems, Alpha Males (Top Dogs, Big Man), brotherhood (unity and love), symbolism, instruction and guidance, training, race wars, rituals, initiations, taboos, high levels of sensitivity (to insult), example killings (to show dominance upon entering a new prison or in order to gain acceptance into the gang), mythology and vicious physical punishment; prison gangs are private circles with their own ideologies, codes of conduct and communication systems. Prison life seems to be characterized by these strange, archaic forms of being, by savage subcultures. Steinberg (2004: 1) notes that the 28s are viciously "misogynistic," stripping their "wives" of legal personhood and making them cook, clean, give backrubs, cut toenails and perform sexual acts. Prison life is strictly patriarchal, centered on macho values where being the "receiver" and any other form of open homosexuality is strictly forbidden. Above all, prison life is characterized by its violence, its unceasing brutality. We've come to accept both deprivations (like lack of healthy relationships) and importations (deviants, delinquents or Cressey-Irwinian hardcore proletariat convicts) as underlying the social aspects of prisonization, as causes for the sharply divided world of prison. This preliminary mode of organization is reminiscent of primitive tribalism.

How to better understand brutal prison violence? Tunstall (2011: 16-17) follows sociological research that views violence as a method of adaptation, cultivated in certain

subcultural environments, to problem or conflict situations in life. Instead of reacting with words or by backing down, a certain subcultural sector (usually called "savages," performers of "barbaric" acts) reacts with the learned behaviour of violence. Michael Reisig and Bert Useem (1999, see Tunstall 2011: 17) differentiate between individual and collective violence. Individual violence is due to fear of assault or lack of security, the strain of involuntary living in a dangerously overcrowded environment where you have no social controls: "snitching" is a killable offence, plus how do you really punish someone already locked up? Violence is a last resort, a way to get yourself heard, and understood like this, it is a form of communication. Collective violence can include the aforementioned assaults, or large-scale disturbances like riots. Reisig and Useem (1999: 1), in a large comprehensive study of 37 prisons, tested two explanations for collective violence in prison: the first was the inmate-balance theory (which posits that collective violence is a response to prison staff cracking down too hard on inmates, taking away too many liberties, which causes the inmates to snap and mutiny) and the second was the administrative-control theory (which posits that collective violence is a result of poor management, of overcrowding and lax regulation). Administrative-control theory was much better in explaining collective violence in prison, a view consistent with what prison gangs say about their situation: "The guards controlled the perimeter of the prison and we controlled what happened inside it," said Michael Thompson (in Grann 2004: 161). This is most obvious in South Africa, where the Number Gangs dominate in prisons such as Pollsmoor, places where 40-60 inmates are locked inside a cell unsupervised from 4 pm to 7 am (Steinberg 2004: 3-4). Individual violence is usually done at the behest of OGs; non-gang violence, or violence committed by non-affiliated inmates, usually conforms more to the get-yourself-heard-last-resort type of communication. A victim of rape might one day "snap" and express himself violently, for instance. In interracial environments collective violence, in my estimation, is based on totemism (gang wars or at a higher level, race wars) and very rarely unites prisoners against staff (like the Sykesian inmate code, more applicable to single race prison environments). The next logical step would be to analyze prison riots (like the ones in Attica or Atlanta) to glean clues about racial organizational tendencies in times of "free-for-all." This will not be done here.

When speaking about prison and its "tribalism," writer Kurt Sutter had a few interesting things to say (Outlaw Empires: *Nuestra Familia* 2012). He notes that most "outlaw empires" (large-scale crime syndicates) grow out of basic human instincts, in the case of prison gangs, the need to stay alive. You really are nothing in prison without your race; as an individual, you are a sitting duck. Sutter also noted that, when comparing street gangs and prison gangs, and looking at gangs that began in prison and now reach out onto the street, the guys from prison are "harder" and "more dangerous," they are people who never toe in a grey area, but their worldview is black and white when it comes to their gang. Valdemar (History Channel's Gangland: The Mexican Mafia 2007) notes that in gangsters' eyes, killing is truly the easiest way to solve a problem.

5.2 Prison House Bricolage

In *The Savage Mind* (1963), Lévi-Strauss (1-8) shows how the peoples we call "primitive," "backwards," or "savage" are really amazingly intelligent in their own way. Living in a specific geographical region, these peoples are intimately in tune with the various meteorological, botanical, zoological, ecological and morphological aspects of their environment, which is reflected in their languages, whose naming contains incredible specificity of phenomena. Their attention to detail and understanding of interrelations is thorough and nuanced. All natural assets, everything existing around them with some kind of use, whether therapeutic or other, are known and utilized in many different ways. They distinguish between plants that are useful to them, to marine life, to insect life, etc. They have a comprehensive knowledge of their environment reflected in vocabulary. Animals and plants aren't known because they are useful, but useful because they are known.

For Lévi-Strauss, this is a form of science. The goal of science is to create taxonomies, to arrange and create order out of the world, to organize and classify. Therefore, the so-called "primitive thought" of savages is very much similar to our modern day one, and does acquire true knowledge (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 9-10). The problem lies when these cultures see relations between everything, like a tree falling as being caused by a spirit; this is magic, belief in overdetermined causality (ibid. 11).

Modern science exists at a level "above" phenomena, like breaking down smells into chemical patterns, while magic exists due to the close relationship between man and land (ibid. 12-13); this is why our "objective", remote science has been called "cold" and "disinterested." This also why Palaeolithic hunters paid tribute to those they sacrificed in order to live, why they patterned the bones of slaughtered animals and buried them, giving their spirit the ability to find new life (Armstrong 2005: 14). Therefore, there are two parallel systems of acquiring knowledge, two forms of scientific thought, one that eventually lead to the technological boom in the Neolithic era and the one that dominates today (ibid. 13-15). The first mode works at the level of perception, experience and imagination (close to nature) (ibid. 15). For Lévi-Strauss (ibid. 16-22) this difference differentiates "the scientific mind" and "the savage mind," the "science of the abstract" and the "science of the concrete" and "the engineer" from "the *bricoleur*."

Lévi-Strauss uses the concept of "*bricolage*" to explain the way myths and rituals are created, to explain mythical thought. I'm using it to explain how the prison environment is manipulated. *Bricolage* involves a limited repertoire, a set of raw materials and tools that are "at-hand." A *bricoleur* is a kind of jack-of-all-trades who works with what he has got, giving the term an interesting "deviant" connotation (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16-17). Basically, an engineer facing a project maps it out and orders all the necessary materials he needs for the project. It is safe to assume that every new project has a new set of tools. Though constrained by the technology of his civilization, the engineer is always looking at ways to open up more of the Universe; he is, in a sense, more "free." The *bricoleur*, on the other hand, is "imprisoned." His toolbox, his set of materials, is closed and finite. Though it may be extensive, all he can do when facing a new project is reorganize the pre-existing structural arrangement (like the tribesmen who, after a catastrophe, restructure the world according to pre-existing categories instead of creating new ones to explain the new order). Everything is retained because it might come in handy. During reorganization, the *bricoleur* is faced with the material constraints of the material at-hand (all Lévi-Strauss 1966: 17-19). Lévi-Strauss' example was a wedge of wood that could be used for making up the inadequate length of a plank. The very same wedge could also be used as a material, glued together with something else. However, at all times, the wedges' prior use and the effect that that use had on the piece

itself is always factored in (ibid. 18-19). The engineer simply needs to call his local lumberyard to solve the problem. Mythology is seen an intellectual form of *bricolage* because it can only take the pre-existing organization of the world and rearrange its parts to solve problems, but can never step out of this intimacy with nature and open new theories of the cosmos (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 21).

I am not the first to use *bricolage* in describing subcultures. Dick Hebdige (1979) sees style (which can include clothing, make-up, accessories, so on) as what differentiated punk, Ted, skinhead and other subcultures from the mainstream in postwar England. Style is based on *bricolage*, which Hebdige sees as a subversive phenomenon that places everyday objects into new symbolic ensembles, therefore changing their meanings; an example would be a safety pin worn as an earring, like Punks do (Hebdige 1979: 103-105). *Bricolage* is anarchic, surrealist, "semiotic guerrilla warfare," a creator of analogies and homologies (ibid. 100-133). Hebdige uses the concept of *bricolage* like I do, as manipulation of objects on the technical plane (the material level).

Let me give a few examples of the use of *bricolage* in prison. The following is a poem written by Jarvis Jay Masters (1992), an inmate on Death Row in San Quentin for his role in murdering a prison guard. The poem is entitled *Recipe For Prison Pruno*:

Take ten peeled oranges,
Jarvis Masters, it is the judgment and sentence of this court,
one 8 oz. bowl of fruit cocktail,
that the charged information was true,
squeeze the fruit into a small plastic bag,
and the jury having previously, on said date,
and put the juice along with the mash inside,
found that the penalty shall be death,
add 16 oz. of water and seal the bag tightly.
and this Court having, on August 20, 1991,
Place the bag into your sink,
denied your motion for a new trial,
and heat it with hot running water for 15 minutes.
it is the order of this Court that you suffer death,
wrap towels around the bag to keep it warm for fermentation.
said penalty to be inflicted within the walls of San Quentin,
Stash the bag in your cell undisturbed for 48 hours.

at which place you shall be put to death,
When the time has elapsed,
in the manner prescribed by law,
add 40 to 60 cubes of white sugar,
the date later to be fixed by the Court in warrant of execution.
six teaspoons of ketchup,
You are remanded to the custody of the warden of San Quentin,
then heat again for 30 minutes,
to be held by him pending final
secure the bag as done before,
determination of your appeal.
then stash the bag undisturbed again for 72 hours.
It is so ordered.
Reheat daily for 15 minutes.
In witness whereof,
After 72 hours,
I have hereon set my hand as Judge of this Superior Court,
with a spoon, skim off the mash,
and I have caused the seal of this Court to be affixed thereto.
pour the remaining portion into two 18 oz. cups.
May God have mercy on your soul.

The meaning of this poem comes from the juxtaposition between the judge taking away Masters' last hope of freedom in an engineer's world, and Masters making due with the materials he has at hand to make prison pruno, a prison house alcohol. A fruit cocktail, a plastic bag, towels, sugar cubes and ketchup make up the ingredients and tools used, no doubt procured from mealtime. Others have recounted stories of pruno being made in toilet bowls. Masters is a prison house *bricoleur*.

In the extremely violent prison world, inmates attack using "shivs" or "shanks," which are prison-made knives made out of whatever material there is around. "The jail-made 'shank' is fashioned from [a small piece of spring steel used to strengthen the arch in leather boots and shoes] and is sharpened by scraping the metal on concrete floors. A handle is fashioned from paper or cloth. Since the length of the shank is small, the handle is often held in the palm of the fist with the blade protruding from between the middle and ring fingers like a push dagger. At a distance, the attack appears to be just a fistfight, but it is much more lethal. The hard spring steel material of the shank can be used to cut

softer iron, aluminum and other metals to make larger, longer "bone crusher" stabbing weapons. Every metal chair, bunk, window frame, table and chain-link fence is a potential edged weapon" (Valdemar 2011-2). In our modern world of increased specialization, any small problem seems to have some sort of mechanical solution. From automatic carrot-peelers to car fresheners, world industry is manufacturing a slew of specialized goods. In prison, this is not possible. Because you obviously aren't allowed knives, everything with an edge is homologous with a stabbing weapon, and the concrete floor is homologous with a sharpening device. The material of the prison enclosure is reworked, given new functions. Every edge exists as a knife in potentiality. The harmless or everyday become imbued with sinister connotations. This leads to constant cell searches, lest the problematic consequences of administrative-control theory's negligence come to fruition.

Here is an array of examples of *bricolage*: urine as invisible ink (called "hit-and-miss" writing); the rectum as a container for contraband; a (hollowed out) Bible as a place to stash drugs; improvised tattoo machines, made out of a combination of guitar strings, automatic shavers, razors, soot or pen ink, etc.; string and a small mirror used as a telescope; bedsheets used as a noose; pepper used as a weapon to throw in eyes; a toothbrush end melted down to a point, used as a knife; the dummy heads constructed out of soap, toilet paper and human hair, the spoons used for shoveling and the raft made out of raincoats and contact cement used in the 1962 escape from Alcatraz (see Babyak 2001); in many cases, you could even see homosexual relationships as making due with what you've got. With no women, powerful men substitute a male rectum with a female vagina, therefore keeping the ability to proclaim their heterosexuality. Like Hebdige's "surrealist" view of subculture (where oppositions like reality : dream or work : play lose boundary), the man : woman opposition is blurred in prison life. The present highest-ranking member of 28s, John Mongrel, did an interview with English journalist Ross Kemp in 2007. Mongrel described that after every three weeks or so, he walks up to a non-Number and tells him "… you sleep by my bed tonight." The consequence of refusing is death. That night, Mongrel says, he has sex (I find it significant he doesn't say "they"). He describes how he holds the other down, the latter not fighting back due to fear. Then comes perhaps the most illuminating exchange:

Mongrel: "I have sex with a man…

Kemp: "… for nineteen years…"

Mongrel (nodding): "… I have sex with a man."

(pause)

Kemp: "Does that make you gay?"

Mongrel (immediately and emphatically): "No."

Kemp: "Why not?"

Mongrel: "I am not a gay…"

Kemp: "Then what are you?"

Mongrel: "I am a *ndota*, I am the man…"

Kemp: "Right, but what about the…" (he begins pointing downwards) "… man that gets fucked? What's he?"

Mongrel: "He's a…" (pause) "… woman. A wifey, a woman… I tell him to wash my clothes, he do it. I give him bread, food. I give him a bed. And I watch him, so he's alright."

… (Ross Kemp on Gangs 2007: South Africa)

Mongrel's carefree manner of exposition juxtaposed with the brutal content of his speech shows the normality of this type of thinking in the prison scenario. In one breath Mongrel can say he has sex with men, while in the very next he can claim he's not gay and see no contradiction. The agent doing the penetrating is considered a straight man, while the penetrated man takes on the role of a woman. The penetrator can acknowledge the fact that he is performing sexual acts with a man while still proclaiming heterosexuality. The extent that the penetrated man takes on the female role is the extent to which he is prisonized (the extent to which he appropriates prison reality, falling into the role of a "punk" or "fag"). This leads to all sorts of problems concerning the appropriateness of placing gay, bisexual or trans-women (born male but identifying themselves as female) prisoners into general population of male prisons. The problem becomes more complex when dealing with so-called "shemales" and other androgynous or hermaphroditic individuals. Male-male sex as *bricolage* is contingent on the fact that the penetrator

substitutes the man for a woman and that sex is for pleasure. In cases when sodomy has the function of punishing or of showing dominance, it is precisely because the man being penetrated *is* in fact a man that the function can be fulfilled (it strips the receiver's manhood, the highest value of this world). The aforementioned can be useful in distinguishing consensual prison sex (*bricolage*, blurring of man : woman) from prison rape (show of power, though rape can also be for pleasure).

Clearly, inmates are very resourceful and clever. There is a constant game of cat-and-mouse happening between prisoners and guards, an attempt to catch-up to their innovative *bricolage*s. The prison is therefore permeated with intense suspicion and mistrust. The fate of the Alcatraz escapees is unknown, but even if they didn't survive, they came as close as can be to living the dream of lifers worldwide, based on their skill as *bricoleurs*. So, *bricolage* is handy when describing the world of "savages" behind bars, who are not quite as backward as many believe.

The final section of this work looks at the possibility of prison gangs' political ideologies as being nothing more than camouflage justifying illegal activity.

5.3 Ideology as a Mask or Illusion

Steinberg (2004: 11-20), when discussing the meanings behind the myth of Nongoloza, notices some very interesting things. At the beginning of the story, Po was concerned with the men leaving the village, abandoning it. This was apparently his motivation in persuading Nongoloza, Kilikijan and the rest not to leave for the diamond-mines. Yet, all Po did in his fervent recruitment was create a band of outlaws who abandoned their *kraals* and village anyway. Steinberg (ibid. 1) also pointed out that the historical Nongoloza was no Robin Hood; he victimized the rich and the poor alike. His Ninevite gang also borrowed the militaristic structure of the armies of the boers of the South African Republic. Finally, Nongoloza divided his group into judicial and military branches. Keep all this in mind.

As we saw, gangs like the BGF and the NF have been described as "paramilitary": the BGF's organizational structure was "supreme leader," "general," "captain," "lieutenant" and foot soldiers. When I was discussing totemism I failed to discuss the

intensely militaristic structure of most prison gangs. Totemism invokes a feeling of some kind of dangerous *Gemeinschaft*, a united tribal brotherhood quick to anger and defend any perceived slight to the community. They are like a large extended family. The military, on the other hand, is a near ideal type belonging to Foucault's disciplinary society, a place where individuals are both atomized (through cellular individualization) and massified (through tactical combination), *Gesellschaft*. Here there is no real unity; group membership is based on artificial relationships (the idea that the world has to be organized racially) and is governed from uptop by various Godfathers. It would seem that totemistic and militaristic organizational modes are in opposition, yet prison gangs clearly rely on both. How to explain this?

I previously mentioned that the beginning of the end of the AB was in the mid-80s, when the gang started going after family members of "snitches." One of these snitches was Steve Barnes; after testifying against the gang, he was locked down in protective custody. Around the same time, member Curtis Price made parole. He got out, got a shotgun from his girlfriend, murdered Steve Barnes' father, murdered the same girlfriend (witness), went to see the film "Gandhi," and got arrested soon after (see History Channel's Gangland: AB: 2007 and Grann 2004). This was the last straw for Michael Thompson. Killing innocents was not part of the program; he saw himself as a holy warrior, not a thug. Thompson flipped and began working with Richard Valdemar. It was around this time in the mid-80s when Clifford Smith reported the AB wasn't "… bent on destroying blacks and the Jews and the minorities of the world, white supremacy and all that shit. It's a criminal organization, first and foremost" (Grann 2004: 165). Years later, a rugged con called Casper Cröwell entered the prison system. He was approached by AB members who asked him if it bothered him that people were picking on his race, especially Africans and Mexicans. Cröwell responded in the affirmative. For him, through a process of euhemerization reminiscent of the Number Gangs, the original founders of the AB were "mythical figures" in the prison system, true warriors, brimming with righteousness, real protectors of the white race (Cröwell in National Geographic Explorer: The AB 2007). All the battle poems and oaths seem to signify the same, but upon further inspection there are some glaring inconsistencies in the AB's world. Tyler "the Hulk/Super Honkey" Bingham, a federal commissioner, wore a swastika on one arm

and a Jewish Star of David on the other, "without any apparent irony" (Grann 2004: 160). Michael Thompson himself is part Native American (ibid. 160). When Charles Manson, whose Family murdered a pregnant woman and other innocents, entered San Quentin, he asked to join the AB, fearing attacks by black inmates. The AB said no; had his crime struck a nerve? Even if it had, the AB still kept him on as an associate, using his devoted followers to smuggle drugs into the prison facility (National Geographic Explorer: The AB 2007). As Smith had implied, the aim of the group was now moneymaking. For Cröwell, they had become "the Heroin Brotherhood," truly "race traitors" who victimized those they swore to protect, who used a white supremacist ideology to recruit aimless men into their group (National Geographic Explorer: The AB 2007).

It is also true that the NF only came into existence as the result of the MM, of "the oppressed becoming the oppressors." The origin story of most prison gangs begins with "we formed to protect our people from [insert race/gang here] who were victimizing us," but always seems to end with a discussion of how much money the gang earns or how many kickbacks prison OGs receive, even behind bars. Many prison killings are the result of unpaid drug debts (Valdemar 2011), an offensive very far removed from defending against attack or insult. Is it possible that prison gangs simply use ideologies, based on totemism, as a way of masking the fact they are really just a criminal, moneymaking organization? Is this the reason for all the training? Let's go all the way back to my example of discipline in the context of University. As we saw with Valdemar, who also noted the irony in it, gang members go through schooling, they learn histories and do assignments. The students of gangsterism are monitored, individualized and hierarchized in relation to others (the cellular). Their activities are codified, they learn skills and efficiency (the organic). They accumulate skills pertaining to violence and enforcement of the gang's code over time, important because after initiation lack of knowledge could get them killed (even doing something as mundane as eating) (the genetic). The position, acceptable behaviour and knowledge of a gang member are combined with others to form a vicious organization of foot soldiers lead by "paramilitary" commanding officers (the combinatory). Finally, any deviation from the norm is met with differing degrees of retribution (beatings-gangrape-excommunication-death). Therefore, prison gang schooling and training is disciplinary, creating efficient mercenaries that work for no pay

under bosses of a large profitable company. The "gangbanger" argot role stated the latter is an inmate dependent on his gang for goods and services. The difference is you can't quit the job of gang member, making fear of death quite the motivational tool for getting the best out of workers.

With the advent of our new capitalist society, profit is key. Profit comes from commerce and industry, this in prison being the drug trade. You protect your business and earn more by enforcing discipline, enforcement based on a militaristic model. The prison house hit as described by Martinez is the perfect example of the totemistic touching on the militaristic (the disciplinary). The tactical hit, constructed out of cellular-organic-genetic-combinatory parts (see Martinez's description of the hit and apply the four aspects of discipline), shows that any debt is punishable by death. The signification is clear: No Welchers, crime and punishment becoming inseparable in the minds of all convicts. Recruitment is needed to keep enforcing the law; the Casper Cröwells of the prison world are the working class, helping the bourgeois Godfathers earn big and live large. Therefore, the racial organization of prisons is needed to keep the drug trade flowing; the play of difference between North-South or black-white is the basic organizational model allowing moneymaking organizations to flourish. If you have racial indifference (a lack of antagonism) then you have no "hook" that lures in angry men in need of something to believe in. In this sense, political ideology based on totemism is clearly masking the true intent of prison gangs. This also explains why "Pegleg" Morgan was allowed into the MM; his business contacts superseded the very powerful race barrier present in prison, just like Charlie Manson's superseded the ethics of murdering a pregnant woman. Bingham's Jewishness or Thompson's native-Americanness fall under the same principle, as do the racial alliances of prison gangs mentioned previously.

Let us now return to the Numbers. Steinberg (2004: 12) points out Po's recruitment did as much damage as the colonial powers, in terms of stripping the productive workforce of an entire village. In the Numbers' anti-colonial ideology hides the very same ravages of colonialism. Steinberg goes to the prison scene and leans heavily on Goffman's concepts of "total institutions" and "mortification." As a preamble, Steinberg notes that inmate testimony of their gang life is always shaky, because imprisonment is a humiliating experience and recounting your personal story always involves a restoration

of your pride (2004: 17-20). Existing in prison, you need to have some kind of idea of standing for something. The Numbers viewed themselves as standing for the liberation of South Africa. But, as Steinberg points out (2004: 17-20), when prisons began to be filled by political prisoners and activists for the African National Congress (ANC), the Numbers viewed them with suspicion, sometimes even classifying them using white Apartheid buzzwords like "troublemakers." After Apartheid, many Number Gang members were pining for "the good old days." How does this make sense? How can a gang fueled by anti-colonialist ideals pine for its return? Gangsters claimed that all the deaths and tortures they underwent were for a goal, for a cause; when Steinberg asked them what they had accomplished, the answer was that living conditions are much improved. Steinberg (2004: 17) writes: "The idea that a century-old anti-colonial army, painstakingly preserved and transmitted across the generations, adorned with imaginary uniforms, a complex, finely observed military structure, a rich myth of origin — the idea that such an entity exists to fight for a bed, a thick blanket, a watch is a humiliating one. It is even more humiliating when one considers that the story is empirically false. It is almost certain that the small improvements in prison conditions which began in the late 1980s — beds, televisions, watches — were the result, not of Number gang activity, but of the campaigns organised by and in support of political prisoners. It was political and not criminal prisoners who began using the courts to contest the conditions of their imprisonment. It was the prison memoirs of prominent political prisoners that finally brought to the world testimony about the conditions in South African jails. And it was the imprisonment of global icons such as Nelson Mandela that brought global attention to penal practice in South Africa."

Here is the heart of the matter concerning the South African Numbers. The total institution of prison strips away all your liberty; in response there are gangs (Goffman's intransigent response to mortification). But the only way the gangs know how to structure themselves is based on the very organization oppressing them in the first place. The *ndotas* (gangsters) that begin to suppress *franse* (non-gangsters) are exerting on them a force of double organization, of double suppression. Po's army could only do the exact same thing the colonial white men were doing to them. Nongoloza borrowed the Transvaal Republic's uniform and military structure for the same reason. The Numbers

are not revolutionaries, only criminals, through and through. Steinberg's catchy phrase was that the anti-governmental ideology of the Numbers acts as "a bulwark against nihilism." In other words, it gives them some sort of purpose or meaning, but one that doesn't exactly correspond to reality. Only the political prisoners were able to escape the cycle between oppressor and prisoner-become-oppressor by achieving real political change (see Steinberg 2004: 11-20). As an example, Steinberg notes that Numbers would punish transgressions by beating inmates with a sockful of padlocks. Ironically, the way in which this was done is exactly the same way that warders informally punished Numbers who had assaulted other warders (Steinberg 2004: 15) The BGF, AB, MM or NF all take on the militaristic form of disciplinary power in the same way. Their constant monitoring of the prison yard in medium- and maximum-security prisons, their creation of norms and their principles of examination are a part of another over-organized world based on the institutional order (the disciplinary society) that put most of them in prison in the first place. Discipline is appropriated by prison gangs from the larger social formation and becomes ubiquitous and eternal. Non-gangsters feel this squeeze the tightest.

This "bulwark against nihilism," the anti-colonial "Warrior"-paradigm, can then be understood in the same way that mythology is understood for the Palaeolithic hunters. Again, the "truth" of myth comes not from its facticity, but from its effect on human life and spirit. This is why the Numbers narrative can have many different versions and still be taken seriously. It gives meaning to the lives of some inmates within South African prisons by ritualizing their world. The actual events or exact details don't even really matter; whether the seer's name is "Pomabasa" or "Ngulugut" is truly irrelevant. In fact, the Numbers transgress the sacred teachings often, especially the ones concerning sex (Steinberg 2004: 10). The fact that John Mongrel himself gave an interview discussing the existence of the gang shows that the reality of South African prisons is not really as strict as it claims, and is full of contradictory behaviour. This is because the myth of Nongoloza is simply a point to rally around and adhere to more-or-less in order to not fall into a total nihilistic existence. This is the same criticism levied at European theologians who took Judaism and other religious/mythological systems too literally, attempting to systematically formalize something never meant to be; its more about the role religion

played in everyday life, not whether so-and-so really existed (Armstrong 2005: 46-56, Masing 1993: 233-244). For Steinberg, *ndotas* are just criminals whose narrative is used for justification and validation of life practices.

In the American context, ideology based on totemism that functions as a mask is the most obvious among groups who began (or are purported to have begun) as racial protectors, but then branched out and became criminal organizations. The MM is interesting in the sense that one of their stated goals during genesis was moneymaking. They are perhaps the most obviously disciplinary (capitalistic) prison gang we have looked at. Jacobs (1979: 10) notes that Black Muslims became a stabilizing force in prisons after having created real political change, like incarcerated ANC members in South Africa. But the BGF which grew out of them is now a business with no real interest in politics (though they may use it for recruitment). In the US it seems that totemic ideologies are used to hide the fact that prison gangs are all about earning cash, while in South Africa it is mostly about making sense of a dangerous existence. However, beginning in the 1980s, the Numbers started waiving various initiation procedures (like murdering a *franse*) for high-ranking street gang members who arrived in the prison. This was because the newly arrived had drug contacts and the Numbers had decided to begin branching out into drug dealing, becoming intertwined with street gangs on the Cape Flats. This lead to the loss of many traditions and the fragmentation of the Numbers (see Standing 2006).

Now, all of this is not to say that totemism isn't a valid way of understanding prison life; there are many other gangs with a heavier focus on supremacy, and people like Casper Cröwell eventually wake up and start their own organizations, but prison gang totemism needs to be understood in relation to militaristic discipline steadying not only the drug trade, but prostitution and other illicit prison house industries. An early reviewer of this thesis asked in passing if I thought that applying Foucault and Lévi-Strauss in the same work was contradictory. The reviewer meant in terms of their theoretical positions. Reflecting on this question, it dawned on me that prison gangs need to be understood and looked at exactly through somewhat contradictory approaches. If you look at history very superficially, we can say that archaic cultures based on totemism are primitive early man, living in a *Gemeinschaft* focused on the folk, on natural relations, on horizontal

communication. These groups are seen as uncivilized. Deviants or delinquents or Irwin-Cressey's convicts are like modern day versions. If you look at Foucault's disciplinary society, this is a big forward step in human development, into industrialism and capitalism, a *Gesellschaft* based on artificial relationships, focused on profit and governed vertically, by elites. The regimented military is an ideal disciplinary type. Prison gangs need to be understood, perhaps paradoxically, as a kind of synthesis between these two things. Large prison gangs *are* criminal organizations focused on profit who *do* use totemic ideology as a mask in order to recruit members. At the same time, tribalism, primitivism, racism, totemism, brotherhoodism, archaic expressions of power and dominance, myth and ritual, symbolism, taboo, sensitivity to insult and vicious retaliations *are* all manifest in the prison subculture, making it an extremely dangerous world. The new Western civilization was and is undergoing a clear spiritual crisis (Armstrong 2005: 47-57); the prison subculture needs to be understood in terms of both discipline (militaristic) and totemism (spiritualistic).

One final thing needs to be looked at when discussing totemic ideology used as a mask or illusion. Martinez, former member of the NF, stated that the inmate subculture is made up of individuals with the "demented criminal mind" (in Kurt Sutter's Outlaw Empires: *NF* 2012). It is a simple fact that inside prison, some hardcore men wield power they wouldn't have on the outside. Psychological factors of empowerment need to be taken into account, the fact that controlling a gang could just be about feeding the ego of a crazed leader. John Mongrel probably rapes because it shows his dominance, steeping it in the tradition of the Numbers to validate it. Prison rape, as we saw, can be about dominance without necessarily being about pleasure. The case of some kind of OG Napoleon attempting to raise a prison army out of pure psychological need is probably quite rare, but there have been many cases where prisoners don't want the leave the comforts of prison because of the lack of anything on the outside for them (see the "convict" argot role in Schmalleger-Smykla/Tunstall's inmate typology).

Conclusion

The aim of this work was to describe prison subculture. It began by looking at imprisonment as only one form of punishment, the one which became standardized beginning in the early 19th century. The other forms included the public spectacle of torture and the "semio-punitive technique" envisaged by reformers. Various functions, criticism, principles and models of prisons were brought out and explained as part of the framework of a "disciplinary society." All of this was based on the writings of Michel Foucault. After this I gave more standard understandings of the prison in American and South African contexts and defined the way I am applying and understand the concept of "subculture" in this work, bringing out two "precursory logics" relating to it. Following that I explained why prison life can be viewed and understood as a subculture.

The next big step was drawing out the historiography of research into the prisoner subculture; from the tradition beginning with Donald Clemmer and Gresham Sykes (focusing on the concepts of "prisonization," "argot roles" and "the inmate code") and then the one beginning with Donald Cressey and John Irwin and developed by James B. Jacobs (focusing on race, the latter being the dominant organizational feature of the prison subculture). The concept of "prisonization" and its splitting into institutional and social versions is given more detailed investigation. What is gleaned from the historiography is the fact that it is possible to see the prison subculture in two different ways, holistically or as racially fragmented (segregated). Following that the history of some Californian and South African prison gangs was brought out, along with a description of each gang in some detail.

All of this set up the application of Claude Lévi-Strauss' conceptions of "totemism" and "*bricolag*e" in describing prison life. "Totemism" refers to the primitive aspect of prison gangs who construct semantic groups of kin (totemic paradigms), which justify and make sense of their violent world, while "*bricolage*" is used to describe the resourcefulness of inmates who manipulate the technical plane of experience in order to gain advantage in the enclosed space of prison. The final part of this work investigates the possibility of prison gang ideology based on totemism as being a mask used to cover

up the very simple existence of a criminal organization with no other goal than making a profit through various illegal activities. The conclusion I arrived at is that prison gangs and the prison subculture more generally needs to be understood in terms of both totemistic and disciplinary factors working together, somewhat paradoxically.

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VANGLA SUBKULTUUR

RESÜMEE

Selle bakalaureusetöö eesmärk oli kirjeldada vanglas eksisteerivat subkultuuri, kasutades Claude Lévi-Straussi mõisteid "totemism" ja "*bricolage*". Ma rakendan neid mõisteid ja toon näiteid vanglagangidelt, mis eksisteerivad USA Kalifornia osariigi ja LAVi vanglates. Töö esimene pool toetub Michel Foucault teooriatele, mis on pärit tema raamatust "Distsipliin ja karistus" (1975). Need näitavad kuidas vangistus muutus karistuse normiks alates 19. sajandi algusest. Töö toob välja erinevad karistusviisid, mis eksisteerisid enne meie tänapäeva arusaamist. Seletades seda, tuleb välja tuua Foucault mõiste "distsipliin," mis on võimu vorm ning mille funktsioon on muuta subjektide kasulikkust ja kuulekust. Selline võimu vorm käib käsi käes kapitalismiga, mis oli otsene tingimus vangla sünniks, nii nagu me seda tänapäeval tunneme. Foucault pakub välja erinevaid printsiipe, funktsioone, kriitikaid ja mudeleid, mis on seotud vanglaga. Peale Foucault'd ma annan ülevaate ja defineerin "vangla" mõistet konkreetsemalt USA ja LAVi kontekstis ning seejärel piiritlen "subkultuuri" mõistet ja seletan, miks võib vanglaelu iseloomustada subkultuurina.

Töö keskosa annab ülevaate vangla subkultuuri uurimuse historiograafiast ja toob välja kaks kõige tähtsamat uurimuse traditsiooni. Esimene neist representeerib Donald Clemmeri ja Gresham Sykesi mõisteid "vanglastumine" (*prisonization*) (sotsiaaliseerumise protsess vangla ellu, millel on sotsiaalsed ning institutsionaalsed osad), "vangide kood" ja "argoorollid". Teine traditsioon sai alguse John Irwinist ja Donald Cressey'st ning mis on edasi arendatud James B. Jacobsi poolt. See lähenemine keskendub rassile (rass või etnilisus kui vangla kõige silmapaistvam ja tähtsam organisatsiooniprintsiip). See tähendab, et vangla subkultuuri võib vaadata kas holistlikuna või fragmenteerituna (rassilisest eraldamisest põhinev). Peale historiograafiat annan ma ülevaate viiest vanglagangist, neli USAst ja üks LAVist.

Töö kõige tähtsamas osas rakendan ma Lévi-Straussi mõisted "totemism" ja "*bricolage*" vangla subkultuurile. Esimene püüab seletada kuidas vangla subkultuuri võib

mõtestada kui hõimulikku keskkonda, kus domineerivad primitiivsed koodid, mütoloogia ja rituaal. Vanglagangid loovad tootemlikud paradigmad, semantilised grupid mis määravad käitumist, annavad tähenduse ja õigustavad/põhjendavad vägivalda. Need grupid koosnevad rassilistest või etnilistest hingsugulastest (tootemitest), kellega gangi liikmed tunnevad lähedust. *"Bricolage"* seletab kuidas vangid manipuleerivad materiaalset maailma tehnilisel plaanil, et anda igapäevastele asjadele uus funktsioon vangla kinnises ruumis. Töö viimane osa keskendub sellele küsimusele, et kas vanglagangide totemistlik ideoloogia on hoopis illusioon varjamaks fakti, et vanglagangid on tegelikult lihtsalt krimiorganisatsioonid, kelle eesmärk on ilma poliitiliste tagamõteteta lihtsalt raha teenida. Jõuan järeldusele, et vangla subkultuuri tuleb kontseptualiseerida nii totemistlikuna kui ka distsiplineerit, et vangla subkultuuris n-ö sünteesi.