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The Santa Monica prison and illegal cocaine: a mutual relationship

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Abstract

This paper will demonstrate how women's labor in the transnational cocaine commodity chain (TCCC) links together the Santa Monica women's prison in Lima, Peru and the illicit cocaine market. Peru is one the fastest-growing economies in Latin America largely due to a neoliberal free market approach to economic development. It has encouraged foreign investment and also has a growing middle class. But a significant portion of the country's population has not benefitted. This has resulted in some women turning to drug smuggling or selling in order to generate an income. Due to war on drug strategies, many of them are caught and sentenced on drug trafficking charges. I argue that the prison and larger criminal justice apparatus benefit financially from the growing number of drug arrests due to the systemic blackmail of incarcerated women. The cocaine sector benefits from the internment of its ex-workers. It is able to recruit new low-level employees and maintain the protection of middle managers. It is in this way that this prison and the illegal drug market are enmeshed together through the labor of subordinate female smugglers and retailers. This study is based on ethnographic dissertation fieldwork conducted in 2008–2009 in the Santa Monica prison.

Introduction

The *Establecimiento Penitenciario de Mujeres de Chorrillos* (commonly referred to by its previous name, Santa Monica) is a bland green concrete building that sits on the edge of the wide and busy Huaylas avenue in Lima, Peru. It is surrounded by restaurants, grocery stores, a supermarket, internet cafes, a health clinic and homes. Built in 1952 as a reformatory to hold 300 women, it held more than three times its capacity at the time of my fieldwork in 2008–09. In 2009, there were 2799 women incarcerated in Peruvian prisons [1] and this jumped to 4427 by 2014 [2], a 58 % increase. Over half of all female prisoners are incarcerated for some form of drug trafficking. It has become one of the leading reasons for women's imprisonment across Latin America [3–5] though their role in the illicit drug trade is secondary [3, 6].

Fifty-eight percent of imprisoned women in Peru are between 30 to 49 years old and 27 % are 18 to 29. Women 50 years and over make up 15 % of the total female prison population. Time served in this prison varies: 24.4 % are serving sentences of up to twelve months;

30.5 % between one to three years; 42.5 % between three to ten years and only 2.14 % are serving sentences of ten to twenty years. In addition, 6.5 % of the country's female inmates are non-Peruvian nationals [2]. During my fieldwork, most of them served their sentences in Santa Monica but since 2010 the majority of foreign prisoners have been placed in a facility located on the outskirts of Lima. Within this foreign female population 34 % are European nationals; 0.34 % hail from Oceania; 45 % are from the Americas (with Mexico, Bolivia and Colombia making up most of this subgroup); 18 % from Asian countries and 14.5 % are African. Finally, there are about 960 women on parole in Peru [2].

Inmates were given a bed, three meals a day and not much else. They had to buy their own blankets, toiletries, medicine and clothes. No air conditioning was available during the hot summer months nor was any heat provided during the cloudy, damp and cool winters. Hot water was only available for an hour or so in the early mornings. When women strategized to earn an income, they had to pay for their own materials such as yarn, knitting needles or thread. The nursery gave the children meals but mothers were responsible for diapers, clothes and medicine. Roaches and lice were common in the crowded cells that were built to hold up to three women but typically sheltered four to six. There was a constant battle to keep roaches off beds and stored food. Women also slept in the hallways of the dormitory buildings. As Sofia told me, "This prison is like the saying: pueblo chico, infierno grande (small village, large hell)."

Using the Santa Monica prison as an example, this paper will explore how the prison and the illicit drug economy become interdependent through the work of women. Economic marginalization moves some women into the cocaine market. As some of the drug trade's most vulnerable workers, they are the most likely to be arrested and imprisoned on narco-trafficking charges. I argue that Santa Monica benefits from the growing number of women inside its walls through prisoners' labor and money. The imprisonment of the drug trade's low-level laborers is also advantageous to the drug trade as it is able to discard superfluous and potentially hazardous transporters and retailers of cocaine.

Influenced by Crenshaw [7] and Hill Collins [8], an intersectional framework was applied to trace how social divisions structured women's pathways to the prison and how inequities were produced and reproduced inside Santa Monica through the interconnection of race, gender, class and citizenship. This theoretical lens proposes that inequalities are the result of a process of related categories of difference that are not only linked, but also form and define one another in varying times and spaces. As I explored the ways in which Santa Monica was a site where inequalities were reflected and/or reorganized, I began with the women themselves, their stories and experiences and worked my way outward to understand how each form of inequality influenced the other [9]. Before incarceration, for example, gender "mediated" [10] class for some women as single motherhood and domestic violence limited income-earning options. For many members of racially subordinate groups, race closed off opportunities to upward mobility such as formal education. The limitations of being a citizen of a lower-income nation moved some women to sex-segmented transnational labor. One social category may have been negotiating others at various points in the lives of prisoners, but all were present in their narratives as they spoke about the choices they had faced. These inequalities were reflected and reshuffled inside Santa Monica. In some instances citizenship

mediated race. A woman who belonged to a stigmatized racial group was partially protected from racism if she was a citizen of a wealthy nation. In other cases, gender influenced labor strategies. For example, income-earning labor in the prison was largely feminized. For many, class affected daily life during confinement as poor women continued to struggle to make ends meet. These categories were reproduced into a stratification system inside Santa Monica that was an extension of the hierarchies that existed outside its walls.

The current state of female prisoners in Peru is linked to the country's twenty-year armed conflict beginning in the 1980s between the military and leftist political groups such as Sendero Luminoso and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. Sendero in particular had active female participants in leadership and frontline positions [11]. The economic crisis of the 1980s and a deeply stratified society mobilized poor rural women to political action. There was a sharp increase in the number of arrests and imprisonment of women and this detainment on political grounds contributed to "incarceration as a mass phenomenon" in Peru ([12], p. 182). Hierarchies of class, gender and race have therefore been upheld by controlling women's bodies through carceral strategies.

Although the focus of this paper is to draw attention to the limitations experienced by prisoners of Santa Monica, there were many occasions in which they renegotiated the social factors that made up the stratification system of the prison. For example, they actively constructed survival strategies such as forming supportive and beneficial relationships amongst each other. Prisoners searched and created opportunities for income generating work. They also manipulated prison staff to the fullest extent possible through compliments or attempts to gain sympathy. Inmates often persisted in maneuvering the complicated institutional bureaucracy for favorable legal outcomes. Although these instances were constrained by the same inequalities that led to their incarceration, prisoners carved out means for support and autonomy.

Intersectionality was used in conjunction with a broader analysis of how incarceration has become important to the functioning of global capitalism. LeBaron and Roberts [13], for example, put forward that in the United States "criminalization and incarceration have emerged as a primary means of managing the contradictions and insecurities generated by neoliberal social and economic policies" (p. 26). One way in which the prison manages the insecurities of neoliberalism is by absorbing surplus labor and this is indicative of how "prisons are a central means by which neoliberal states govern poor people" [14], p. 6). Expanding on this idea, Sheldon and Brown [15], writing about the rise of incarcerated people of color and poor people in the United States, claim that this boom "is better seen in terms of class control; specifically it is a method of controlling the 'surplus population'" (p. 57). There is a strong relationship between the prison and the surplus of labor that results from the functioning of capitalist economies.

Mass incarceration also helps preserve the ethno-racial order [16] as well as supporting and protecting the capitalist market [13]. Prisons are not marginal spaces [17] because they play an important role in capitalism's continuous search for accumulation of profit. Part of this search includes periods of "political economic crises" ([17], p. 26) to which prisons serve as "partial geographic solutions" (p. 26). Specific groups of people are criminalized based on

their race, class and other social factors. The prison is one way to capitalize on these populations. Prisons are consequently deeply woven into the fabric of economic systems at the national and global levels: they have absorbed the surplus labor of changing economies; they have served as an instrument to control and manage the poor; they have functioned as protectors of a racist hierarchy; they have been used as safety nets for neoliberal political and economic policies. This is also the context for the Santa Monica prison, it is an institution that absorbs not only marginalized women of Peru, but women but from all over the world who have felt the pressures of a globalized neoliberal free market economy that functions within localized hierarchies of class, race and gender.

The relationship between the prison and transnational capitalism is also gendered. Writing about the United States, LeBaron and Roberts [13] argue that, “gendered insecurity under neoliberalism is a key factor driving the growing incarceration of women” (p. 27). As manufacturing jobs have moved to the global South, women’s participation in non-agricultural jobs in these regions has increased. At the same time, however, women work mainly in sex-segregated industries with less pay and little job security. Structural adjustment programs in Southern nations and cutbacks in welfare programs in industrialized countries have contributed to the feminization of poverty as women are the primary caretakers of children and aging parents in most countries [18, 19]. In addition, Reynolds [20] claims that “the global economy has failed to provide legitimate opportunities for women” (p. 91) and it is because of this that some women in developing countries move into criminalized work which carries with it the risk of incarceration and consequently, the re-creation of a cheap pool of peripheral workers.

This paper also uses the concept of the transnational cocaine commodity chain (TCCC) as it moves us to a more precise understanding of drug trafficking and is useful for demonstrating how “countries become linked to the global economy in a variety of ways via participation in commodity chains” ([21], p. 29). The cocaine commodity chain is transnational because it occupies national spaces such as the Peruvian prison. This framework allows us to analyze labor across the various ‘links’ of this chain such as production, distribution and consumption, particularly how labor differs at each link and why.

Methodology

This research is based on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Santa Monica prison with fifty incarcerated women. I also visited the prison for periods of one to two months from 2004 to 2010. Participant observation was used as a way to understand daily life inside Santa Monica. I spent time with various women in the main patio, sitting on benches with them or standing and chatting about daily life. I listened to their conversations and asked questions when I did not understand something regarding prison life. We talked about many things that had nothing to do with their incarceration: family, relationships, movies, the weather and more. It was after two months of doing this that I finally began to request formal interviews. I conducted participant observation first in order to allow as many of the women in Santa Monica as possible to become familiar with me and my research goals. Privacy was scarce inside the prison and I intentionally did not ask for interviews until I felt that some of the women were comfortable with me as a researcher and as an individual.

The selection criteria for interviews included women who 1) were in prison on charges of drug trafficking or drug consumption 2) were 18 years old or older 3) had been sentenced or were still waiting for sentencing 4) were not pregnant. Snowball and convenience sampling methods were used. I approached different women in the prison, described the project and criteria for participation and told them where they could find me if they wanted more information on the project. I emphasized the voluntary nature of participating in the study with both sampling methods.

Throughout my fieldwork, I used life history narratives to establish the sequence of events and to form probable explanations of why and how interviewees came to work in the drug trade and consequently become imprisoned. This methodology made it possible to record the “multiple dimensions of women’s lives” ([22], p. 6). As women spoke to me about their childhoods, families, relationships, children and work, I attempted to develop a multi-faceted representation of those who had worked or were accused of working in the drug trade. Life history narratives helped to elicit basic demographic data and informed me of the general circumstances of the lives of research participants [23]. These narratives recorded material from the perspective of the interviewee from the start of her life to the present [24]. I tried to document the nature and conditions of their lives before incarceration and their motivations for undertaking criminalized work [25] or, if they were not involved in this kind of work, how it nonetheless led to their imprisonment. By letting women speak for themselves, they provided only the information they were comfortable giving.

During interviews, I asked few leading questions and none of those inquired into the details of work in the drug trade. This was one way in which to make sure that the privacy of an interviewee was respected. I asked participants to tell me about their lives and I noted the work that they performed in both the criminalized and non-criminalized job markets and how they came to do that work. These interviews provided information on how options for criminalized work were shaped. In order to help maintain confidentiality I did not audio or video record conversations. All interview notes were hand written by myself only and names have been changed.

Peru’s new “tiger” status and increased inequality

In spite of broader access to education, land distribution and increased democratization over the last half-century, Peru remains one of the most unequal countries in the world [26]. For example, Oxfam [27] reports that two-thirds of a person’s income in the present is related to their parents’ earnings in the past. In other words, social mobility remains limited. Various economic reports claim that the country has consistently experienced economic growth over the past ten to fifteen years. The Wall Street Journal named Peru one of the new “Tigers.” In fact, its economy grew more than any other country in Latin America from 2000 to 2011 [28]. This is largely due to the country’s export of commodities such as agricultural products, natural gas, textile, wood, and fish. Mining has become particularly important to the country’s growth as this sector makes up about half of Peru’s export earnings [29] and the high price of gold, copper and silver has contributed to increased revenue. The government also supports foreign investments such as the entrance of Chinese mining companies. Reports from organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and European Union

note that the country's adherence to neoliberal free market policies including free trade treaties with the United States and China as well as prudent fiscal management have contributed to Peru's growing economic power. This current economic boom has its origins in the early 1990s after Alberto Fujimori took office. He set about opening up Peru's economy, privatizing state owned companies and reducing barriers to private investment. As a result it has become "one of the most open and liberal economies" ([30], p.3) in the region.

These optimistic reports, however, contrast with the other side of the country's integration into the global economy. Peru's national statistical institute reported a reduction in poverty but an increased gap in equity. For example, according to a 2008 United States congressional report by Jasper and Seelke [31], "the wealthiest 10 % of the Peruvian population controls 41 % of the country's income whereas the poorest 10 % control just 1 % of the income (p. 1)." Castro et al. [32] argue that a multidimensional approach to poverty in Peru indicates that in 2008, 39 % of the country's population who did not fall into the category of monetarily poor still faced significant deprivation in health, education, living conditions and nutrition. A large section of the country's population has yet to benefit from Peru's booming economy. For example, underemployment remains a problem: "Almost 55 % of the employed population is underemployed" ([33], p. 47) and "almost 80 % of the employment belongs to the informal market" (p. 45). Labor in this sector is risky as it has few legal protections with regards to health, accidents and workers' rights. Neoliberal strategies have consequently failed to create adequate work for many Peruvians, including the women serving sentences in Santa Monica.

In 2011, current president Ollanta Humala ran on a platform of sweeping change for Peruvian society and government. He advocated progressive social policies such as decreased dependence on privatized economic projects, offering wider access to public education, expansion of social welfare programs and eliminating corruption. Humala also espoused the idea of stronger government control over mining projects and other natural resources. Although it was feared by many middle and upper class Peruvians that he would be another Hugo Chavez or Evo Morales, he has thus far been a strong supporter of implementing economic policies of recent past presidents. For example, his administration has continued to emphasize private investment and free trade agreements.

Peru also participates in the United States sponsored war on drugs. In the late 1980's the United Nations Vienna Convention assured the exportation of the United States punishment approach to the drug economy. Member states accepted policies that moved away from a public health response to drug use. A report by the Transnational Institute and the Washington Office on Latin America [34] exemplifies this point for Peru:

The growth in prison population since 2003 corresponds to a period in which the Toledo administration practically submitted Peru's position on the drug question to international demands in order to make it possible to continue negotiations on the free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States. (p. 9).

President Humala has also emphasized interdiction and eradication [35]. The Peruvian government has complied with war on drug policies largely set forth by the United States and has relied on financial and military support from its agencies. In 2011 for example, the

State Department Peru \$160 million “to help its forces eradicate coca crops, disrupt production and trafficking networks, and shut down operations that launder drug profits” [36]. Peru’s “orthodox, law and order approach” [37] has resulted in the increase of the number of incarcerated women.

Gendered struggles and responses

Previous and current economic reforms are also gendered. Open market and privatization reforms enacted in Peru during the 1980’s and early 1990’s affected low-income women in gender specific and multidimensional ways such as increased migration, hardships in finding employment and meeting the basic needs of their families, reduction of wages, elimination of food subsidies and inflated prices [38] and the deterioration of working conditions [39]. Poverty in Peru has been feminized as the number of female headed households has risen and most female workers hold low-wage jobs in the formal and informal economy [40]. Maternal care work has been made more difficult as mothers are put in the position of “making up” for this insecurity. Casualties of structural reform have been absorbed by the informal sector and about 50 % of its workers are female. I found that prior to working in the TCCC, most women in Santa Monica had labored as street vendors, cleaned homes, sold food in the market or done some other type of work outside the formal market. Betty demonstrates the transition from informal to illicit work: “I sold food from about six in the evening to midnight. This business belonged to my father and I sold from the house.” After her husband was imprisoned for theft, Betty moved into the cocaine business.

My son and I had to make it on our own. We lived in an area where there are puntos (transgendered sex workers). My son watched over the clients’ cars and sold condoms to the prostitutes and I rented my room out to them. They would also want drugs and I’d bring them soda and drugs. I got my drugs from la Victoria (a neighborhood in Lima) and sold them for a profit. My husband was in prison for two years. This is how I survived.

For Betty, economic survival in the face of the loss of her husband’s financial contribution was a motivator for entering criminalized work. She took advantage of opportunities in the underground economy and found her niche as a retailer of drugs within the TCCC.

The TCCC divides workers among its various segments including coca cultivators, coca paste producers, transporters and exporters, distributors, consumers and finally, money launderers [41]. It recruits labor, and reproduces and expands itself through its workers by exploiting how a particular nation is located within the global political economy. At the same time it also uses the same racial and gender hierarchies employed by licit commodity chains. In fact, the cocaine commodity chain is an extension of and depends on current mechanisms of transnational capitalism such as free market reforms, privatization, lowering of trade barriers and most importantly, a divided labor force. The inequalities embedded in the global labor force are reflected in this particular niche of the underside of globalization, but with even harsher and more dangerous risks for those with the least amount of power.

The informal economy is segmented by labor and female workers earn less than their male counterparts [42]. They also have the most insecure and least paying jobs [43]. Drug trafficking organizations recruit workers from this sector because they are already

exploitable and the drug trade takes advantage of the informal economy's gendered divisions. Martina, in her sixties and serving a twelve-year sentence, is an example of how disadvantaged female laborers are used by the TCCC.

"A friend used me," she explained. "My friend came into my house and saw that I lived in poverty, she saw that I needed money." Martina did not know that her friend was involved in drug trafficking. This friend said that she would pay Martina to bring drugs to a prisoner in one of the male prisons and she agreed to do it. Martina smuggled the drugs but was caught. "It's as if the traffickers studied their victims in order to lure them into the trade." Before her incarceration, she was employed in the informal sector as a cook and domestic worker. As discussed previously, this sector is made up of jobs that are flexible, low paid and unstable. This labor vulnerability is transferred to the TCCC with Martina moving from one type of low-level work to another.

Joanna, thirty years old and a single mother, exemplifies the insecurity and risk of an expendable worker in the TCCC. Joanna was incarcerated for four months when I met her. She told me about her work in the drug trade:

I worked making T-shirt designs. I worked for my daughter's education. A friend told me that she had a job for me. I took this job out of desperation. The business was to take drugs from one place to another in Lima – that is how the police got us. I transported drugs for two months and I got 80 soles (about \$30) for each trip. I did this only once a week and I made a total of eight trips before getting caught. I would usually bring my sister's baby with me so that I wouldn't get caught by the police. But on that trip my sister had taken the baby to the hospital. The business belonged to my friend and she took most of the profit. She doesn't help me with anything inside.

Her work before entering the TCCC was in the informal economy and it was from here that she was recruited into illicit work. As a single mother in a precarious economic position, she agreed to transport cocaine to supplement her income. The TCCC reproduced the same labor instability that existed in the informal sector: she worked in the bottom rungs of the local drug economy and was more at risk for arrest.

Working in the TCCC in Peru offers women the opportunity (but more realistically, the fantasy) of earning thousands of dollars. One kilo of cocaine can be bought for about \$1310 in Peru and sold for \$30,000 in the United States and up to \$100,000 in Asia and Russia (Briceño [27]). But for those at the lower end of this chain, earning a fraction of these amounts remains beyond their reach. Peru's push for a neoliberal model of economic development sets the stage for why some poor women opt for selling or trafficking drugs. In spite of the country's new promising economic status, the Peruvian women in this study struggled to meet their financial needs as well as that of their families. Selling or transporting drugs became a way to supplement a meager income. Charo exemplifies how this work provided economic support for her family:

I wanted to help my mother, who has cancer, and that's why I started selling drugs. My husband's income wasn't enough. I earned money for her cancer treatment which cost six or seven hundred soles, and that's not including the medicine. I also

gave money to my older sister. My mother came to visit me yesterday and she looked weak. She can't afford the cancer treatment.

The lack of a social safety net was an incentive for Charo's participation in the drug trade. The cost of many drugs, including those for cancer, has been rising (Economist Intelligence [44]). Although the Peruvian government has made recent advances in making health care accessible to low-income citizens, this process has been uneven. When I spoke with Charo, the government's subsidized health program, SIS, only covered the diagnosis of cancer and not treatment. It was announced in July 2012 that SIS would expand its coverage to treatment and medication [45] but implementation of this policy faces financial obstacles as well as low numbers of licensed oncologists [46].

The lack of resources faced by low-income mothers is shaped by the intersection of race, class, race and citizenship and becomes a motivating factor for entering the TCCC. At the time of our interview, Beatriz had been in Santa Monica for sixteen months, serving a ten-year sentence (the minimum for transporting drugs into a prison).

My husband was with a friend who had drugs and he was imprisoned...I was three months pregnant. When my daughter was two weeks old I went to visit him and he had a friend who was from my hometown. He offered me work bringing drugs into the prison. I agreed to do it because I wasn't working. I was desperate to make money because my daughter's father didn't give me money. I came into the prison carrying drugs once and then another time. The third time I got caught. I didn't know about the laws. I was with my baby who was one month old. My sons were waiting outside for me. The police took my children to an orphanage.

The government's ombudsman intervened on her behalf and got her daughter back. Both of her sons went to an orphanage.

Beatriz turned to smuggling drugs as an income-earning strategy because she was the single head of household and out of work. As a worker in one of the lowest levels of the transportation niche of the TCCC, she had very little control over the welfare of her children. She entered the illicit drug sector as a local transporter in a coca producing country. In the globalized economy of cocaine, much of the money to be made occurs in the countries that are major consumers of this drug. Coca growing nations receive significantly less profit. This is so because although there is a demand for the local consumption of cocaine in Peru, it is low compared to that of North America Europe. In addition, Peruvian soles do not compare with American dollars or Euros. Therefore, Beatriz's menial position in the cocaine chain was influenced by the role of Peru in the global political economy.

Female labor, the TCCC and Santa Monica

The Santa Monica prison has become a place to "dispose of" expendable workers of the TCCC. Because the majority of them are women, their labor becomes the bond between illegal cocaine and the prison. These low-level workers are laboring at the riskiest and most visible jobs to police surveillance. They are arrested when they are no longer needed or once they become a threat to the day-to-day operation of trafficking drugs (for example, being caught by the police) while the (mostly male) middle managers above them remain in the

background. A symbiotic relationship, built largely off the labor of women, has formed between the prison and this chain. The arrest and incarceration of the drug trade's female labor force ensure the survival of illicit cocaine and opens up recruitment for new workers.

The Peruvian government has much to gain from this. It receives financial aid and other economic incentives when it adheres to war on drugs policies. Part of this adherence includes a "tough" anti-drugs stance with prison time for those arrested for drug offenses. An unofficial incentive is the profit from the wide-ranging corruption that exists at all levels of the police/prison system. There is potential to earn money on the side from the growing numbers of drug related arrests. A conversation among a group of foreign prisoners shows us how policing forces benefit:

Jean (South African) and Anna (Malaysian) talk to me about what had been stolen from them when they were arrested. Anna says that she had money stolen from her as well as her sneakers (she arrived at Santa Monica barefoot); Jean says that two cell phones were taken from her. Carol (Dutch) and Glenda (South African) join us and they talk about kilos disappearing from their cocaine stashes. They compare how much cocaine the police had stolen from them. Jean was transporting seven kilos on her but when she went to court, she was reported as only having had three. Glenda gives her a high five and exclaims that she was lucky. Carol had one kilo stolen. The discrepancy in cocaine amounts between arrest and appearance before a judge (fewer kilos than were actually carried) results in shorter sentences. (S. Campos, field notes, February 16, 2009).

This sort of corruption, as well as what I refer to as systemic blackmail, are common practices throughout the legal system, including Santa Monica. Systemic blackmail is the act of demanding money from individuals who are under arrest or incarcerated. It is systemic because it occurs consistently at practically every level of the state justice system. It is blackmail because the targets of this practice are those who have the least amount of resources and power. There is no equality between the two parties who exchange money. The more racially and economically marginalized the target, the less choice she has about meeting the monetary demands of the person in power. This term is used instead of bribery because it foregrounds the disparity between the representative of the justice system and the prisoner.

Women may be pressured to pay police officers when they are arrested. Once inside, money is used to make prison and court staff work a little faster and harder on individual cases. This income supplements the low wages paid to government employees. Systemic blackmail is then another component of the cocaine commodity chain. Drug trafficking organizations must purchase pathways into the licit sector in order to survive. They need their money laundered; they need police officers who will conveniently ignore illegal activities; they need judges who can lower sentences; they need prison staff who can sneak a stash of cocaine through security. Systemic blackmail supports a workforce in formal institutions that simultaneously maintains the running of the cocaine business. Elsa's account illustrates this pattern of abuse. She was in her late twenties when I met her and adamant about proving herself innocent of drug trafficking charges. She was a Peruvian national but a legal resident of the United States. She had been living and working in New York City for ten years. She

travelled to Lima as a birthday present for herself; she had not been back since she immigrated to the United States.

I met a man at a night club and stayed with him for a couple of nights at a hotel. He asked me to hold a package for him in my car and I said okay. He left and the cops came almost immediately. My case is being investigated, I've been here for ten months and I am so frustrated. When I was arrested the cops demanded \$3,000 in order for me to get my greencard back from them. I called my grandmother, who lives in Lima, and asked her for money. I gave them the money and I got my greencard back. The cops saw that I had an ATM card and they wanted me to go to the bank and withdraw money and but I kept saying no. They were anxious for the ATM withdrawal and they were going up and down the stairs of the hotel trying to get me to withdraw money from my account.

When she first arrived in Santa Monica, she was determined to fight the corruption that had landed her in prison but she gave up after months of facing continued extortion and fraud. In the end, Elsa pleaded guilty. She believed that fighting the case against her would only extend her incarceration and she wanted to start looking forward to one day leaving the prison. Because she had gone past the time limit for staying abroad, she lost her United States residency and access to her child in New York City.

Elsa's experience with the arresting police officers is not surprising given the severe problems that exist within the Peruvian National Police (PNP). First, it is understaffed [47], the PNP "averages 106,000 members between officers and non-commissioned officers. This number is insufficient to cover the internal security of the country and its more than 30 million inhabitants [48]." Secondly, it suffers from low morale and lack of professionalism. More than six thousand police officers were investigated for corruption from 2011 to 2012 [49]. A major corruption survey conducted by the Transparency Institute demonstrated that 44 % of all respondents in Peru reported paying a bribe to the police in the past twelve months (2013) [50]. The broader Peruvian criminal justice system also experiences serious problems. Prosecutors and judges, for example, must deal with an overload of cases, lack of personnel for proper management, slowness of court procedures, poor coordination with the police, shortage of adequate training and ultimately, corruption [47].

Janie's account draws out the intersection of gender and systemic blackmail. She was forty-two years old when I met her and had been separated from her second husband for a number of years. He introduced her to drug consumption and she had worked for him transporting drugs. She left him and drug trafficking and began her own small informal business selling soups at a local market.

My husband still hid drugs in my home. He asked my son (from her first marriage) to go with him to pick up a package and he went with him. The police stopped my husband and son and they were arrested. They were in a moto taxi and there were drugs there. My son went to prison because my husband claimed that he knew about the drugs. I became wanted by the police because I was married to this man, I destroyed my son's life. My son became addicted to drugs in the prison. He left after one year and six months because he was declared innocent. He went back to

the university but only for two months because he went back to drugs. His grandmother put him in a treatment center. My son began stealing for drugs and his grandmother didn't want anything to do with him anymore. The police would blackmail me so that I wouldn't be arrested; I'd pay them four-hundred to five-hundred soles. One day my husband took our other son drinking at a party. I got a call from someone telling me that they were both fighting. I went to the party and as I was taking my son outside, the police came and I was arrested. My husband let the police know that there was a warrant for my arrest and they demanded a bribe of \$5,000. I told them that I didn't have that kind of money. I gave them 1,000 soles and they let my son go. They put drugs on me – they wanted money and I threatened to tell about the bribes.

As the wife to a man who worked in the cocaine chain, Janie was also implicated in the case against her husband and her son. Her son's addiction is another example of how the chain makes use of the prison. It warehouses workers and simultaneously creates new drug users. Thus the prison and the cocaine chain are involved in a reciprocal relationship: the prison continues to receive new bodies and they go back to the chain as workers and/or consumers. Once they become unnecessary or dangerous to the survival of the chain, they are moved into the prison. The motivation behind all of this is profit from the lower-level selling of cocaine and from the higher-end deals. Both the prison and other criminal justice institutions in Peru become the recipients of this profit. In Janie's case, it was in the form of blackmail to the police so that she would not be arrested. There is money to be made from the people caught at the crosshairs of the transnational cocaine commodity chain and the war on drugs.

The corruption experienced by Janie was shaped by gender. For instance, the culturally constructed expectations of motherhood positioned her as the primary caretaker of her two sons. Her husband got them into trouble and it was her duty to get them out. Even after she paid for her son's release, the police continued to demand money and planted drugs in order to incriminate her. Janie was indicative of how Peruvian women work at the lowest and riskiest levels of the cocaine trade and how some enter the business through relationships with men. Due to their location in the cocaine chain, female workers may also be the easiest to blackmail and extort and consequently become a source of income for policing and carceral institutions.

Betty's story demonstrates how this systemic blackmail is also affected by Peru's insertion into the global economy, in this case through remittances. She had moved up in the cocaine business by taking orders from her home and was no longer selling on the street.

One day a woman came to deliver drugs to my house. She was carrying extra drugs because she had other deliveries to make. A group of men came into my home. The woman and I were sitting and chatting on my bed in my bedroom. The group of men ended up being the police. They found the drugs on the woman and arrested everyone in the house. Everything was taken from me. My son, the woman, my husband and some other people in the house were arrested. The delivery woman had family in Canada and the U.S. and they sent money so that the charge could be changed from selling to consuming (which carries a shorter sentence). They sent

\$5,000. The woman lied and said she was a user. She was the first person on the case to be released. It all fell on me. I blame myself.

Systemic blackmail operates within a broader global political economy. In this case it intersected with transnational migrant networks in order to benefit the recipients of bribes and those who had access to remittances. Betty did not have connections to this type of resource and received the full impact of the war on drugs.

Citizenship structured the experience of systemic blackmail in Santa Monica. *Talleres* were income-generating workshops sponsored by the prison. They not only brought in income but for every five days worked in a *taller*, one's sentence was reduced by one day. They could be manipulated by prison staff as a potential source of money. For example:

Cathy (North American) is a few weeks away from being released after two years inside. She tells me that she was very upset when she got back from speaking to her lawyer recently. "The man who is in charge of the paperwork that goes out to the judge, Sanchez, said that there is only proof that I worked six months of taller. I worked in taller for one year! There are six months missing." Fortunately Cathy has saved her receipts (she paid 22 soles a month for taller) but had sent them out with her belongings to her lawyer. Her lawyer will go through her things and find the receipts and bring them in. This sets Cathy back a couple of more weeks from being released.

"I was so angry that I started crying. Sanchez is an asshole! When he asked me for proof that I worked in the taller for those missing six months, he had a smirk on his face." Glenda (South African) and Cathy think that he was waiting for a bribe. "I won't give him one sol," Cathy says. "Because the same happened to Jenny (Dutch) and she paid him. He's asking for money." Glenda remarks, "Jenny must have paid a lot to be released without any problems." Cathy is frustrated and angry. (S. Campos, field notes, June 8, 2009)

Sanchez expected a bribe from Cathy because she was North American and he was suspected of delaying her release when she did not give him any money. In fact, he "lost" her paperwork two more times after the above incident and further hindered Cathy's release from Santa Monica. She eventually regretted not having given him any money. Cathy's status as a North American came with expectations and pressure from Peruvian workers in Santa Monica, expectations that she may not have wanted nor have been able to meet.

These and other incidents of corruption result from a government that is partially propped up by profits of the cocaine sector and a long-standing tradition of patronage and payoffs in Peru. Systemized blackmail is an extension of the globalization of cocaine. The public sector, particularly criminal justice institutions and employees, profit from this type of exploitation. The prison also makes money off prisoners in other ways besides bribes. They must pay for repairs, tables and chairs used for visiting days, supplies for workshops, and more. Rubi explained how this functioned:

You have to pay for everything in the prison – a table on visiting day: one sol; clean up: one sol; repairs: one sol. If you don't have the money for medication, you can't

have any. You have to pay to be able to work in a taller. If you don't have the money to pay, you get kicked out. The clinic is usually out of medicine. Toothaches are extra hard because there isn't any medicine for them. (She points to one of the few trees in the main patio) The women take bark from the tree to use on their toothaches.

Santa Monica also profited by forcing prisoners to pay for needed goods. A portion of the wages women earned inside the prison or money they received from relatives in Peru or abroad went back to the institution. The prison charged for basic supplies and services:

You have to pay for everything in there," Magda says, "shampoo, soap, detergent and you also need to pay for cleaning." She is in debt for 15 soles for bathroom cleaning. If she doesn't pay for the cleaning, she might get written up. (S. Campos, field notes, March 13, 2009).

A weekly collection from each prisoner went towards paying individuals who cleaned the floors, bathroom and eating area. Magda and other women complained of the pressures to participate in this collection. One had to earn money in order to be able to pay these and other fees. Starting a small store in Santa Monica was potentially profitable but also very hard to actually realize:

I ask Elena (Bolivian) about life in the prison. "There's no work," she tells me. "Only those who have capital and the foreign women have money. You need about 3,000 soles to start your own business selling food or groceries. To have a store inside, you also need capital. Women who set up their own businesses either get loans from the INPE staff or they have family who help them. (S. Campos, field notes, December 8, 2008).

Certain staff member in Santa Monica also doubled as loan sharks and this was another method of supplementing meager incomes. They also had access to a captive population and could easily track down loan recipients in order to demand repayment. For example, Elena recounted the following as she cried:

My psychologist loaned me fifty soles and is demanding it back, one way or another. The psychologist isn't allowed to loan money to anyone here. I was expecting to get money from Spain but it hasn't come in and I don't know where I am going to get the money.

Hence, Santa Monica benefits from cocaine trafficking in that it gets two important things from the women inside: income in the form of blackmail, fines and fees and their free labor. Because women are peripheral workers in this chain they serve as the insulating layer between law enforcement and drug distributors and are more susceptible to policing forces. This is why women's labor is the link between the illegal cocaine trade and incarceration.

Conclusion

This project is significant in several ways. First, the working model of intersectionality clarifies interactions inside Santa Monica and is a framework for understanding how oppressions are produced and reproduced in this particular site. This model is a result of

previous research that has emphasized the inclusion of various structural inequalities when studying women in prison. For example, Bloom's [51] work on the "compounding effects of race, class, and gender inequality as factors in women's rising imprisonment" (p. 190) used an intersectional method that revealed the "triple marginalization" (p. 191) experienced by incarcerated women of color. Sudbury [52] also advocated for the use of intersectionality when writing on this topic through her call for an end to a "unidimensional analyses that provide *either* a race-bases *or* a gendered *or* a class-bases analyses" (p. xvii). This ethnographic project is a concrete response to this appeal. The development of the model for this particular study and its application is the first such attempt in a Peruvian prison. It was constructed as patterns emerged from the relationships between social categories inside Santa Monica. This framework becomes an explicit way to understand how structural inequalities influence one another in a carceral setting. This proposed template is important because as the number of women in prison grows in much of Latin America, it is vital to analyze the obstacles they face, how they are constructed and how prisoners attempt to overcome them. This model can be tested in other prisons to determine how social divisions work in different penal institutions.

Also, women's labor in the transnational cocaine commodity chain demonstrates that the relationship between the legal and illegal is gray and porous. Several of the narratives included exemplify how some Peruvian women with limited choices for earning an income moved back and forth between informal and illegal markets. Once we understand that there is no clear division between the two and that in fact, they may overlap and blur together, we can begin to question exactly who and what make up the "criminal." By doing so, we turn the lens to the formal and legal domain, which may be just as unethical, oppressive and violent as the illicit. In fact, it was the licit structure of society that led women to smuggling or selling cocaine. The criminal in their stories were instances of sexism, government neglect, racism and economic marginalization.

The increasing rates of incarcerated women in Peru are related to the country's integration into a free market global economy. Poor women who have not benefited from the government's neoliberal approach to economic growth may turn to the criminalized cocaine market as an income earning strategy. This is a pathway that may unfortunately lead them to the prison. Rather than framing Santa Monica as an oppositional force to illegal cocaine, I argue that it has become a part of the transnational cocaine commodity chain and increasingly submerged into the underside of globalization while Peru implements its current strategies to economic development. This symbiosis is ruthless, especially to those who already occupy a subordinate status. Drug trafficking organizations purposefully recruit easily exploitable workers from the licit economy and then set them up to go to prison.

The Peruvian state plays a part in this because of the financial rewards to be gained. It collaborates in using and then disposing of female laborers of the TCCC. Hence, the women in this work are victims of the cocaine market and of their own government. It is a war that is comparable in some ways to the civil war that only ended about fourteen years ago. In both, those who have suffered most are located at the bottom of the country's racial and economic hierarchy. The reasons behind this current war may be different but the effects are the same: doing away with those deemed marginal. This work documents how penal

institutions and the war on drugs are either a colossal failure, or the goal was always to remove from view those who are on the edges of society. Regardless, the collusion between the prison and illegal cocaine creates insecurity for *all* Peruvian citizens.

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