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Abstract

Prison is a study field in which everyone – inmates, guards, and prison researchers – experiences powerful sensory stimuli comprised of sounds, sights, and smells in a crowded, closed space. Yet traditional academic research has socialized researchers to “wash away” their physical and emotional feelings for fear they would jeopardize the scientific nature and validity of their studies. Nevertheless, at times in a prison setting, the researchers’ bodies are the only tool that enables them to document what goes on; so much so that ignoring their bodies and emotions leads to a loss of valuable information. Using embodied autoethnography (EA), I have examined bodily experiences in prison as reflected in the staff’s conversations about the prisoners, how the prisoners speak of themselves, and the researcher’s own prison experience while facilitating theater and study groups in an Israeli prison. I contend that the staff treats the prisoners’ bodies as one would a *messy body*, which then becomes a metonymy for the prisoners’ criminal personality. Although the prisoners internalize this standpoint, they continuously undermine it by boasting bodies that are both aesthetic and tidy. In conclusion, I claim that prison inmates are attentive to the self-body of all those with whom they interact. They use performance and physical gestures to build relationships while expressing vulnerability and empathy. Prisoners forge mutual emotional ties with researchers they identify as having a psychic deadness and with whom they are able to engage in a process of emotional bartering. The study sheds light on the incarceration experience and effects of human bodies in prison, emphasizing the importance of the use of qualitative methodologies that give voice to body, senses, and emotions.

Keywords

embodied autoethnography, autoethnography, embodiment, incarceration, prison studies

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Incarcerated Bodies – Embodied Autoethnography in Prison

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Prison is a study field in which everyone – inmates, guards, and prison researchers – experiences powerful sensory stimuli comprised of sounds, sights, and smells in a crowded, closed space. Yet traditional academic research has socialized researchers to “wash away” their physical and emotional feelings for fear they would jeopardize the scientific nature and validity of their studies. Nevertheless, at times in a prison setting, the researchers’ bodies are the only tool that enables them to document what goes on; so much so that ignoring their bodies and emotions leads to a loss of valuable information. Using embodied autoethnography (EA), I have examined bodily experiences in prison as reflected in the staff’s conversations about the prisoners, how the prisoners speak of themselves, and the researcher’s own prison experience while facilitating theater and study groups in an Israeli prison. I contend that the staff treats the prisoners’ bodies as one would a *messy body*, which then becomes a metonymy for the prisoners’ criminal personality. Although the prisoners internalize this standpoint, they continuously undermine it by boasting bodies that are both aesthetic and tidy. In conclusion, I claim that prison inmates are attentive to the self-body of all those with whom they interact. They use performance and physical gestures to build relationships while expressing vulnerability and empathy. Prisoners forge mutual emotional ties with researchers they identify as having a psychic deadness and with whom they are able to engage in a process of emotional bartering. The study sheds light on the incarceration experience and effects of human bodies in prison, emphasizing the importance of the use of qualitative methodologies that give voice to body, senses, and emotions.

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Introduction

At the turn of the 20th century, positivist theory became the dominant approach in criminology studies and soon turned into a prominent research and medical model. The positivist perspective asserts that prisons take care of and rehabilitate prisoners, thus rendering incarceration an appropriate counteraction of crime (Rothman, 1980). Since the mid-1970s, there has been a significant increase in U.S. incarceration rate. In fact, the USA boasts the largest prison population worldwide, with the highest incarceration rate per capita¹.

¹ According to the JCPR (Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research), as of 2018, the USA takes first place with 2,094,000 inmates. https://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total?field_region_taxonomy_tid=All

However, since the 1950s and 1960s, a different assessment has been formed, whereby the “incarceration industry’s” contribution to reducing crime was relatively small (Travis et al., 2014). Furthermore, despite dozens of years of mass incarceration, the rate of violent crimes in the USA remained one of the highest in the world (Currie, 2013). This critical approach soon led to a transformation in the methodology of prison research, during which researchers began to meet inmates unmediated and employ various methodologies such as ethnographic approaches, participant observation, and in-depth interviews (Copes & Hochstetler, 2017; Sutton, 2011). While these methods led researchers to form a closer acquaintanceship with the inmates, they nevertheless remained on the fringes of criminological research (Copes et al., 2016).

Bodies in Prison – Inmates, Staff, and Researchers

Prison is a heterotopia (Foucault, 1970) – a space that is “other” (Foucault, 1966/1970), the entry to which is expected to attack the senses. Researchers are engulfed by beeping doors opening, metal doors slamming loudly, alarms, announcements on public address systems, and barking guard dogs (Wacquant, 2002). The smells in prison are different too (Chamberlen, 2018). Spatially, prison is a closed, claustrophobic place, consisting of a geometric system of cells, dungeons, corridors, and wings (Childers, 2013). It is inhabited by three main populations: prisoners, prison staff, and citizens who come there (such as visitors, counselors, and researchers). For all three, prison is a stimulus-laden environment, an intense sensory experience that is radically different from the outside world.

The presence of one’s body in prison is intensified first and foremost among the prisoners themselves. Gresham Sykes' (2021) five "pains of imprisonment" – loss of liberty, desirable goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security – are directly targeted at inmates’ bodies, thus affecting their appearance, health, and personal wellbeing. Thus, the loss of an inmate's autonomy renders their body public property, and, as such, an object subject to scrutiny (Wahidin, 2002).

Inmates' bodies are located in a limited material network. As is only natural, a body in prison seeks to move, but keeps colliding with the barrier of "I cannot" (Leder, 2016, p. 176): I cannot leave prison, I cannot move freely, I cannot have privacy, and I cannot fulfill my goals. Consequently, inmates often have the need to "separate" themselves from their own bodies because they feel their bodies do not belong to them (Chamberlen, 2018). However, the opposite process takes place simultaneously: inmates start noticing their bodies and reclaiming them; they fortify them and turn them into a haven, using them as a means of self-expression; for instance, when tattooing them, as well as a source of pleasure when using drugs or engaging in sexual behavior. They even utilize their bodies as means of escaping reality by using their imaginations (Leder, 2016).

The prison environment has a dramatic physical and emotional impact on staff. Officers suffer from chronic workplace stress, while the physical conditions in a prison – limited access to natural light, high noise levels, and lack of privacy – cause diseases and lead to increased use of addictive substances (Bierie, 2012). Daily exposure to interactions with criminals, as well as the consequent need for high alertness, increases psychological and physical stress. Many prison guards adopt the "macho" image and deny stress, when, in fact, they face a variety of problems: health and mental issues such as anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, and PTSD, as well as low performance at work (Evers et al., 2020).

Sarah Tait (2008) created a typology of five types of prison officers according to their approaches to care toward prisoners. She distinguished between *True cares* and *Limited cares*, both of whom demonstrate caring behaviors; *Old school*, that engage in caring pragmatically and minimizing the use of force; and officers classified as *Conflicted* and *Damaged*, who

express minimal involvement in caring, presumably due to ongoing trauma at work. These officers are the most detached from their feelings, avoid demonstrating care toward prisoners, or are even aggressive toward them. In men's prisons, the rate of identified conflicted officers were 46% (Tait, 2008).

Body curiosity – how I will feel and what I will experience in the prison heterotopia – is an incentive for many a prison researcher. "Many not only want to 'know' and 'understand' but also want to anticipate how they will 'feel' when they experience a prison environment for the first time" (Jewkes, 2012, p. 64).

Indeed, conducting research in prison dramatically affects the researchers' bodies (Liebling, 1999; Sutton, 2011). Prison researchers feel alert as a result of the potential risk of being harmed by physical violence, graphic violent depictions, or sexist remarks (Adams, 2021; Jewkes, 2012). Liebling (1999) describes how, after being in prison, her research staff used to drink, smoke, and drive faster than usual – behaviors that express a need to vent the anxiety which accumulated in their bodies. Powerful positive physical and emotional feelings are also experienced by prison researchers. In prison creative writing workshops, in which researchers participated along with inmates, warm and reciprocal emotional bonds were formed with the participants (Hinton-Smith & Seal, 2019). However, despite the fact that entering a prison is often motivated by an interest in the body, and notwithstanding the dramatic effect on the researcher's body, senses, and emotions, academic research conducted in prisons tends to ignore "the presence of the embodied, subjectively perceiving researcher" (Rowe, 2014, p. 404). Up until ten years ago, most prison studies were objective, disinterested, and apathetic, and the researcher was absent from them as an individual (Jewkes, 2012; Liebling, 2014). Rowe (2014, p. 404) describes how "the researcher often all but disappears, confined to methodological footnotes and appendices and seldom visible or acknowledged in the analysis proper." The tradition of academic research in prison has socialized the researchers to be objective, inducing them to "wash away" physical and emotional feelings such as anxiety, confusion, and vulnerability (Copes et al., 2016). The phenomenon is intensified among female researchers, who, while in prison, try to obscure their physical presence because they are supervised and reprimanded for their appearance (Adams, 2021; Hinton-Smith & Seal, 2019). Researchers also do not want to be perceived as incompetent, and fear that physical and emotional reflexivity will impair the validity of their research (Jewkes, 2012).

Given the centrality of one's body in prison, the present study aimed to examine the experience and perception of prisoners' bodies from three perspectives: staff's view of the inmates' bodies; inmates' own view of their bodies; and the researcher's personal experience, all through the use of the embodied autoethnography (EA) methodology. The overarching research question was: How are the bodies of prisoners experienced by the staff, prisoners themselves, and researchers?

The overarching research question was subsequently divided into the two following sub-questions:

1. What physical experiences do prisoners display using their bodies? How do they describe them?
2. How is the physical communication between the researcher and prisoners expressed?

Although physical curiosity guides researchers when conducting prison research, and despite the fact that prisons are sensorially powerful fields of research that both physically and emotionally impacts researchers, the *researcher's body* has not been used to date as scholars' main and declared research tool. The present study therefore sought to fill this void by offering the use of EA, which places the researcher's physical and emotional experience at the center

and links her personal experience with the socio-cultural issue of a body in prison. The target audience of the present study is prison researchers, as it aims to draw attention to the methodological potential inherent to using the body as a research tool.

In addition, researchers have pointed out the problems associated with conventional qualitative research methodologies such as interviews: bureaucratic difficulties, cancellations, and long waits, along with ethical complexity and pleasing behaviors on the part of the interviewed prisoners (Sutton, 2011). Embodied autoethnography preserves the natural setting of the field research, enabling researchers to glean significant information while avoiding disrupting prison routine or creating unnatural situations that affect the data.

Prisoners' attitudes towards their bodies, as described in the literature, are binary – alienation from the body vs opposition to the degrading attitude and re-embodiment (Chamberlen, 2018; Leder, 2016). There is no holistic and complex observation of how prisoners “do their body” (Butler, 1997). The present study fills this gap by examining not only how inmates internalize or reject being marked and abjected in this environment, but how they establish full and sensitive relationships through physical communication within the prison's restrictive system.

In an age of mass incarceration, which fails to rehabilitate criminals and prevent crime, the information obtained may shed light on the incarceration experience and its effects on the body. In light of the findings produced using EA, researchers and policy makers will be able to refine theories, outline effective policies to curb crime, and improve the therapeutic services provided to prisoners.

The Researcher's Positionality and Body

At the end of 2017 I underwent surgery that had many implications on my day-to-day functioning. I did not sleep at night, experienced a loss of sexuality, and was very vulnerable emotionally. Outwardly I continued to function, but inside, I felt powerless. In a theater production I had staged in prison several years earlier, I met Michal,² a prison rehabilitation officer. I contacted her and offered to open a theater group in prison, based on the prisoners' life stories. Michal accepted the offer and took the necessary steps to obtain the required approvals.

The theatrical technique I used was based on playback theater – improvisational theater in which participants listen to the life stories of their peers and turn them into a theatrical piece (Fox, 1994). While hearing life stories, the participants practice listening and empathy skills. They learn to recognize the “heart” of the story and the range of emotions within it. From the artistic-theatrical aspect, participants acquire a variety of improvisation techniques, including use of images and metaphors, singing and movement, as well as familiarity with diverse patterns of playback theater (Salas, 2000). Michal was initially present alongside me during the sessions; however, in time, she often left the room, leaving me alone with the prisoners, unattended.

The activity took place in a high-security prison in Israel intended for criminal offenders. In it, 70% of the inmates were Arab Israeli citizens. The sessions were conducted in Hebrew, so that all participants, and especially the rehabilitation officer, could understand what was being said. However, as a result, many participants were forced to talk about personal and emotional issues in a language other than their native tongue.

After about a year and a half of weekly theater activity, I realized that one of the necessary things for inmates sentenced to lengthy prison terms is an encounter with the outside

² All names and identifying details in this article have been changed to protect the privacy of research participants.

world. Thus, along with the theater group, I founded the “Turning a Page” project, in which Jewish and Arab prisoners meet once a month with Jewish and Arab citizens and study various cultural texts with them. Cumulatively, for two and a half years, I spent about 400 hours in the prison and met with some 40 prisoners – 18 as part of the theater group and twelve more as part of the Turning a Page project. My visits to the prison ceased in early 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several rules make data collection difficult in prison. I was personally given a detailed briefing, undergoing a security check at the start of every visit. I was also required to leave my personal belongings outside, entering the prison without a recording device or camera, nor even my field diary. The prohibition of any type of recording device left only my own body as the sole “device” by means of which I could get an impression, experience, recollect, and record. I absorbed the prison environment and all that transpired in it through my body as “*enfleshed knowledge*” (Spry, 2001).

However, it was not only the lack of technological aids that I encountered, but also the habitus, which was subject to extreme supervision, as well as the limitation imposed on speech and the transfer of information, all of which had intensified the presence of the body. Prison inmates are required to wear uniforms and are prohibited from making themselves conspicuous by means of personal accessories. Upon entering the prison, I had to rely on my own observation and recollection of unique bodily characteristics in order to distinguish between inmates. The inmates, in turn, unwittingly developed body communication skills, which included picking up on other people’s tiniest bodily nuances. I was also subject to prison supervision: upon entry, I was made to sign a pledge to the effect that I would report any unusual behavior on the part of an inmate. The rehabilitation officers would occasionally comment on my outward appearance or the activities in which I had the prisoners engage. In time, I got used to this panoptical habitus, learning to express myself implicitly through my body. Negligible body expressions such as a smile, movement, gesture, or handshake, and even sniffing, served the inmates and myself in our communication.

My body became both open and attentive. I grew mindful of the bodies of people with whom I associated, and who evoked in me physical reactions such as tears, trembling, and jerky movements triggered by awkwardness, for instance (Ellingson, 2017). Simultaneously, I began to be in tune with my own body vitals, such as energy levels, muscle tension, hunger, and pain. I listened to Alison Liebling’s (1999, p. 475) advice to make “full use of your self.” I was able to identify with her remarks on prison research: “We often learn most when our bodies do the work for us, detecting cues, recognizing danger, sensing tension, or sharing frustration” (Liebling, 2014, p. 483). I immersed myself in the prison’s cultural web (Ugelvik, 2014), and used my body-self, senses, and body.

Only when I returned home did I translate my bodily impressions into notes in my field diary. I recorded what happened in the group to remember what we did and create a sequence between sessions, but the main motivation behind my autoethnographic writing was that the relationships, norms, and discourse in prison were detached from anything I had ever known before. Autoethnographic writing was a process of inquiry, an attempt to tell myself a story that, despite not being linear and coherent, could give meaning to the raw experience. My body, emotional experiences, and autoethnographic writing served as an intellectual resource, and became the data base.

Method

Research Context

Israel has a total of 21 correctional facilities: six high-security prisons for Palestinian prisoners charged with involvement in terrorist activity; 13 criminal prisons for Israeli citizens (both Arab and Jewish); one women's prison; and one juvenile prison. In 2019, of the 9167 criminal offenders incarcerated in Israel, 40% were Arabs, more than twice their percentage in the overall population³.

The "ideal" Israeli body is masculine, Jewish, European, heterosexual, and healthy. In Israel, "other body" types – with disabilities, elderly, Palestinian, or immigrant – are excluded (Weiss, 2004). The bodies of many prisoners are very different from the exemplary body, and, as such, become an intersectional body – one that acts as an intersection of sorts, a junction of marginal categories (Davis, 2008): Arab prisoners; sick inmates; or anyone whose body is considered blemished.

Participants

The study population included about 40 inmates who participated in the theater groups and study group I facilitated, as well as three rehabilitation officers with whom I interacted regularly on a weekly basis, and accompanied my activities in prison. The inmates were all male, aged 19 to 46 years, who had committed serious violent offenses – murder and aggravated physical violence – and had been sentenced to life imprisonment or imprisonment for over ten years.

Officer Michal recruited the prisoners for the groups. She told me she had chosen "good" prisoners who had participated in previous educational and therapeutic groups, and demonstrated perseverance. Prisoners' participation in the groups was voluntary.

Data Collection: The Embodied Autoethnography (EA) Methodology

Conducting research in prison may prove to be a difficult and frustrating task. Prison is a dynamic environment, saturated with bureaucratic and emotional barriers. Thus, a methodological adjustment is required, both for the unique characteristics of the field and for the research questions. The research methodology I used in this study is embodied autoethnography (EA).

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that uses personal experience to describe and critique social practices and phenomena (Adams et al., 2015). The roots of autoethnography can be found, *inter alia*, in existentialist philosophy, which struggled to find meaning in an absurd world. The question "What is going on here?" (Poulos, 2021, p. 31) is particularly relevant in the prison context, where occurrences are experienced as chaotic and fragmentary, and autoethnographic writing is used as "a way to clarify and make sense of human experience" (Poulos, 2021, p. 32).

Autoethnography may be written by researchers who embody in their identities and bodies the phenomenon they are researching and writing about, such as Stacy Holman Jones (2005), who wrote about adopting a child as she herself was an adoptive mother. In other autoethnographies, however, the authors do not belong to the group they study, but are present in the field with their bodies, describing their experiences there, as Yael Cohen (Cohen et al.,

³ https://www.gov.il/he/departments/publications/reports/2019_report The 2019 report of the IPS (Israel Prison Service). Published in July 2020.

2017) did while researching othering processes in soup kitchens as a customer, when in reality, she herself is not underprivileged. The present study, therefore, is an autoethnography based on my stay in prison as well as my physical and emotional experiences as a facilitator and researcher, not a prisoner.

The “embodiment” methodology uses the researcher's body as the research tool, placing it at center stage, and directing it to perceive the field and interactions in it from a sensory perspective. The researchers are “full of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and vision, open to the buzz and the joy and the sweat and the tears - the erotics - of daily life” (Brady, 2004, p. 628).

For this purpose, researchers employing the embodiment methodology make use of the sensorium, processing all perceptual and sensory information received by the body-self. The underlying assumption is that the senses do not belong to a particular body part; rather, the researcher's body undergoes a complex process that produces a synthesis between sensory perception (created by the five senses) and the “somatic senses” – external and internal sensations relating to balance, muscle tone, and movement (Jones et al., 2006). When the researchers become attentive to their sensorium, they “calibrate” their body and turn it into a sensitive seismograph. They are then able to pay attention in real time to moments of physical reactions, such as a feeling of suffocation or abdominal cramping. As the researchers become accustomed to paying attention to their physical self, their sensitivity to the sounds, smells, and textures that exist in the environment also increases, and they take more notice of the performance, clothing, gestures, and movements of study participants (Shilling, 2012).

When the researchers enter the field, they become a physical subject in someone else's world (Field-Springer, 2020). They adapt their bodies to the physical performance and speech form of the participants, learning their social practices and communication methods from them (Ellingson, 2017). Attention to the physical experience of others leads researchers to a “deep understanding” of the subjects: “To understand is to draw on the sensations on your skin, in your bones, and in the pit of your stomach. It is to feel the pain and suffering of others, as if it is experienced by your own body” (Yoo, 2021, p. 723). The sensations in their body may teach researchers from within how the participants feel – a process that Laura Ellingson (2017, p. 88) called an “emotional bartering process.”

In the present study I have provided the perspectives of the three prison populations – prison rehabilitation staff, prisoners, and researcher – in relation to the inmates' bodies, assuming that the body experience in prison is not fully subjective and not fully objective, but reciprocal, with the three actors influencing one another (Van Manen, 1997/2016).

Embodiment as a research methodology draws the researcher's attention to the physical sensations and material environment, but no less so to the words, concepts, and texts used in the field. In this study, I refer to the staff's discourse on prisoners' bodies, as well as to the prisoners' discourse about themselves, because even the most physical sensations are derived from the descriptions enabled by language (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004). When the staff talk about prisoners, or when prisoners talk about their own bodies, language mediates the experience, shapes it, and even imposes it on the body.

During data collection, I included my memories and physical-personal experience as an observer-participant in prison activities, combining them with conversations and observations I had with and of the prisoners and officers. I documented this data when I returned home, and incorporated it into the literature on prison and body, so that my experience as a researcher was woven into the culture being studied (Poulos, 2021).

I wrote the findings in a first-person, subjective voice, which invites readers to place themselves in the action. By using first-person writing, I tie myself to other characters in the story. Being the narrator, I position myself as a medium for creating knowledge and meaning around what is happening in prison (Adams et al., 2015).

EA is an appropriate methodology for the field of prison research and for examining research questions from both a practical perspective and in terms of relationships with inmates. Researchers' entry into prison is often viewed by the authorities and staff as a disruption to the routine of prison life (Sutton, 2011). Researchers must synchronize themselves with other inmates' activities, such as work, mealtimes, visits, canteen, and travel to seek medical care or appear in court. Coordinating in advance is not always helpful, as the prison is saturated with unexpected events. More than once, researchers are forced to wait a long time for the prisoners. Their arrival is often cancelled and the normal course of research is disrupted (Sutton, 2011). Beyond the technical difficulties, prison researchers face a difficulty in creating rapport and trust with the inmates. Inmates shy away from recordings of interviews and refrain from participating in research (Copes et al., 2013). In the present study, the prisoners knew me as a group facilitator; they trusted me, and did not have to take part in an artificial and inconvenient research situation. Collecting the data in EA during my routine activities in prison allowed me to speak to the inmates and officers in person, observe how they behave and act in their natural context, and be attentive to the behaviors and discourse as well as the feelings and emotions that arose in me.

Ethical Considerations

Prison researchers have pointed out with dismay that writing about prisons is in itself a process confined to a "prison." Liebling (2014) described how the mistrust and suspicion towards researchers on the part of prison authorities have grown over the years. Indeed, one of the major challenges in prison research is access to the field. Obtaining approvals from the Israel Prison Service's (IPS) research committee and Institutional Review Boards (IRB) requires time and effort, and there is often a conflict between the incarceration authorities' requirements and those of the IRB committees (Liebman et al., 2014). By using an autoethnography research method in which the author writes about herself and her own experiences, one might assume that these tedious procedures would be foregone; however, although autoethnography is writing about oneself, "our self-narratives stray into and cross over the paths of others" (Turner, 2013, p. 216). Furthermore, those "others" have not necessarily given their explicit permission for their stories to appear in our papers. The dilemma is further intensified because those same "others" who are present in my stories are prisoners, and informed consent is considered problematic among the prison population (Copes et al., 2013; Hinton-Smith & Seal, 2019). Sometimes, the presence of the researcher entails promises and hopes for the prisoners. Some prisoners may wish to leave a good impression on the researcher in the hope that s/he will give a favorable account of them to the prison authorities. Others agree out of general hope that some benefit will emerge from their participation (Copes & Hochstetler, 2017). "I agree to everything," one of the inmates told me. Prisoners also lack the narrative privilege (Bolen & Adams, 2017): they do not have the physical resources and appropriate social identity to publish their narratives and be heard. Yet, Lydia Turner (2013) believes writers to be the exclusive owners of everything that happens to them, basing her argument on the following constructivist ontology: when researchers write about their personal experiences, even if other people appear in them, they reflect the researchers' constructions and interpretations of the words and actions of others.

In accordance with the sensitivity and demands expected in autoethnography regarding ethical issues, such as relational ethics (Adams et al., 2015) and friendship as a method (Tillmann-Healy, 2003), I used the following practices to protect participants' privacy, avoid causing harm, and maximize the benefit derived by them.

1. **Using pseudonyms, composite characters and composite narrative accounts:** since the focus of the present study is the inmates as a group, I used pseudonyms, *composite characters* (Ellis, 2004), and *composite narrative accounts* (Caine et al., 2017), merging numerous details and occurrences. Composite representation protects prisoners' privacy, prevents identifications, and expresses the group perspective. It also reflects the bodily sensation experienced by many prisoners whereby boundaries between bodies are dissolved (Chamberlen, 2018), or, as one of the prisoners I met said, "Our stories became very similar."
2. **Conducting research in a natural setting:** using the natural setting of the field is one of the conventions in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In prison, such practice entails a unique ethical implication, for prisoners' collaboration with researchers and being interviewed by them may be interpreted by other prisoners as violating the "prisoner code" and informing, leading to study participants finding themselves in harm's way (Copes et al., 2013). The use of EA enabled the research to be conducted in a natural setting – a group theater session or study session – while maintaining participants' safety.
3. **Fictionalizing:** I turned the original stories I heard from inmates into *creative non-fiction* (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2020), choosing specific elements from the stories and reorganizing them, not only in order to blur the identities of the narrators, but also to make the writing more *evocative* (Leavy, 2020). I also recorded the findings in the form of short vignettes, with the hope that my storytelling will humanize the prisoners, and bring the readers closer to their world (Liebling, 2014).
4. **Using the methodology of embodiment and vulnerability:** unlike researchers' traditional paternalistic position in which their emotional self remains hidden, autoethnography typically embraces vulnerability as a way of understanding emotions and promoting social life (Adams et al., 2015). I had entered the prison from a vulnerable physical position and, by paying attention to my physical dimensions within myself and the environment, maintained a sensitive and compassionate point of view throughout data collection and writing, allowing for moments of mutual vulnerability (Adams, 2021; Ellingson, 2017). When we expose our vulnerability, we accommodate the narrative privilege (Bolen & Adams, 2017) and commit ourselves to improving the lives of others and ourselves (Adams et al., 2015).
5. **Empathic listening to prisoners' life stories:** in exchange for the information and stories provided to me by the inmates, I reciprocated by being attentive to their stories. Prisoners' stories about themselves are a therapeutic tool that allows them to be heard and navigate through prison life (Copes et al., 2013; Copes & Hochstetler, 2017; Goffman, 1961). Prisoners attach great value to the opportunity to tell their stories through writing or creative activity, rather than as part of a therapeutic group (Hinton-Smith & Seal, 2019).

Findings

To extract the findings, I re-read my field notes, which was a categorizing work (Adams et al., 2015). I searched for clues – repetitive images, expressions and experiences – in order to find recurring patterns in the actions and discourse in prison and create thematization. I found that the body in prison theme recurred in both prisoners' stories and behavior, as well as in the words used by the staff and in my own personal descriptions. The body experience in prison is organized according to three points of view:

1. The prison staff's perspective: how the prisoners' bodies were experienced and described by the rehabilitation officers.
2. The prisoners' point of view: how the prisoners related to their own bodies and described them.
3. My own personal point of view as a researcher: in this section I described my physical experience in prison in relation to myself and in relation to the bodies of the prisoners with whom I had interacted.

I used the participants' perspectives as well as my own to create verisimilitude – a complex description of reality (Adams et al., 2015). The interweaving of personal experience in other narratives – those of the staff and prisoners – creates a thicker description of the cultural phenomenon (Poulos, 2021) of body experience in prison.

I presented the findings in the realistic autoethnography genre: a text that separates personal experience from analysis, and includes “story and analysis, showing and interpretation” (Adams et al., 2015, p. 85). The presentation of the findings therefore included vignettes: brief occurrences which illustrate and embody the physical occurrence in prison from different perspectives. After each vignette is presented, a theoretical interpretation and/or explanation is provided. Theoretical interpretation is a way of thinking, observing, and asking about what is happening in the stories, challenging beliefs and practices while making suggestions for understanding what is happening (Adams et al., 2015). In the last, personal part, when describing my own physical experience in prison, the embodied autoethnography incorporated expressionist, confessional parts, in which I focused on my inner feelings of embarrassment, confusion, and uncertainty (Adams et al., 2015; Poulos, 2021).

The Prisoners' Bodies as Reflected by the Staff's Point of View and Discourse

Oftentimes, the prison staff's conversations revolved around the prisoners' bodies: their appearance and level of cleanliness. The blemished body became a metonymy for their blemished personalities.

I arrive to theater class with the prisoners. Despite the heat, Meir wears a long-sleeved orange shirt zipped up to his thick, sweaty neck. Lesions cover the entire surface of his palms, which protrude from the ends of his sleeves. His knuckles are red and itchy. Meir can sense that I am looking at his palms. "I'm here, but I won't go in to class today," he says as he cracks his knuckles. "I have 'bed bugs' under my skin."

Yusef explains, "He has lice under his skin."

"What??"

Michal calls me into her office and says, "Don't be alarmed by Meir. It's from the blankets. Scabies." Michal sits down in front of her computer, typing and reading aloud: "Scabies - a skin disease. A parasite insect penetrates the skin and the female lays eggs. The parasites use their mouths and front legs to dig tunnels inside the skin.' They dig tunnels!" Michal is shocked. She continues: "The parasite causes severe itching.' - Disgusting! - 'The disease is especially common in people living in overcrowded conditions.' Do you know how filthy it is here? It's hard to get rid of it."

The physical conditions in prison do not encourage tidiness and cleanliness; it is also very crowded. However, when the officer says, "It's filthy here," her words do not only refer to the visible filth and lack of hygiene; rather, they reference Meir's crime as being "filthy." On another occasion, Michal advised me to refrain from surfing the Internet and reading about the inmates' offenses. Michal used similar phrases: "The descriptions are graphic, filthy. If you read, it will be *hard for you to get rid of it*." Meir, like many of the inmates, is serving time for murder. From Michal's remarks, it seems as if something of the *fundamental pollution* (Kristeva, 1982, p. 109), the decay of death, worms, and maggots has infested Meir. The repulsion felt for Meir is affected by the aversion to the crimes he has committed. However, Michal talks about Meir's *body* – the scabies and difficulty to stay clean. In her words, the prisoners are observed and apprehended according to the offense they committed, and it becomes their identity.

The following vignette illustrates how, not only prisoners' bodies, but their emotions, such as pain or vulnerability, are also perceived as dirt and filth.

When Michal, the rehabilitation officer, escorts me out at the end of a session, I mention Addel, who voiced his difficulties. "He is in a delicate position," I say.

"Yes, I know. I'm in charge of their ward. He is looking for someone who can contain him. Every time he finds somebody – he gets verbal diarrhea. He dumps it all on anyone willing to listen."

I find myself choking. My stomach cramps. Such talk dehumanizes the prisoners. But you know how it is – the officers are worn-out; the work is so taxing and despicable but nevertheless... I care for Addel. I don't consider his stories to be verbal diarrhea.

Invalids or terminally ill patients often cannot control their bodily fluids, such as urine, blood, feces, vomit, bile, and phlegm. This bodily phenomenon is not only a violation of biological boundaries, but also of social ones. Such bodies are considered *messy bodies*, bodies that are out of control (Ellingson, 2017, p. 73). They are stigmatized and as such, cause aversion. The crime committed by Addel was a violation of social boundaries, but the officer talks of his *body* as being out of control. Michal wants to express the fact that Addel talks too much; that he is sensitive and chatty and oppressive. She does so by talking of his body: his body is suffering from "verbal diarrhea." Addel's words are not perceived as conveying ideas or feelings; rather, they are viewed as "diarrhea" – body waste; not just any waste, but the worst kind – a foul-smelling liquid, stemming from the very insides of the prisoner; his guts.

The bodies of prison researchers have a precarious status – betwixt and between the prisoners and staff. Researchers do not wear uniforms, and when meeting the prisoners, they try to avoid the power struggles and symbolic practices used by staff. However, in order to persevere in their field work, the researchers try to display loyalty to the system when interacting with the staff (Hinton-Smith & Seal, 2019; Jewkes, 2012). When it comes to Addel's story, my body contains a dichotomy. I hear the despicable talk of him and keep silent, unwilling to enter into conflict with the officer; but at the same time, my body rebels – my stomach cramps, I feel like I'm choking, and my heart goes out to Addel.

How the Prisoners View Their Own Bodies

The buildings, bars, locks, staff, and daily routine oppress prisoners and affect their bodies. Seemingly, these are all external limitations that confine the body; however, prisoners experience their own bodies as collaborating conspirators: their bodies have committed the crimes; their bodies were apprehended and incarcerated. The thought that is on prisoners' minds is: *if I had no body, nobody would be able to observe me, hurt me, punish me*. Prisoners internalize the words used to describe their inflicted bodies, and end up detesting them, wanting to avenge and punish them (Chamberlen, 2018). At the beginning of one of the sessions, we started with a short round of "how are you", when Alex said:

Please excuse me, but I wish to talk about going to the toilet. Today I woke up and felt I could not urinate. I needed to pee really badly, but I couldn't! I started screaming for them to take me to the clinic, that something was wrong! They took me to the clinic and checked me, they made sure everything was okay. I felt happy.

Alex perceived his body as a source of suffering: The body accumulates waste, and is unable to dispose of it. He views his body as a faulty cesspit, a blocked urinal. These images convey very deep revulsion.

Urinating is an act of release which is juxtaposed to the socialization their bodies undergo: it must close up, constrain itself, hold everything in. Alex failed to do so. His cry – "Take me to the clinic!" – was an expression of "I cannot" (Leder, 2016, p. 176); *I cannot even pee on my own*. In much the same way that Alex has internalized the fact that he was controlled, observed, adhering; he was also unable to do the simplest of acts associated with a private, autonomous body. Hence, the waste accumulated within him. Only after receiving the formal seal of approval from the authorities that he was "okay," did he calm down and walk out "happy." He did not even relate whether he was ultimately able to urinate or not. He was satisfied with an external confirmation: he was told his body was "okay."

Alex's story demonstrates how the prisoners use their body to talk about themselves, their needs, and their feelings in order to get attention. Alex's body served as an instrument by which to scream out his distress and get treated.

Majdi had gone a step further: he was not content with perceiving his body as a waste site. He regarded his entire body-self as spoiled, and moreover, as dangerous, a contagious spreader of defects.

There are already three boys in the family who have been named after me – Majdi. I have been honored! But... I feel bad they were given this name. The bad luck which has been a part of my name since my offense has now passed on to them. One of them has crooked legs. Another cannot speak. The third has a heart condition. My name is faulty. It's brought them bad luck.

Majdi, similarly to the staff's discourse on prisoners, formed a correlation between his self and body. When his nephews were given his name, with the good intention of keeping his presence in the family alive, his *spoiled identity* (Goffman, 1963) hurt their bodies. Majdi felt that he had stigmatized them, and that his name had cast a bodily blemish on them. His evil identity and bad luck were contagious, and continued to wreak havoc in other people's bodies.

The stories about the scabies and diarrhea illustrate how the prisoners' bodies were perceived from the outside: as having no boundaries, being filthy and hazardous; a body-self that has become a metonymy for a criminal personality. Alex's and Majdi's stories demonstrate

the effect of the staff's discourse on prisoners, and the extent to which they had internalized the derogatory perception of their bodies by those external to them. Just like the officer had created an association between the prisoner's misdeeds and his filthy body – filled with "bed bugs" or "diarrhea" – the prisoners too had stigmatized their own bodies, projecting their bad deeds onto a blemished and contagious identity.

Aesthetics and Cleanliness as Means for Prisoners to Reclaim their Bodies

The body's head-on collision with obstacles such as bars, barbed wire fences, walls, and confined spaces on a daily basis raises body-awareness and, subsequently, the body is perceived as responsible for the suffering. The anger and alienation felt toward the body lead to dis-embodiment and the desire to act against the body, which becomes an object of retribution. However, one cannot persistently be angry at one's own body; after all, the body is the little that remains of the prisoner's self. Prisoners are deprived of all personal characteristics: their personal belongings are taken from them, and they are robbed of their families, communities, social and professional identities. Their physical bodies are the only *self* they have left. Subsequently, these individuals become far more *attached to their bodies*. Prisoners' bodies become their homes: "I'm the cell, my own body," said inmate Tray Jones to Drew Leder (2016, p. 176). In much the same way that we build, decorate, and furnish our homes in order to make them pleasant to live in, prisoners build and shape their own body-abode. In contrast to the perception that prisoners' bodies are passive substances, mere items of inventory that are counted and recounted, or, alternatively, dangerous bodies that have no boundaries – prisoners actually "do their bodies" (Butler, 1997), displaying it as organized, clean, and aesthetic. The following incident occurred on one of the first occasions on which I arrived at the prison:

Today on the way to the staffroom I came across Adam. The lower part of his head was shaved, and a forelock adorned his head from the front. There was something pompous and surprising about this ostentatious haircut here, and I could not help but smile. To disguise my smile, I greeted him loudly: "Adam! Great haircut!" The smile stayed with me as I walked into the staffroom and saw Michal leaning over the computer. I approached her and quietly said: "Did you see Adam? Last week his hair was already cut, and now it's cut again, such a trendy haircut...What's up with them, they are constantly getting haircuts..." "Maybe they want to look good when you come," Michal said, "they are really meticulous. They even do each other's eyebrows."

The aestheticization in which the prisoners are engaged might be interpreted as an act of deletion or mutilation (Ellingson, 2017): prisoners clean themselves and shape a "new" body for themselves in the attempt to rid themselves of the body in which their traumas are embedded. But in addition to erasing the trauma, the act of cleaning oneself up and shaping up can be viewed as owning the body and (re)turning it to the prisoners' "possession," the only haven that still belongs to them.

The prisoners live in a reality in which bodies are compressed and blurred, perceived as fluid and having no boundaries. Aesthetics and body mannerisms help form individuality and create boundaries. Having a sense of body boundaries is the most basic aspect of creating a self – an entity that is separate from other objects and people (Damasio, 1999). Nurturing the body, adopting certain gestures or physical habits, like the way one speaks or walks, are a *stylized repetition of acts* (Butler, 1990) – a performance that forges unique identities and individualism.

Traditionally, men take less time to groom their bodies. This relates to the freedom of movement enjoyed by men, and their dominance in the environment (Connell, 2005). However, in prison, many prisoners are well-groomed: They have nice haircuts; their nails are trimmed, and they even shape their eyebrows. Body cleanliness and aestheticization also offer the prisoners' bodies *sexual capital* (Hakim, 2011). In prison, grooming oneself indicates that one has control over their environment. The disciplinary observation of the panopticon becomes a source of personal power: if the prisoner's body is under observation (Foucault, 1975), then at least let the world see that it is not a "docile body" or a submissive one; rather, it is a clean, tidy, resilient, aesthetic, and even attractive body, bordering on the ideal "chosen body."

During group sessions, the prisoners refused to sit on the floor, claiming it was "repulsive." They refused to attend sessions immediately after work or before showering. By adding further prohibitions and restrictions, the prisoners were reclaiming ownership of their bodies and the space around them.

The body then bears the pains of imprisonment, but it is also a source of pleasure. Part of the pleasure lies in the fact that prisoners are able to successfully overcome the stigmatized image of a "messy body." By using a variety of practices pertaining to cleanliness and aestheticization, prisoners demonstrated that their bodies may be shaped and toned and, in fact, contained a whole range of bodies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004).

Bodies as Communicating Vessels – My Body-Self in Prison

Thus far, I have described how the body in prison is an object under scrutiny – the staff examine the prisoners' bodies, while the prisoners examine their own bodies, either adopting others' view of them or else defying it. However, in some situations, bodily communication is used neither for inspection nor for defiance; rather, it is a medium used to connect bodies, turning them into *connected vessels* that mutually transmit sensations and emotions. At the end of one of the sessions, the following incident took place:

The prisoners and I stood in a circle, holding hands. Adam really squeezed hard, hurting me. I said - "Adam!" – not quite comprehending where it was coming from and what he was doing. He only smiled. This was a wake-up call for me: I was living in a bubble. I was feeling too comfortable with sweaty convicts, too comfortable.

Adam took advantage of the fact that all the participants were standing in a circle, holding hands, and tightly squeezed my hand, which held his own. He knew very well that the rehabilitation officer would not be able to discern how hard he was squeezing, and was likewise convinced that I would not report him. This hand-squeeze was violent and felt to me like betrayal. But it was more than that – Adam wished to leave a mark. He wanted to transfer his pain to my body. Several days following that incident, I could still feel the pain in my hand, a pain which evoked a memory of Adam. Adam had etched himself onto my own body.

However, in other instances, the bodily message that had been conveyed expressed empathy, closeness, and deep intimacy, as reflected in the following example:

In today's meeting, the inmates each revealed their "stigmata" – marks left on their bodies, such as scars, tattoos and injuries – and spoke of them. After they told their stories, I pointed at the scar on my own neck, left there by a surgical operation I had undergone. In fact, it was this operation and the difficult emotional state that had followed it that led me to volunteer at a prison. I end my story by saying that my scar is a reminder of the fact that the illness that had

killed my father would come for me as well. The group is astir: "You are saying that you know you will get the disease," Kamal said excitedly, "but do you know what God is not telling you? Do you know His plans? Why would you say that?" Halil supported him by adding: "Our thoughts create reality. If we think positive – that's what will happen. Your thoughts may bring about a negative reality!"

In fact, even before mentioning my operation to the inmates, I felt they had sensed the *psychic deadness* (Eigen, 2004) with which I had come to the prison. They perceived the pain that my body was transmitting. When I came to our meeting bleary-eyed following numerous sleepless nights, having experienced a loss of sexuality – they were able to resonate through their words all that I felt and did not say: "My body has been burned," "I feel like a rag," and "I cannot sleep."

In contrast to my attire, which was always tidy and well-kept, in accordance with prison rules, my *self-body* was torn and injured. I had arrived at our meetings with a bodily vulnerability, which corresponded with their own, much like what happens with the *communicating vessels*, and the result was an *emotional bartering process* (Ellingson, 2017). I felt that I was internally able to understand the prisoners' emotions, and they, in turn, signaled to me that they could understand me, too.

My personal experience of an intimate and close bond with the prisoners illuminates a universal cultural experience in which "dead" and broken people cannot bear to meet people with too much vivacity and vigor (Eigen, 2004). The prisoners viewed me as one who was *sufficiently dead*, and so felt comfortable in my presence, in keeping with Liebling (2014, p. 484): "No wonder that prisoners find those who carry wounds (well) something of a relief."

My having explicitly brought up the matter of my operation led to various responses on the part of the inmates, but common to all was the attempt to "take care" of me. Bringing my bodily vulnerability to the surface facilitated an *I-Thou* dialog (Liebling, 2015), which is a mutual healing process rather than one that is hierarchal or unilateral; a process whereby I not only directed my healing at the prisoners, but was also willing to accept it from them. The following description illustrates the reciprocity of the relationship, as well as the vulnerability shared by both parties:

After a movement circle, where everyone had suggested a movement and we all repeated it, I felt that some of the prisoners were looking at me with yearning. Perhaps it was because I came to the session with lots of energy and wanted them to soar up high? I returned home with a yearning of my own – for their bodies, for the strong presence I felt there. A single woman with twelve men, most of whom were friendly, pleasant, and masculine, each in their own way. On the one hand, I was aware of my age; I was older than most of them. On the other hand, the fact that I was female hovered in the room and was very much present. It's a very fine line – I was not allowed to touch or hurt them; they were prohibited from touching or hurting me. But, at the same time, I was in close contact with them, there was intimacy between us – them and me, within myself, and among them.

Only now, after two years in the prison, am I willing to admit to the power relations at play, and the erotic elements embedded in the relationship between me and the prisoners. My sexuality was boosted by them. I felt more of a woman in their presence. I am appalled by the thought that I might be exploiting their presence and using their imprisoned masculinity to empower myself. I am privileged, free, with a spouse and friends – men and women, young and old. I

embrace others and am embraced. Whereas they live in a confined group, comprised of males only, deprived of touch, intimacy, love, and sexuality. They have been deprived of them all for years.

I am well aware that some of them fantasize about me. They devour me with their eyes, wanting to touch me. During some of our sessions, I could see it in their eyes. Their love was infused into me with a great, choked cry; it encompassed me. Their passion was so tangible that I felt as if I had been touched. It was clear as day that they were using me, my body, my image, my love for them to feel more manly, more potent, more loved, and better people. Both parties are very lacking, very blemished, very vulnerable.

But at the very edge of these power relations and inequality, there was love that tried to make its way without hurting or becoming perverse. It was very hard, given the circumstances. In order to continue seeing each other, the relationship had to be confined to the prison. The love had to remain unspoken, the closeness – silenced. The friendship could only be expressed by a look, or, at most, a smile. The embrace forever had to linger in the air.

These relations were saturated with delicacy.

Alongside the hostile and supervised habitus, there are also *emotion zones* (Crewe, 2014), or "enclaves" both in space and time, where caring and intimacy may develop, and which contain a delicate eroticism. The latter is communicated through tiny body signals, and it is sensitive to the vulnerability of both parties. In these "relationship enclaves," the blemished and stigmatized body does not evoke repulsion or abjectness; instead, it conjures up attentiveness and mutual compassion.

As I recovered from the operation, and the marks on my body faded away, the prisoners started voicing the need for change: statements such as "I'm starting to feel bored" were made, or complaints about a lack of intimate companionship and the need to father a child began to be heard. A number of regular participants expressed their desire to leave the group. It was my impression that their sharpened senses had alerted the prisoners to my bodily recovery, leaving them feeling "betrayed:" they felt that my wound was healing, and that my levels of vivacity and vigor no longer matched their own. We were no longer communicating vessels.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the experience and perception of prisoners' bodies from three perspectives: how the prison staff viewed the prisoners' bodies, how the prisoners themselves viewed their bodies, and the prison researcher's own personal experience. To do so, the embodied autoethnography methodology was employed, which utilizes the researcher's own personal experience, body, and senses to describe the general cultural experience of the body in prison.

Prison is an example of a site saturated with physical stimuli (Wacquant, 2002), where the body must always be supervised (Foucault, 1975). The body serves as a key player in staff's attitude toward inmates, in inmates' attitudes toward themselves, and in the relations forged between the researcher and inmates.

Although the body plays a key role in the prison network – including the body of the researcher in particular (Jewkes, 2012) – prison researchers tend to minimize their reports on bodily experiences (Jewkes, 2012; Rowe, 2014). Contrary to the reality common to most prison

studies, the present one has employed EA, a methodology whereby the bodies and emotions of all players in the field, including those of the researcher herself, are observed. This choice was made with the understanding that the body is a key medium, and often the only means, in prison, by which the field may be studied, for it is a site where “our bodies are analytical terrain” (Daza & Huckaby, 2014, p. 801). Furthermore, attention to the researcher’s own personal and bodily experience could produce unique and valuable data.

Positivist theories that view the offense as branded into the body of the prisoner have been harshly criticized over the years, and most are currently perceived as racist and unethical (Einstadter & Henry, 2006). Yet these studies reveal that inmates, as well as former prisoners, feel that their **bodies** are branded (Chamberlen, 2018), as if “they have a tattoo on their forehead” (Moran, 2012, p. 567).

Individuals who are socially labeled tend to internalize the attitude toward them, and embrace the others’ perceptions of their identities (Chamberlen, 2018; Leder, 2016). Similarly, the prisoners in the present study blame their bodies for being incarcerated, perceiving it as a source of suffering, and often labeling themselves with the same derogatory terms used by those around them. At the same time, however, their bodies are also the only areas over which prisoners have ownership and autonomy: “The prisoner is at once punished through her body and at the same time is reliant on it for survival” (Chamberlen, 2018, p. 101).

The body in prison is an incomplete project that is forever in the process of becoming. Prisoners perceive their bodies, as well as identities, as undergoing constant change, and struggle to erase bodily stigmas (Moran, 2012). In the same vein, the present study reveals that prisoners’ bodies serve as spaces for objection and means of obtaining symbolic capital. In contrast to being presented as having bodies with no boundaries, the prisoners showcase aesthetic, attractive, and organized bodies. They even initiate additional bodily prohibitions and constraints, thereby undermining the derogatory attitude toward their bodies, and even expressing superiority over their surroundings.

The present study further indicates that, not only do prisoners undermine their bodily branding, but their bodies – performance, senses, and physical gestures – serve as means of forging relationships. They sense emotions and situations using their bodies and senses, and even express partnership and caring. Manifestations of vulnerability, sympathy, and empathy that cannot be expressed verbally and explicitly due to rigorous supervision, are conveyed by prisoners’ bodies. When the researcher entered the prison in a vulnerable physical and emotional state, her ability to communicate with the inmates and help them increased, as the bodies of researcher and prisoners resonated one another and formed “communicating vessels.”

Study Limitations and Applications

When researchers provide thick descriptions of the context, readers can judge the transferability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1999), as well as the similarity between the contexts (Larsson, 2009). The researcher’s role is “to communicate a context to an audience, which has the role of judging whether some context they know about is similar to the researched context” (Larsson, 2009, p. 32). In the present study I provided descriptive data to allow readers to judge its transferability. One limitation I will note is that the present study was conducted in a maximum-security prison, which means the level of supervision of the inmates’ bodies is particularly high. Thus, derogatory talk about prisoners’ bodies, and their need to “do their bodies,” or use bodily communication, may be heightened compared to lower-security level correctional facilities, where supervisions is less rigorous.

Although positivist theories that perceive prisoners’ bodies as being branded and inferior are considered unethical (Einstadter & Henry, 2006), the present study reveals that the derogatory perception of prisoners’ bodies is still common among prison staff and the inmates

themselves. Although prison officers are coping with a stress-saturated physical and emotional environment from which they themselves suffer, awareness of prison staff's humane and respectful attitude toward prisoners' body-selves should nevertheless be raised.

Prison researchers are exposed to intense physical and emotional effects, conducting their research under supervision and numerous restrictions. Instead of concealing body and sensory experiences, and viewing them as non-scientific, qualitative researchers should be encouraged to use methodologies that give voice to their bodies, senses, and emotions, which enable them to perceive and understand what goes on in the field. In this era of mass incarceration, which fails to rehabilitate prisoners or prevent crime, the use of autoethnography and body as research instruments could shed light on the incarceration experience as well as its effects, and hone imprisonment theories.

Good autoethnography aspires to create *Communitas*, in which researchers discuss their experiences and aim to create a language common to scholars and readers alike (Adams et al., 2015). EA is a methodology that seeks to create a connection and resonance not only between researchers and readers, but first and foremost, between researchers and study participants. By using bodily and emotional tools, EA reduces researchers' narrative privilege (Bolen & Adams, 2017), highlights the human aspects of both prisoners and researchers, and focuses on the vulnerability and imperfections of both parties. This methodology gives weight to study participants' body-selves, who absorb information without requiring words, deciphering body conditions, minor stigmas, energy levels, and vulnerability. Paying attention to both researcher and participants' bodily experiences and subjective emotions allows for ethical encounters to take place between both parties (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008). EA is a methodology that reminds us that prisoners – despite being branded as different and excluded from civil society – are human beings, nonetheless, and form an integral part of the community-body.

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