

The Representation of Latinas in *Orange Is the New Black*

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ABSTRACT

THE REPRESENTATION OF LATINAS IN *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK*

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This thesis examines the representation of the Latina characters in the Netflix original series *Orange Is the New Black*, created by Jenji Kohan. Inspired by Piper Kerman's memoir, *Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, the series creates a unique representation of Latinas in US media.

The first chapter of this thesis provides a contextual overview while focusing on women in the US prison system, gender and sexuality, and inter-ethnic relationships in the series. Following the works of Judith Butler and Teresa de Laurentis, gender and sexuality are proven to be fluid. Chapter One contains a comparison with other television series with homosexual characters including *Will & Grace* and *Bad Girls*, as well as a study of Episode 6, Season 2: "You Also Have a Pizza." Inter-ethnic relationships in the series are the final focus of this chapter.

The second chapter is a linguistic study. First is an examination of language use in Piper Kerman's memoir. Explanations of the terms "code-switching" and "translanguaging" are provided using the works of Barbara E. Bullock, Almeida Jacqueline Toribio, and Suresh

Canagarajah. The use of Spanish and code-switching of the Latina inmates in the series is studied in several specific scenes. Finally, additional language use in the series is examined, specifically German and Russian.

The third and final chapter is a study of Latina representation in US media. A brief history of representation is provided, primarily following the works of Arlene Dávila, Isabel Molina-Guzmán, and Angharad N. Valdivia. Character studies of Flaca Gonzales, Gloria Mendoza, and Maritza Ramos are used to evidence the importance of the Latina characters, as is Dayanara Diaz and John Bennett's romantic relationship. The chapter concludes with a look at the role of Netflix and the implications for Visual Culture Studies.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of Latina women in US television is nothing new; however, their representation in the Netflix original series *Orange Is the New Black* (*OITNB*, 2013-), created and directed by Jenji Kohan, is without precedence. This series, inspired by Piper Kerman's memoir, *Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*¹ (2010), is one of the first to tackle the world of female prisons in the United States while exploring inter-ethnic relationships and fluid sexualities among inmates. *OITNB* substantially changes the perspective about Latinas in US media, including them in an exploration of the intersection of class, race-ethnicity, gender and sexuality in today's prisons for women. In this thesis, I provide an in-depth study of the representation of Latina women in a current, popular television series, and examine how this representation enters into dialogue with contemporary studies on multilingualism and power, and about the representations of Latinos in US media. The very fact that Latinas are central characters in the show creates a new conversation about their portrayal in US visual culture. Most importantly, the Latinas are primary characters due to their involvement in the storylines

¹ To be clear, the title *Orange Is the New Black* is a fashion reference, not a racial reference. Specifically, Kerman writes of Bill Cunningham's "On the street" fashion column, "Oranginas Uncorked," from the *New York Times* that was mailed to her while in prison from her best friend, Kristen. Kerman states: "Covering the half-page were over a dozen photographs of women of every age, race, size and shape, all clad in brilliant orange...Apparently, orange was the new black" (Kerman, *Orange* 71).

of the series, not because of their Latinidad, and this is the unique representation of Latinas created in *OITNB*.

The immensely popular TV series has a strong presence in social media. As of spring 2015, the show has won multiple awards in just its first two seasons. Out of 53 nominations, *OITNB* has received 30 awards, including three Primetime Emmy Awards, two Screen Actors Guild Awards, and the Peabody Award (www.imdb.com). Selenis Leyva, who portrays Latina inmate Gloria Mendoza, was interviewed about her part in the Netflix phenomenon after its first season, and her response reflects the central arguments that I make in this thesis:

In Hollywood we always have to deal with the one Latina representing us and they usually latch on to one Latina per year or one network says “we believe in diversity” and they have one Latina or one Latino in one out of ten shows. In this case though I think there is celebration in the Latino community. I don’t think we’ve ever had five, six Latinas in a show this huge worldwide. We haven’t. And I think that the writers aren’t focusing on any stereotypes, they’re telling stories, real stories that can happen to anyone regardless of race. (Selenis Leyva, “Selenis Leyva explains why ‘Orange Is the New Black’ is a huge step for Latinas”)

Leyva recognizes the inclusion of so many Latinas in a show that is not centered on Latina characters. The stereotypes that are present in the series serve as points of departure to acknowledge and ultimately reject them. *OITNB* is one of the first globally popular television series that includes a focus on not one but many Latino characters. As

Leyva mentions, the writers are not limited by stereotypes. While the women of Litchfield are multi-ethnic, they are all convicted criminals. The inmates' stories are all different, but they have led them all to the same place. Most importantly, they are the focus of attention as complex human beings.

KOHAN'S TV SERIES V. KERMAN'S MEMOIR

The Netflix series deviates firmly from Kerman's text, in which she shares her personal memories from her experience as a white, middle-class woman charged with a drug-trafficking crime. In contrast, the series develops a multi-perspectivism that delves into the lives of multiple prisoners of various ethnicities. Additionally, the series focuses much more on the usage of Spanish than does Kerman's memoir, despite the fact that she affirms that about half of the women in her federal prison were Latinas —mainly Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Colombians— and that many of them barely spoke English (Kerman, *Orange* 66). In this sense, the role of language is of the utmost importance. The alternation between English and Spanish that occurs among Latinas, and between Latinas and the other characters is present from the earliest scenes of the pilot episode. Additionally, a study of the interaction between all ethnicities portrayed within the prison reveals peculiarities that challenge many racial stereotypes.

Kohan's series paves its own path to create a discussion about race, ethnicity, class and sexuality while portraying the fictional stories of unequivocally diverse characters. Kerman's account focuses on her thirteen-month sentence while Kohan's show expands on that experience with great liberty to tell the stories of the characters created to surround Piper Chapman —a fictionalized version of Kerman— while

imprisoned. Although Kerman was sentenced for a crime that occurred during her relationship with another woman, lesbian desire is not a focus of her memoir; she explicitly states: “I wasn’t remotely interested in messing with prison pussy” (Kerman, *Orange* 269). From the very beginning, the show deviates from the memoir. Kerman, who has supported Kohan’s project all along, has stated more than once that “the series also makes dramatic jumps from the book, and that’s okay” (Kerman, “Orange”). However, Kohan’s interest in exploring the racial, linguistic, gender and sexuality markers in the contexts of prisons for women needs to be contextualized in relation to Kerman’s memoir, for this comparison is crucial to understand the series.

OITNB currently consists of two seasons, with thirteen episodes each, and a third season in the making to be released in June 12, 2015. Although the show does focus on many characters of different ethnicities and includes flashbacks to explain their stories, Chapman serves as the protagonist in both seasons. In the fictional women’s prison of Litchfield, inspired by the actual federal camp Danbury in Connecticut where Kerman served her time, Chapman is a young, attractive, middle-class, and well-educated white woman. At the time of her incarceration, Chapman is engaged to fiancé Larry Bloom, a reflection in name only of Kerman’s husband Larry Smith; they were also engaged at the time she had to serve in prison. Alex Vause —Chapman’s ex-girlfriend and former drug smuggler— is inspired by Kerman’s ex-lover, referred to as Nora Jansen in the memoir. Vause asks Chapman to carry drug money internationally into Brussels from Chicago, which is the same crime that Kerman committed in real life and for which she was incarcerated. Though Kerman has stated that some of the women she met in prison served

as inspirations for characters on the series (Kerman, “Orange”) their lives and story lines are completely original to the show, which Kohan directs.²

Kerman, who became a lead activist for prison reform after her release, describes the day she found out about her indictment as the “beginning of a long, torturous expedition through the labyrinth of the U.S. criminal justice system” (Kerman, *Orange* 21). As far as comparisons of central components in the series and memoir, the representation of prison life holds the most in common in both mediums. Kerman read books on prison life before her incarceration, but “they were written for men” (Kerman, *Orange* 30), and they prove to be useless when she enters Danbury; the same happens to Chapman in the show. Despite these similarities, a relevant difference between the memoir and the series resides in the fact that Kerman is intentionally reflecting upon her experience several years later, while Kohan’s series presents the dramatic unfolding of Chapman’s immediate reactions to her new surroundings. While Chapman is frequently shocked, upset and disturbed by many facets of life as an inmate, she has not had time to reflect on this experience, and her preoccupations are less with social justice than they are with survival. That being said, many of Kerman’s concerns are appropriately echoed in the series through the voices of the characters, their actions, and their life stories. For example, about eighty percent of the women in US prisons have children (Kerman, *Orange* 131). This troubling statistic is reflected not only in the numerous main characters who are mothers, but also in the pregnant Latina inmate Maria Ruiz who goes into labor while incarcerated in the first season of the show.

² It should be noted that, throughout the entire memoir, Kerman only included the real names of two women, both of whom gave their consent (Kerman, *Orange* n.p.)

Even though both Kerman and Chapman were able to find positive aspects of prison life while serving time, it is clear in both mediums that a women's federal prison is a place with unacceptable living conditions and no respect for women's dignity. The show is full of critiques on the tragic state of the prison system and includes countless scenes that emphasize the need for prison reform. Within Litchfield, there is but one doctor to treat the entire prison, and even the kindest of the prison staff, Joe Caputo, is shown in the first episode masturbating immediately after meeting with Chapman in his office. Sam Healy, another senior officer, witnesses a violent fight between Chapman and another inmate and remains a voyeur instead of interfering. And in an extreme example, Officer Mendez falsifies the cause of one inmate's death, assigning her the blame when in fact he could have attempted to save her life and chose not to do so.

A final and striking difference is in the role of language that each medium employs. The use of Spanish in prison is clearly relevant in Kerman's text, but it receives more attention in the series. "Swirling eddies of language" (Kerman, *Orange* 62) competed with an "endless repeat of classic rock vs. hip hop vs. Spanish" (Kerman, *Orange* 141) for the background soundtrack of Kerman's prison experience. Understandably, though, Spanish is less of a dynamic in the written text of a singular memoir than the more creative medium of the television series with dialogue allows it to be. Kerman admits that she tried to learn some Spanish during her sentence, but states: "what I managed to pick up was almost exclusively about food, sex or curses" (Kerman, *Orange* 97-8). While Spanish is used much more extensively in the show than in the memoir, what does remain relatively equal in both mediums is the racial distribution of

inmates. Eight Latina inmates are mentioned various times in Kerman's memoir, while six Latina inmates are consistent subjects of attention in the series. Thirteen Anglo American inmates are mentioned by name in Kerman's memoir, while seven Anglo American inmates serve as primary characters. Kerman presents nine African American inmates as important to her while *OITNB* portrays seven main African American characters. *OITNB* includes two Asian characters, though neither is central, and this is comparable to the one Asian inmate referenced in Kerman's text. Finally, Kerman mentions one Indian inmate and a "couple of" Middle Eastern and Native American inmates (Kerman, *Orange* 66); *OITNB* does not introduce any characters that do not fit into the aforementioned four categories. It is important to note that while English and Spanish are certainly the most dominant languages in the series, they are not the only languages spoken. Entire dialogues take place in multiple episodes in both Russian and German, thus creating a translingual ambiance.

Piper Kerman's memoir serves as the point of departure for *OITNB*, and both mediums remind us of the often-forgotten US prison population, and perhaps particularly so that of women prisoners. The series assumes a life of its own, though, in which new characters are created and fictional relationships develop. *OITNB* exists in a modern world of social media, and the diversity of the characters has given birth to new discourses that reimagine perspectives on homosexuality, transgenderism, and women in the US prison system. This thesis analyzes the representation of Latinas in US media within the contextual framework of women in prison, gender and sexuality, language and

visual culture. In the following section, I explain how I have organized my study of *OITNB* in this thesis.

THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 studies the context and theoretical framework, Chapter 2 focuses on the role of language, and Chapter 3 examines the representation of Latinos in US media. Although I give priority to the analysis of the series itself, I include comparisons with Kerman's memoir throughout the three chapters when these comparisons are relevant to my study. Chapter 1 offers a contextualization of *OITNB* in three principle fields: women in the United States prison system, contemporary gender and sexuality theory, and the inter-ethnic relationships in the series.

Chapter 1 provides information about women in prison, and includes a dialogue with texts by prominent scholars in the field of Prison Studies, such as Angela Y. Davis and Suzanne Oboler. I explore Davis' argument for the abolition of prisons in conversation with the stances Piper Kerman and *OITNB* creator Jenji Kohan take on prison reformation. I specifically analyze the compilation *Behind Bars: Latino/as and Prison in the United States* (Oboler 2009), which investigates juvenile Latinas in prison, all the while relating this information to relevant scenes in the series. I discuss corruption in the US prison system in relation to the show.

The second part of Chapter 1 examines the representation of gender and sexuality in the series. I discuss the show's representations of gender performance, love and desire, fluid sexualities and sexual structuring in relation to theories by Judith Butler, Lauren

Berlant, and Teresa de Laurentis. I specifically explore the characters of Piper Chapman, Lorna Morello, and Sophia Burset. I also provide an analysis of the Valentine's Day episode in Season 2, which serves as a study of the inmates' understanding of love and desire.

Finally, the third section of Chapter 1 looks at the inter-ethnic relationships in Kohan's series and explores their implications. Specifically, I analyze scenes and episodes where inter-racial/ ethnic unity overpowers racial divisions. As a whole, Chapter 1 provides a contextual and theoretical framework for a better understanding of the series, and aids in developing a more complete understanding of how Latinas are represented in the show.

Chapter 2 is a linguistic study that examines the use of Spanish and English by the Latina inmates. I explore several scenes in which the Latinas use both English and Spanish, and evaluate the implications for these choices as well as what identity markers are associated with which language. I also study two episodes -- Episode 2, Season 1, and Episode 6, Season 2 -- in which German and Russian are used extensively, situation my analysis within current scholarship on bilingualism and translanguaging.

Chapter 3 is a comprehensive look into the show as part of the media representation of Latinos in the United States. I use a recent historical exploration to evidence the radical representation that *OITNB* creates. Drawing on the works of Arlene Dávila, Angharad Valdivia, and Isabel Molina-Guzmán, I argue that *OITNB*'s representation of Latinas is unique in that the Latina characters are important due to their

involvement in the events of the series, and are not just included because of their Latinidad, but because of their complexity and humanness.

In the Conclusion, I provide a summary of the central arguments of each chapter. I put these arguments in conversation with the effects of *OITNB* in a broader context. Specifically, I look at the series' implications on current thought about gender and sexuality, women in prison, inter-ethnic relationships, multi-lingualism, and of course Latino representation in US media. Finally, I discuss possible outcomes of the upcoming Season 3 and prove that any developments will undoubtedly involve the storylines of the Latina women.

CHAPTER ONE- GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FICTIONAL PRISON

OITNB focuses on the often forgotten women inside the US prison system, questions contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality, and creates relationships that defy racial and ethnic stereotypes. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan stated that prisoners exist "... in a shadow world that only dimly enters our awareness" (cit. in *Oboler 1*), but *OITNB* places these female inmates in the spotlight and gives life to this population through the stories of these complex female inmates. The series also creates an environment where lesbian desire and the performativity of gender are not only acceptable but also fluid. Finally, the series revolutionizes the way racial and ethnic stereotypes are represented in US media, as the inter-ethnic relationships of the prisoners are unified against the corrupt prison administration. The following conversation between Officer Sam Healy and Executive Assistant Warden Natalie Figueroa takes place early in Season 1 before it is revealed that the budget cuts Figueroa ("Fig") proposes are the result of the money she stole from the prison to fund her husband's political campaign. At first glance, this dialogue may appear to be simply ignorant and apathetic to the inmates' basic rights as well as their gender and sexual identities, but the underlying corruption gradually becomes exposed as the series progresses:

HEALY. You can't just change people's meds! I got a line of 'Golden Girls' complaining about blood pressure pills. Half this prison's on

antidepressants. If you take away their Zoloft they're gonna go off the rails. Monumentally bad. Monumental pain in my ass.

FIGUEROA. Your ass? I'm juggling vendor changes, staff reductions. Look at me, I'm paying for my own coffee here.

HEALY. I got a tranny camped out in my hallway yelling about her hormones!

FIGUEROA. He can suck it up. She. Jesus.

HEALY. She could be a major headache for us.

FIGUEROA. We are only required to give her enough to maintain. It is a federal system. If he wanted to keep his girlish figure, he should've stayed out of jail. Why would anyone give up being a man? It's like winning the lottery and giving the ticket back (*OITNB*, Episode 3, Season 1).

This exchange demonstrates the prison staff's lack of sympathy that serves as a reflection on the corruption of the US prison system. Additionally, Figueroa's macho interpretation of transgenderism serves to ridicule her in her absence of knowledge or concern about the fluidity of genders.

WOMEN IN THE US PRISON SYSTEM

According to a recent Bureau of Justice report, in 2013 there were 111,300 women incarcerated in the United States (Glaze and Kaeble). Piper Kerman continually emphasizes the need for comprehensive reform of the US prison system in her memoir, and states her position as an activist very clearly: "We have a racially biased justice system that over-punishes, fails to rehabilitate, and doesn't make us safer" (Kerman,

Orange 303). Currently, Kerman serves on the Board of Directors for the Women's Prison Association (www.piperkerman.com). Her beliefs reflect those of many organizations that fight for prison reform, such as the non-profit group The Sentencing Project, whose research affirms that the number of imprisoned women has increased more than 500% between 1980 and 2001 and that between 2000 and 2010 the number of Latinas in prison has increased 28% (1-2). *OITNB* reflects Kerman's concerns about the US prison system and provides a wealth of examples of its flaws. In Episode 5 of Season 2, the bathrooms that the Latina women use suddenly become flooded with feces, and Asst. Warden Figueroa initially refuses to spend the money necessary to fix the plumbing because she stole that money. Jenji Kohan and the show's writers use the absolute absurdity of Figueroa's decision to lightheartedly portray the reality of corruption within the US prison system.

Activists such as Angela Y. Davis call attention to the injustices of the US prison system. Davis argues that though prisoners are convicted of crimes, they are foremost human beings with basic human rights that, like the Latinas' showers, cannot be ignored. In her book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2008), Davis argues that prisons should be obsolete, the criminal justice system should be reformed, and society's focus on crime itself should lie in prevention and reformation as opposed to punishment. Answering her own question regarding the lack of outrage to the increasing number of US prisons, Davis explains that "... the level of comfort... has to do with the way we consume media images of the prison, even as the realities of imprisonment are hidden from almost all who have not had the misfortune of doing time" (17).

While Angela Davis argues for the abolition of prison as an institution, Piper Kerman provides a more practical argument in favor of prison reform. Davis questions the lack of outcry in response to new prisons (17) and Kerman responds with her outcry in publishing her memoir. In an interview included in the most recent paperback edition, Kerman elaborates on her intentions for sharing her story: “It’s important for people who have been prisoners to have a voice, and to say in a more authentic way what life is really like” (Kerman, *Orange* 319). The consumption of media images of prison that Angela Davis condemns is continued with *OITNB*, but the series alters the image that is being consumed. *OITNB* reinforces prison as part of society’s visual landscape, but not an aesthetically pleasing one. Rather than support the abolition of prisons, Jenji Kohan advocates for an emphasis on rehabilitation inside them, and does so through story lines such as the one featuring the character Taystee. African American inmate Taystee is scared and unprepared for release into the outside world, for her time served has done nothing to prepare her to live life as a law-abiding, productive member of society: “I’m scared. Shit, I been in institutions my whole life. I was a ward of the state till I was 16 then juvie. I got no skills... No one’s gonna take me serious” (Episode 9, Season 1). The popularity of a show about women in prison reminds those on the outside about the US’s increasingly large prison population and constructs platforms from which Kerman and others can voice their calls for action.

In *OITNB*, Piper Chapman also struggles with this feeling of being forgotten, as is evidenced in the first season. Chapman’s mom and her best friend Polly come to visit in Episode 3 of Season 1, and Piper asks for an update on the luxury soap company she and

Polly started before Piper went to prison. Polly reveals that she fired their assistant, and when Piper expresses frustration with not being consulted on this decision her mother curtly replies: “Oh, honey, it’s not as if we can pick up a phone and call you. I know it’s hard, but the rest of us have to keep living our lives” (Episode 3, Season 1).

In her essay, “Caught in the Net: Language and Cultural Resistance among Latina adolescents in Juvenile Detention,” Laurie Schaffner reports her findings from one hundred interviews conducted between 1994 and 2004. These interviews were conducted with Latina women in California, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Illinois. The one hundred women interviewed ranged in age from thirteen to eighteen and forty-one self-identified as “‘Latina,’ ‘Hispanic,’ ‘from Nicaragua,’ ‘Puerto Rican,’ ‘Chicana,’ ‘Mexican,’ ‘El Salvador,’ ‘Mexican-American’... and so on” (cit. Oboler 117). Schaffner’s intentions echo those of Kerman: “This study... begins from the viewpoint that bringing the voices of the detainees to the fore of the analysis will yield new understanding of girls’ actions in the juvenile legal system” (cit. Oboler 115). In an effort to understand their daily lives in prison, Schaffner discusses the Latinas’ strategic employment of both Spanish and English in different situations, which I discuss in Chapter 2. Overall, Schaffner finds that “sharing cultural experiences played an important role as a tool Latinas used to survive day-to-day life in lock-up... girls communicated who they were... by expressing their opinions of norms of sexuality, beauty, favorite food and music, and family relations” (cit. Oboler 121). These shared cultural experiences that create moments of female bonding among the Latinas are seen in both Kerman’s work as well as the series. In the Season 1 finale, Latina inmate Gloria Mendoza has been given control of the prison

kitchen, and thus the kitchen becomes the Latina domain. Christmas is approaching, and Dayanara Diaz, along with Maritza Ramos, Flaca Gonzales, and Maria Ruiz are preparing food together. Daya recognizes the moment: “All of us in the kitchen together, making tamales. It almost feels like Christmas at home” (Episode 13, Season 1).

Despite the horrible prison conditions, this capacity for female bonding is something that occurs in both Schaffner’s research and Kerman’s memoir and is reflected on the show. Kerman states:

Small kindnesses and simple pleasures shared were so important... regardless of what quarter they came from, that they brought home to me powerfully that I was not alone in this world... I shared the most basic operating system with people who ostensibly had little in common with me. I could connect- perhaps with anyone. (Kerman, *Orange* 292-293)

The series echoes this recognition of female unity when inmate Suzanne Warren, known as “Crazy Eyes” (for self-explanatory reasons) spontaneously offers Chapman two jalapeño peppers that she has been searching for but cannot purchase because her commissary check has not yet been processed. When Chapman questions Crazy Eyes’ generosity, she responds: “People forget we was all new here once. It’s good to know you ain’t alone” (Episode 2 Season 1). As I will discuss later in this chapter, *OITNB* portrays female solidarity both within a racial-ethnic group and, what is more, outside of it, in that all the female prisoners are united in their position as inmates beneath the prison staff. I am not implying that there is no racial division within the fictional prison of Litchfield- there is- but the inmates themselves often mock and transcend this division.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The portrayal of fluid sexuality and genders is arguably two the most attention-grabbing aspects of *Orange Is the New Black*. Laverne Cox's portrayal of transgender character Sophia Burset is groundbreaking, and I analyze her gender transformation, along with the fluid sexualities of characters Piper Chapman and Lorna Morello, in this chapter. Sexuality and sexual desire are a focus of the series from the beginning: the first scene of the pilot episode shows Piper Chapman and her former girlfriend sharing a shower. Although Piper Kerman was in a relationship with another woman at the time she committed the crime for which she was incarcerated, lesbian desire is intentionally not a focus of her account, and was not an aspect of her time served: "I had decided from the beginning to reveal nothing about my Sapphic past to any other inmate. If I had told even one person, eventually the whole Camp would know, and no good could come of it" (Kerman, *Orange* 76). While the memoir leaves lesbian desire decidedly in the past, the series focuses on it from the very beginning.

Judith Butler's understanding of gender is particularly useful in analyzing *OITNB*. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler explains that institutions are constantly trying to control gender and sexual norms, thereby exerting their power on the social formation of gender and sexual identity. With respect to the corporeal body, Butler writes: "This 'body' often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as 'external' to that body" (175). If the body is but a physical representation of cultural and societal imposition, Butler argues, then gender can be neither true nor false: "Consider gender, for

instance, as a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (Butler 190). Ultimately, then, gender is a conscious, intentional action that is established performatively through its repetition. That gender is a performance has much to do with the idea of being “gay for the stay,” a concept explained to Piper Kerman by a male prison guard: “Frankly, most of these women were not even close to being ‘real lesbians’ in my mind. They were, as Officer Scott put it, ‘gay for the stay,’ the prison version of ‘lesbian until graduation’” (Kerman, *Orange* 76). It is remarkable how precisely the concept of “gay for the stay” embodies Butler’s fundamental understanding of gender.

Within the confines of prison, this “act” or gender performance has only to be repeated, day after day, as if it were a habit. Teresa de Laurentis expands on Butler’s understanding of gender as a repeated performance in her essay entitled “Habit Changes” (2007). De Laurentis introduces the term “sexual structuring,” in which she emphasizes the process involved in forming a sexual identity:

...the constructedness of sex... its being a process, an accumulation of effects that do not rest on an originary materiality of the body, that do not modify or attach to an essence, matter or form- whether corporeal or existential- prior to the process itself (sic 205).

If gender is a repeated performance, then sexual identity is similar in its continuous process throughout the life span. De Laurentis continues: “both [the body and the subject] come into being in that continuous and life-long process in which the subject is, as it

were, permanently under construction” (205). Transgender character Sophia Burset exemplifies this continuous construction of a gender or sexual identity, and the show portrays her physical transformation through this process.

TRANSGENDER CHARACTER SOPHIA BURSET

The third episode of Season 1 begins with a flashback to when Sophia was still physically a male, and also a firefighter. At the end of the workday, Sophia does not undress in front of the other men, and when she does remove her clothing, she is wearing a hot pink bra over breasts that do not yet exist. Like so many other flashbacks in the series, the scene then switches back to present-day, and Sophia is admiring her body-- topless, now with breasts-- in the mirror of the prison bathroom. Just moments later, Chapman walks by Sophia sitting on the toilet (there is only one bathroom stall with a door) and apologizes for the intrusion. Sophia responds: “That’s okay, honey, you can look, I spent a lot of money for it” (Episode 3, Season 1). Sophia is clearly proud of her new gender, and is pleased with the result of the process of her physical transformation. Later, when she is temporarily denied her full hormone dosage, she explains to the one prison doctor: “Look, I’ve given five years, \$80,000, and my freedom for this. I’m finally who I’m supposed to be. Do you understand? I can’t go back” (Episode 3, Season 1). Here, Sophia references the fact that she paid for her gender transformation procedures with stolen credit cards. Sophia rejects her original gender for one that she must purchase, and can only afford to do so with stolen funds. In a cruel irony, she is imprisoned because of her gender transformation. Sophia acted against an imposed gender system and is punished for doing so. Judith Butler references punishment in citing Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger*:

... ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created. (cit. in Butler 178)

The institution of prison attempts to punish Sophia's gender transformation by restricting her hormones as a result of budget cuts. Sophia resorts to performing sexual favors for a male prison guard, George "Pornstache" Mendez, in order to receive her full dosage. This further underlines the corruption of the prison staff not only in their lack of acceptance of her gender transformation but also in their abuse of power. Though Sophia is still subject to the rules of the prison, her story is nonetheless a victory: she physically obtained the gender with which she had always identified. Her character is a victory for the transgender community as well. Actress Laverne Cox herself is transgender, and her award-winning performance as Sophia not only opened the door for future transgender actors but also for future transgender roles. The 2014 Amazon original series *Transparent* about a family whose father reveals his feminine identity is one such example. The series won a Golden Globe for Best Television Series- Musical or Comedy, and actor Jeffrey Tambor won a Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Television Series- Musical or Comedy in 2015 (www.wikipedia.com/transparent).

CHARACTER PIPER CHAPMAN'S SEXUAL STRUCTURING

Piper Chapman's sexual structuring is constantly in question, consistently in flux, and often the catalyst for drama both within the prison and outside of Litchfield. When

Chapman committed the crime for which she is imprisoned, she was involved in a lesbian relationship with her drug-smuggling girlfriend, Alex Vause. Nearly a decade later, when Chapman is first charged with her involvement in the international drug ring, she is in a serious relationship with a man, her soon-to-be fiancé Larry Bloom. Once charged, Chapman explains everything to Larry, and resumes "...And then it got scary, and I ran away, and I became the nice blonde lady I'm supposed to be" (Episode 1, Season 1). This first episode also reveals that Larry proposes to Piper before her self-surrender, and the flashbacks of the sexual activities with Alex appear to be just that- flashbacks, in the past. In the final scene of the pilot, however, Alex approaches an already hyperventilating Chapman, and lesbian desire returns to her for the first time since becoming that nice white lady.

In the early episodes of the first season, it appears that Chapman is going to remain faithful to Larry. She rejects various advances from other inmates, though her rejection does seem to have more to do with the sanity of the women offering, and less with the fact that they are women. Chapman's anger towards Alex eventually succumbs to her desire, and what begins as relatively innocent flirtations climaxes in Chapman's grabbing Alex's hand, leading her to the prison chapel and kissing her. The kissing leads to sex, and Chapman's loyalty to her fiancé, as well as her sexual orientation, are in question. The other inmates notice the relationship between Chapman and Alex, and when directly questioned about it, Chapman responds by denying her lesbian identity: "I'm not gay... softball is the furthest thing from my mind" (Episode 10, Season 1).

Chapman claims she is not gay, but she is having sexual relations with a woman while engaged to a man, demonstrating the very fluid sexuality that she denies.

Interestingly, it is Chapman's brother, Cal, who gives the most insightful observation about his sister's sexuality. Cal smokes weed, does not work, lives in a trailer out in the woods, and has served as a confidant for Larry since Chapman's incarceration. In yet another example of the corruption within the Litchfield prison staff, Counselor Healy calls Larry to inform him of his fiancé's relationship with Alex. Larry opens up to Cal: "That's the bigger problem with this whole thing. She fucked a woman. So, so what, is she gay now?" Cal responds, "I don't know about "now..." I just think she is what she is, man." Larry questions what exactly that means, and Cal voices his criticism of Larry, one that underlines *OITNB*'s general disdain for close- and narrow-mindedness: "I'm going to go ahead and guess that one of the issues here is your need to say that a person is exactly anything" (Episode 12, Season 1). *OITNB* embodies the very reasons Piper Kerman wrote her memoir-- to share with people what prison is really like and to prove that not all prisoners are necessarily very bad, dangerous people. Piper Chapman is not exactly straight, but not exactly gay. She is not exactly a bad person, but she is not always a good person either. An argument can be made that none of the inmates in *OITNB* are completely bad, and an argument can equally be made that some, if not most, of them are mostly good people who got caught for several bad decisions.

THE FLUID SEXUALITY OF CHARACTER LORNA MORELLO

Lorna Morello is another inmate who, like Chapman, appears and even claims to be straight, but is involved in lesbian sexual activities. Unlike Chapman, though, Morello

never identifies at any point as being a lesbian, and alleges she is only participating in sexual activities with other women strictly under the circumstances of her incarceration. Morello is a young, lower-middle class Anglo American woman who was convicted of credit card fraud. She obsessively talks about her fiancé Christopher, who is eventually revealed to be not only not her fiancé, but also the victim of her excessive and violent stalking. Morello is constantly planning her wedding and honeymoon with the fiancé she does not have, much to the annoyance of her one-time prison girlfriend Nicky Nichols. In Episode 10 of Season 1, Morello flips through a magazine while asking Nicky what she thinks of “Bora Bora Bora” as a honeymoon destination. Nicky tries to correct her by pointing out it is fact just Bora Bora, and knowingly tells her that this is a conversation she should probably have with Christopher instead of her. Morello responds by telling Nicky that her annoyance must be due to the fact that they are no longer sleeping together, and while she admits she sometimes misses that, she has to remain true to Christopher. Finally, Nicky has had enough with her friend’s denial of the truth, and tells her to “go do your make-believe somewhere else” (Episode 10, Season 1). Morello’s “make-believe” exemplifies Lauren Berlant’s understanding of desire. In *Desire/Love* (2012), Berlant explains that desire “...describes a state of attachment to something or someone, and the cloud of possibility that is generated by the gap between an object’s specificity and the needs and promises projected onto it” (6) while love is “...the embracing dream in which desire is reciprocated” (6). Morello embodies this definition of desire in believing that she is engaged to her dream man outside of prison (her

attachment to a possibility), but her performance of gender within the prison implies a different, lesbian desire.

Morello claims her lesbian desire is associated only within the confines of prison, and this belief is arguably as true as her engagement and upcoming wedding. Berlant refers to this as “the zoning of desire”: “...desire tends to be associated with specific places” (14) such as “... red light districts” or “master bedrooms” (Berlant 15). Morello is forced to acknowledge reality in Episode 6 of Season 2. Since she drives the prison van, she had an opportunity to escape, and broke into Christopher’s house and stole his wedding invitation- of course, from his wedding to a different woman. Suzanne “Crazy Eyes” Warren finds this invitation in the trash and brings it to Morello. Morello finally confesses that nobody knows she is not with Christopher (Episode 6, Season 2). Crazy Eyes encourages her, and gently reminds her that she (Morello) knows she is not with Christopher. Morello allows herself to be hurt just one sigh longer, then bursts into laughter, agreeing with Crazy Eyes.

ABSENCE OF FLUID SEXUALITY IN OTHER TELEVISION SERIES

This fluid sexuality is unique to *OITNB*. As Gary Needham notes in *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics* (2009), even *Will and Grace*, arguably the most well-known successful television show starring a homosexual character, gives in to a heterosexual ending. In discussing the series finale, Needham explains that Grace’s grown daughter and Will’s adopted son:

[A]re getting settled into their first year at university and are moving into dormitories directly across the hall from each other. We soon learn that

their children have hit it off and are getting married- and *Will and Grace* (the sitcom) can finally present the straight fantasy of romantic union that Will and Grace (the characters) could never have (149).

Needham adds that this wedding is a triumph for heteronormativity. The conclusion to one of very few successful US shows featuring a gay protagonist is a resolution that satisfies a world in which heterosexuality is the norm.

Perhaps the closest comparison to *OITNB* in television series history is with the British series *Bad Girls*. *Bad Girls* premiered in 1999 on ITV, and also takes place in a women's prison. In her article "'Bad Girls Changed My Life': Homonormativity in a Women's Prison Drama," Didi Herman examines how this show created a "prime time lesbian homonormativity-- by which I mean that the show not only takes lesbianism for granted, but also presents lesbian sexuality as commonsense desire" (143). Similarly, *OITNB* portrays lesbian sexuality at times as both commonplace and desirable. Herman explains that the British show focuses on various characters, addresses critical issues "...such as prison healthcare, officer violence, and the institutional sexism faced by employees, while simultaneously constructing... outrageous dialogue and subplots" (142) which could just as easily be said about *OITNB*. Also parallel to *OITNB*, each *Bad Girls* episode contains scenes of "solidarity, and community for the women incarcerated there" (Herman 142).

There are even characters on both shows whose stories are remarkably similar. Helen, precisely like Lorna Morello, "...is quick to declare not only her heterosexuality and imminent marriage" (Herman 147). There is also Thomas, "... who appears to play

the familiar role of the male intermediary destined to thwart the women's love (Strayer, 1995) and confirm a heroine's heterosexuality (Hart, 1994)-- but this is not the case" (Herman 148). This male archetype coincides with Piper Chapman's fiancé Larry, who intends to end the love Chapman had for Alex and confirm her heterosexuality, but ultimately does neither. Finally, both series contain homophobic characters whose homophobia is portrayed as ridiculous. *Bad girls'* Shell seems a precursor for *OITNB's* Pennsatucky. Shell refers to a homosexual prisoner as "the evil lezzie bitch" and "lezbo" (Herman 151). Herman states that the "high camp manner in which characters express homophobia may also appear as insider humor to a gay and lesbian audience" (151). This is certainly the case with Pennsatucky, who in episode 6 of the first season tattles to Officer Healy about Chapman and Vause's lesbian activity:

They're sexting Mr. Healy, I seen it. This morning, in the bathroom, one girl's face was all up in the other one's hoo-ha it was so nasty. It's an abomination. They were moaning and everything. Speaking in tongues like it's some kind of revival... Vause and Chapman. She's a lesbian. They lesbianing together. (Episode 6, Season 1)

Despite all these numerous similarities between the British and US series, however, what is most notable is the following difference: On *Bad Girls*, as Herman states, "... sexuality is not really fluid and "gender bending" and transgenderisms are entirely absent" (52). *Orange Is the New Black* is arguably the first television series to explore homosexual characters whose sexuality really is fluid. Gender is not necessarily "bent," but it is certainly performed, and transgenderism is present.

EPISODE 6, SEASON 2: “YOU ALSO HAVE A PIZZA”

For Lauren Berlant, love is the “embracing dream in which desire is reciprocated”

(6). For the inmates of Litchfield, love is many different things. In Season 2, Valentine’s Day provides an opportunity for the women to express their opinions on what love is. The episode begins with characters responding to an unseen and unheard interviewer about what love means to them. The responses are diverse and entertaining, but all of the inmates’ definitions are more expressive of desire than love. Love is everything from “light” to “fucking 24/7” to “kicking it with somebody,” (Episode 6, Season 2) to having a fling with a boss at Long John Silver’s and having a pizza. For Chapman, love is “coming home,” (Episode 6, Season 2), which is of course representative of her desire to leave prison.

Valentine’s Day is also the only time that the Latina inmates so much as contemplate lesbian desire. Throughout the episode, Maritza Ramos and Flaca Gonzales, the youngest Latinas, have been lamenting their absence of the possibility to live a normal life in which they would be with boyfriends on Valentine’s Day. In one scene, they are decorating heart-shaped cookies for the party. Maritza asks Flaca what her cookie says. Flaca replies: “Ian. In case he shows up today. Stupid” (Episode 6, Season 2), and Ian in fact, does not show up. When the unseen interviewer³ asks Maritza and Flaca about their thoughts on love, their responses are off-beat, humorous, and representative of their young age. Flaca goes first: “Okay, it’s like getting into a bath, but

³ Note: the interviewer is revealed at the very end of the episode in the one time she is heard; it is Anglo American character Nicky Nichols.

the water is like warm chocolate pudding. And the Smiths are playing *There's A Light That Never Goes Out*. Oh. There's warm lighting all over and there're like five dudes massaging you" (Episode 6, Season 2).

Maritza stands by her friend, twirling her hair, and adds: "And you also have a pizza," to which Flaca confirms, "She's right. And you also have a pizza" (Episode 6, Season 2). This episode takes its title from this exchange ("You Also Have a Pizza"), which is clearly representative of a temporary desire, but is nonetheless a humorous definition of love. This desire is also representative of all the ordinary desires in prison that become even greater since they remain unfulfilled.

Later during the party, Maritza and Flaca sneak off to the kitchen. Flaca holds the cookie with Ian's name on it in her hand, sighs, calls him an "asshole" (Episode 6, Season 2) and throws the cookie on the floor. Maritza complains that they are wasting the best years of their lives in prison, their bodies will never look better, and no men are there to appreciate it (Episode 6, Season 2). Maritza complains that no one is touching her or kissing her, and Flaca responds "Shit. I'll kiss your dumb lips" (Episode 6, Season 2), and awkwardly leans in for a brief kiss. The kiss is very brief, and they both giggle, and Maritza encourages her to do it again. Flaca leans in again, grabs Maritza's hair, and kisses her longer, but immediately after this the friends burst into laughter, shaking their heads and saying "No, no" while realizing their friendship is genuinely strictly platonic.

There are instances of lesbian sexual acts that take place between Anglo American inmates in the show, and flashbacks reveal lesbian sexual activities taking place between African American inmate Poussey Washington and a former girlfriend.

The kiss that takes place between Maritza and Flaca in Episode 6, Season 2, is not only the only instance where Latinas take place in homosexual relations, but it is also the only time the Latina characters so much as reference lesbianism or homosexuality. Throughout the 26 episodes that comprise the first two seasons, the Latina characters never once witness these lesbian sexual activities or so much as speak about them. In reference to former traditional Latino representations, Arlene Dávila writes:

... [T]he essentialisms of the past which were built on Latinos' putative homogeneity of class (working class and poor), nationality (Chicano or Puerto Rican), political affiliation (Democratic), citizenship (undocumented), religion (Catholic), residential patterns (urban), sexuality (heterosexual), and race (mestizo or "brown")... (8).

OITNB advances the representation of Latinas in US media in many ways, but the show has not challenged any of the Latinas' sexual orientations as of the first two seasons. The single time a Latina references anything remotely related to homosexuality is in a derogatory fashion in a flashback showing Dayanara and her mother Aleida's relationship at home. Aleida's boyfriend Cesar states that he likes the boxed macaroni and cheese that is shaped like animals, though Aleida tells him he should not eat something that is made for kids: "I'm just trying to look out for you... so people don't think you're a faggot" (Episode 5, Season 1). *OITNB* does not question Latina heterosexuality, but I argue that this in no way takes away from the revolutionary representation of Latinas in this series. I will discuss just how innovate Jenji Kohan's portrayal of Latinas is in Chapter 3 of this thesis, which is devoted to this topic.

As I discuss in the next section, friendships like Maritza and Flaca's are formed not only between inmates of the same ethnicity in the series. The shared experiences within the prison walls outweigh their problems on the outside, and it is in forming these interracial bonds that the women are able to confront the problems on the inside.

INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS

The portrayal of inter-ethnic relationships on *OITNB* proves that even the very worst of circumstances can be made less difficult when faced together. Rather than deny the existence of racial stereotypes, *OITNB* directly addresses them, mocks them, and ultimately defies them. I do not intend to suggest that there are no scenes that include just one ethnicity, for there are. I propose, however, that scenes that show unity within one ethnic group do not take away from the more powerful unity that all the female inmates share. This capacity for female bonding is very clear in Kerman's reflections:

However, most of all, I realized that I was not alone in the world because of the women I lived with... We shared... prison khakis, cheap food, and hygiene items. Most important, we shared a deep reserve of humor, creativity in adverse circumstances, and the will to protect and maintain our own humanity despite the prison system's imperative to crush it.

(Kerman, *Orange* 292)

Episode 6 of Season 1, "WAC Pack," is the culmination of *OITNB*'s response to crude and divisive racial and ethnic stereotypes. "WAC" stands for Women's Advisory Council and consists of one inmate representative from each racial-ethnic group. Mr. Healy decides to reinstate this practice after excessive complaints from multiple inmates

in hopes that the WAC will address these problems under his council and will consequently lessen his workload. Anglo American and veteran inmate Nicky Nichols explains the process to Chapman in a sarcastic tone that reveals her recognition of the antiquated racialized divisions imposed by the prison staff: “You can only vote within your race or your group. Look, just pretend it’s the 1950s-- it makes it easier to understand” (Episode 6, Season 1). Lorna Morello elaborates: “See, everyone elects a representative from their own tribe: white, black, Hispanic, golden girls, and others. Then those five gals meet with Healy, tell him what they want and then he speaks to the higher ups. It’s like student council” (Episode 6, Season 1). Chapman responds in shock, stating the obvious question: “But how is that an effective system? Not every Hispanic person wants the same thing” (Episode 6, Season 1).

Morello, who has made multiple racist comments throughout the series thus far, begins the first of the racial- ethnic generalizations that each race- ethnicity will then make in turn of the others. Morello explains that of course all Hispanics want the same thing, because they all want to come to America. Thus begins her humorous generalization of Latinos, humorous in that it is so obviously un-informed and remarkably un-intelligent: “They live like 20 people in one apartment. They have more kids than even the Irish, the men like their women with big titties and big asses, they’re dirty, they’re greasy, their food smells nasty, and they’re taking a lot of jobs” (Episode 6, Season 1).⁴

⁴ It goes without saying that this is not true of all Hispanic people, but, as I will elaborate in Chapter 3, these stereotypes are unfortunately not too far off from the first studies of Latinos on US television.

Lorna Morello is clearly a character that places no value in political correctness. In the first episode, Morello hands Chapman a toothbrush and tissues immediately upon her arrival and states “We look out for our own. Don’t get all PC on me- it’s tribal, not racial” (Episode 1 Season 1). As humorous as her unintelligent remarks may be, however, unfortunately Morello’s opinions are representative of more racist beliefs that are deeply ingrained in US culture.

Underlying the stereotypes and generalizations of this episode is the fact that each race receives the same treatment and thus “...defies political correctness in powerful and disturbing ways” (Vivancos Pérez, “Latinas and Multiethnic Queerness in Orange Is the New Black”). The Anglo Americans light-heartedly stereotype the Latinas, the African Americans stereotype the Anglo Americans, and the Latinas stereotype the African Americans. As the conclusion of the episode shows, however, all the women are still subject to those in power- the prison staff. In this same episode, African Americans Taystee and Poussey create a dialogue in which they impersonate Anglo Americans to share their own generalizations:

TAYSTEE. Let’s talk about healthcare, McKenzie.

POUSSEY. Oh, Amanda, I’d rather not, it’s not polite.

TAYSTEE. Did you see that wonderful documentary about sushi? Of course, now that I’m vegan, I didn’t enjoy it quite as much.

POUSSEY. No, Chad and I had wine tasting class, then we had to come back and have really quiet sex, every night at 9. Did you hear that piece on NPR about hedge funds?

TAYSTEE. I don't have time. Now, what do you think I should do with my bangs? Should I do more of a side-sweep thing? (Episode 6, Season 1)

All the African Americans laugh, and then it is the Latinas' turn to generalize the African Americans. Flaca begins outrageously: "Did you know they can't float?... It's true. Like in the swimming pool and shit. Their bone density ain't right for it" (Episode 6, Season 1). Aleida Diaz, Dayanara's mother, responds to this stupidity with more: "That shit is crazy. Look, they smelly, stupid, and lazy, but they ain't got different bones" (Episode 6, Season 1). Maria, interestingly enough the pregnant Latina, responds "[They ain't got different bones,] 'cept in their pants. Lemme tell you, that black boys has some serious trouser meat" (Episode 6, Season 1). Each racial stereotype provided by the three ethnic groupings is as ridiculous as the next, and I argue that these stereotypes are intentionally absurd to portray the laughable uselessness of making racial generalizations.

The episode continues with other ridiculous diatribes -- "I'm black, she's black, and we like fried chicken;" "I say, we should have a 'Whites Only' bathroom!"-- (Episode 6, Season 1) but the final scene takes place behind closed doors between Counselor Healy and Chapman. Healy implies that he and Chapman understand each other, and that he believes she could help him. Chapman politely declines the unspoken invitation to run for WAC, and in the strongest display of power of the man in charge above the women of all races, Healy concludes their meeting with an indirect threat: "I'm giving you a chance to make your time count. Well, I'm disappointed, but it's not like I can make you run, right?" (Episode 6, Season 1). Chapman is horrified, and is even more so when the winners of the council are announced over the PA and she is named the

representative for the Anglo Americans. The rest of the inmates are equally shocked and outraged. Piper did not run, but, of course, she did not even have to, as ultimately neither she nor any of the inmates have any real vote.

That the Anglo American man in power ultimately undercuts the democratic system in place creates an even greater need for all the inmates to unite together against this injustice. In the article “The Caged Melting Pot: Toward and Understanding of the Consequences of Desegregation in Prisons” (2002), Chad Trulson and James W. Marquart re-introduce the equal status contact hypothesis, which “... in its most basic form suggests that ‘prejudice may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups’” (281). They apply this hypothesis to a prison setting in an attempt to figure out if desegregated living conditions result in more or less violence between inmates. They carry out their study in the Texas prison system, and compare segregated cellmates to desegregated cellmates from 1990-1999. Trulson and Marquart acknowledge that putting a measurement on racial relations is unrealistic, so they measure this in terms of physical acts of violence that they use as a visual indication of the state of these inter-racial relationships. To be clear, I acknowledge that this study is not directly applicable to the inter-ethnic relationships in *OITNB*. I am not interested in counting acts of physical confrontations, but their study contains information that is directly relevant to my argument. Trulson and Marquart found that “equal status contact via desegregation did not result in more violence compared to violence among inmates who were segregated” (769). Prison violence in this study could not be attributed to racial tensions, as acts of violence occurred both between men of the same race and men of different races. This

finding supports my argument that the prison setting is an equalizing factor for all ethnicities.

Given the most equalizing conditions possible, the African American, Latina, and Anglo American women are all equal in that they are all inmates and they are housed in the same minimal security prison. Despite their racial and ethnic differences, they share an absence of power because they are all subjected to the power of the prison staff. Further, this staff takes advantage of their position and abuses it, creating yet another reason for the inmates to join together against this abuse of power. Through living together and getting to know one another on what is likely the most equalizing territory possible, the women get to know each other as people, not representatives of different ethnicities. In discussing advocates of the equal status contact hypothesis, Trulson and Marquart explain:

“interracial contact counters stereotypes and promotes positive racial attitudes by providing sensitizing information to the norms, lifestyles, values and experiences of others-- familiarity erases ignorance and paves the way for positive interaction” (745).

Though the women jokingly acknowledge racialized characterizations in this episode, they know through their shared living experience that they are more alike than they are different. Ultimately, it is Counselor Healy who is racist, and all the women must stand together against him.

The second display of racial and ethnic unity of the female prisoners is again a response of the women banding together against the abuse of the men in power. Officer

Mendez, nicknamed “Pornstache” due to his eccentric mustache and inappropriate manner, has been smuggling drugs in to sell to addicted inmates in exchange for sexual favors. One of these inmates, Anglo American Tricia, has just completed rehab, but Mendez forces his latest stash on her upon her return, telling her she must sell it all in order to repay him. Kerman writes that “it is hard to conceive of any relationship between two adults in America being less equal than that of prisoner and prison guard” (Kerman, *Orange* 129), and certainly Tricia feels the same, as she has no choice but to take the drugs. Tricia is supposed to report for work, but instead Mendez locks her in the utility close with the baggy of drugs. Tricia subsequently overdoses, and Mendez finds her dead, hides the drugs, and stages a suicide.

Tricia’s closest friends, all Anglo Americans, hold a makeshift memorial service for her in the dorms, as the prison staff had her cremated in order to avoid a potentially revealing autopsy. It is in this moment, more obvious yet equally as powerful, when all ethnic groups join together in response to the tragedy created by the prison staff. Chang, the one Asian woman in the first season, is the first to stop by the memorial with a smuggled bag of oranges from the commissary (of which she is in charge). The Latinas stop by next, Gloria with a plate of nachos fresh out of the microwave (Episode 11, Season 1), and Flaca and Maritza offer their condolences in their respective juvenile fashion: “I never knew her much, but I thought she had a good vibe;” “Sucks she killed herself” (Episode 11, Season 1). Gloria tells Big Boo, one of Tricia’s closest friends, that she is sorry for her loss, and Boo responds with a thoughtful “Yeah. Gracias” (Episode 11, Season 1). Finally, African Americans Poussey and Black Cindy arrive with

contraband junk food and toilet hooch. Compassionate Poussey offers her condolences to her Anglo American friends: “Thought y’all could use some comfort food. She pulled off them [corn] rows really nice, too” (Episode 11, Season 1). Black Cindy agrees: “Yeah. Well, for a white girl,” (Episode 11, Season 1), and the horrible cause for this reunion is lightened through the unity of the women. In this scenario, one could argue that the Anglo Americans are the victims of the abuse and corruption of power, as Tricia and her friends are Anglo American.

The ethnic unity that manifests is two-fold. On the first level, though the inmates mourning Tricia’s death are Anglo Americans, the African Americans and Latinas comfort them in their time of loss. Secondly, Tricia’s kindness clearly transcended racial lines, proving that one’s character is of more importance than one’s race, even, and I argue especially, in the worst environments. Had Tricia disrespected the African Americans or Latinas in any way, they would not have gone through the effort of remembering and respecting her life, but they do. The Latinas recognize Tricia’s “good vibe,” (Episode 11, Season 1), and the African Americans acknowledge that she wore her hair in corn rows, a traditionally African American hairstyle, well. As Trulson and Marquart mention, the Latinas’ and African Americans’ familiarity with Tricia’s kind heart gets rid of unfounded ignorance.

Orange Is the New Black is a series about multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-sexual women in prison. Though the main characters are presently incarcerated, the show includes flashbacks to fully develop each woman’s story. The inmates are currently under the control of a representatively corrupt prison system, but it is not one that they accept.

In their own ways, each character uses their strength to cope in ways that go against the intentions of the prison staff. Some women have sexual relations with one another to find human comfort, and most all seek the companionship of one another, regardless of race. As the show's tagline says, "each sentence is a story," (www.Netflix.com) and Piper Kerman's desire to reveal what women in prison are really like is achieved.

No prisoner is exactly any one thing. Piper Chapman and Lorna Morello are neither gay nor straight. Dayanara Diaz does not speak Spanish, yet she is still a Latina. All of these women are criminals, yet the majority are not evil people. Many characters are multilingual, and they are able to share their stories in more than one language. Ultimately, the representation of the Latina women in *OITNB* is symbolic of all the traditional characterizations and stereotypes the series refuses to accept: not all prisoners are bad people, heterosexuality is not the only norm, and English is not the only language spoken. In Chapter 2, I take a very detailed look at the languages spoken in the series, giving primary focus to the use of Spanish and English by the Latinas but also examining German and Russian. This linguistic study will also discuss the different identities associated with different languages and language choices, and the complexity of the Litchfield inmates is even further developed. Piper Chapman's brother Cal wisely acknowledges that one of Larry's "issues" is his "...need to say that a person is exactly anything" (Episode 11, Season 1), and an attempt to place any character in only one category would be problematic indeed.

CHAPTER TWO- BILINGUALISM AND TRANSLANGUAGING

The role of language in *Orange Is the New Black* is crucial from the earliest scenes of the pilot episode. Piper Chapman arrives to prison with only two other women, one of whom is Latina Dayanara “Daya” Diaz⁵. Once shown to their shared temporary housing assignments, Chapman and Diaz are introduced to Gloria Mendoza, another Latina inmate. Mendoza not only assumes that Diaz knows Spanish because of her appearance, but also demonstrates the belief that to be Latina, one must speak Spanish. Upon introduction to Diaz, Mendoza states that she needs a minute as she finishes putting on makeup:

MENDOZA. Espérate un minuto. Déjame terminar esto.

DIAZ. Um, I don’t speak Spanish.

MENDOZA. Great, another fucking coconut. What’s the matter with your mother, she don’t teach you Spanish?

MENDOZA (to CHAPMAN): Hey *blanca*, you speak Spanish?

CHAPMAN: Un poco. Entiendo más de lo que puedo hablar.

⁵ I argue that Daya’s arrival with Chapman also serves as a foreshadowing of the increasing centrality that Daya’s character will assume throughout the progression of the show.

MENDOZA (to DIAZ): You see? Fucking white girl speaks Spanish.

(Episode 1, Season 1)

The use of Spanish can be considered an identity marker of Latinidad, and its varied usage can indicate various aspects of identity. In this chapter, I analyze the use of Spanish and English in the series and consider additional languages spoken in the first two seasons. The alternation of Spanish and English employed by the Latina inmates is given a certain priority. I examine specifically when each language is used and explore the possible implications. Throughout these close readings, I look into the role of language as an identity marker, and discuss how identity is performed and suggested by certain language uses. I begin with an examination of language use in Kerman's memoir, noting the importance she gives to language in her personal reflections. I will then introduce the concepts of code-switching and translanguaging, and apply these to specific scenes in which the Latinas alternate between English and Spanish. Finally, I reflect on the use of German and Russian in specific scenes from the series as well, as part of the fully multi-lingual environment of *OITNB*.

LANGUAGE USE IN KERMAN'S MEMOIR

As I discussed in the introduction, Piper Kerman's memoir serves as the inspiration for the series but also strays from it in many ways. With respect to languages, the most important distinction is that Kerman's text is the compilation of her personal reflections whereas the series includes an array of viewpoints. That being the case, I argue that language plays such a strong role in each medium that even Kerman devotes various sections to language use in her single account. The scene from Episode 1, Season

1 in which Chapman first meets her temporary roommates is one of few that are replicated almost exactly from Piper Kerman's text. After the inmate count, which was "screwed up" in both accounts, Kerman writes: "After the liver-and-lima-beans dinner... women of every shape, size, and complexion flooded back into the main hall of the building, shouting in English and Spanish" (Kerman, *Orange* 45-46). Although Kerman's account is intentionally personal, one of the first observations she makes about her new living situation is about the bilingual din that surrounds her. Kerman also writes about one of her co-workers in the electric shop, whom she calls Yvette: "Yvette, a sweet Puerto Rican who was halfway through a fourteen-year sentence and yet still had (at most) seventeen words of English at her command" (Kerman, *Orange* 89-90). This is certainly proof that enough Spanish was spoken within that prison that knowing English was not necessary. Kerman later relates that she was trying to learn some Spanish, and Yvette "was very patiently trying to teach [her], but what [she] managed to pick up was almost exclusively about food, sex, or curses" (Kerman, *Orange* 97-98). Whether these three categories were the most pertinent to prison life or whether they were most important to Yvette, these are the areas of Spanish language that Kerman learned while serving her time. Clearly, learning Spanish was not a priority for Kerman during her sentence, but both the language and its speakers are important enough to be referenced again and again in her memoir.

In reflecting on her first five months in prison, Kerman shares all that she has learned up to this milestone. These accomplishments include learning how to clean with maxi pads, how to tell whether two women were lovers or just friends, and learning when

to curse in Spanish (Kerman, *Orange* 150). Kerman also includes in this section a recipe for prison cheesecake, which she learned how to make from Yvette's "Spanish and hand-gesture instructions" (Kerman, *Orange* 150). This cheesecake is indeed an accomplishment, as noted by Kerman: "Yvette raised her eyebrows when she tasted it. "¡Buena!" she proclaimed. I was very proud" (Kerman, *Orange* 151).

Knowing Spanish is important for Kerman during her stay in prison when needing to curse someone, and those who speak it prove to be valuable friends to have on the inside. Just like in the series, though, Spanish is not the only language spoken in the prison besides English. Kerman devotes an entire chapter to mother-daughter relationships in prison, and concludes her account of the Mother's Day event noting that "Mother's Day was special, and children of every age swarmed the place, and a cacophony of conversations flowed in many languages and accents" (Kerman, *Orange* 135). *Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison* is an account of Piper Kerman's experience in prison. Though the book provides only her perspective, dealing with different languages- both Spanish and others- is certainly an important part of her experience in prison. Kerman mentions that about half of the inmates were Latinas (Kerman, *Orange* 66), and that Spanish was very clearly the second most-used language in the series. However, entire episodes of the TV show are devoted to flashbacks of inmates speaking in Russian and German, giving *OITNB* a multilingual aspect that goes beyond Kerman's memoirs, and that is not common to most US television series.

CODE-SWITCHING AND TRANSLANGUAGING

Initially, all the Latina inmates in *OITNB* speak both Spanish and English. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-switching* (2009), editors Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Toribio define the concept code-switching (hereafter CS) as “the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by a bilingual speaker” (xii). Of course, this alternation can and does occur in many different ways in *OITNB*. Bullock and Toribio explain that even monolingual speakers alter the way they speak depending on the addressee(s) and the setting. This is defined as “style shifting” (2). Since bilingual speakers have two registers or dialects within their repertoire, their choice to speak different languages at different times is referred to as “language shifting” rather than style shifting (Bullock and Toribio 2). Crucially, then, “...given the appropriate circumstances, many bilinguals will exploit this ability [language shifting] and alternate between languages in an unchanged setting, often within the same utterance; this is the phenomenon understood as CS” (Bullock and Toribio 2). The examples I provide of this alternation of languages occur within the unchanged setting of the fictional prison Litchfield in *OITNB*. As Bullock and Toribio explain, CS can be used for many different purposes, such as “...filling linguistic gaps, expressing ethnic identity, and achieving particular discursive aims...” (2) These reasons for CS do occur in the series. I will study some examples later in this chapter.

In an essay entitled “Code-switching among US Latinos,” (2011) Toribio offers a more detailed definition for CS as the “linguistic phenomenon whereby a speaker uses two linguistic codes within a single speech event, alternating between phrases, clauses, and utterances, often with no change in addressee or subject” (Toribio 530). The

alternation of languages is “regularly practiced by Latinos who are proficient bilinguals, and is especially prevalent among those born and raised in the United States” (Toribio 532). This, of course, is directly applicable to the Latina characters in *OITNB*. Another important observation provided in this chapter is that CS is not something that is ever formally instructed; it just happens (Toribio 537). While CS is not instructed, it has always been presumed to be a conscious choice by the speaker (Toribio 539). Toribio presents a comprehensive list of functions served by CS: quotation, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message, topic shift, persuasion, and emphasis (Toribio 539). Finally, Toribio also touches on the relationship between language and identity that is so crucial to the analysis of language in this series: “Through the juxtaposition of Spanish and English, Latinos engaged in the “performance of identity” as conceptualized by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), a positive assertion and enactment of their *Latinidad*” (Toribio 540). This “performance of identity” connects to Butler’s understanding of gender as a performance, and all these performances help to better understand the characters.

TRANSLANGUAGING

Suresh Canagarajah introduces the term “translanguaging” to refer to the communicative practices of multi-linguals. According to Canagarajah, translanguaging is based on two assumptions. First, language is part of a multi-lingual’s repertoire that is accessed for communicative purposes. Second, languages are not separate but integrated, and “multilingual competence emerges out of local practices where multiple languages are negotiated for communication” (Canagarajah 1). Certainly, both assumptions are true with respect to the practice of CS as well. CS is used in communication, languages are

integrated in their combination and alternation, and CS occurs when and where both Spanish and English are spoken. Canagarajah also touches on the “style shift” of monolinguals that Toribio and Bullock earlier explained: “All of us have multilingual competence and adopt multilingual practices in our competence. Even the so-called “monolinguals” shuttle between codes, registers and discourses” (Canagarajah 4). Though Canagarajah examines the application of translanguaging in his graduate level teaching of a second language course, he emphasizes that translanguaging is a social accomplishment (4), which reinforces our understanding of language as an interaction. Canagarajah analyzes one student’s particular use of translanguaging in her writing, and although the texts are in written form, they are still part of a social interaction in that they are peer-reviewed. Peers provide their feedback and the authors respond directly to this feedback. Canagarajah adds that translanguaging is performative: “it is an interactive achievement that depends on aligning one’s language resources to the features of the ecology to construct meaning” (5). Language and translanguaging are social, and as linguists Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (2005) explained, identities can be formed from specific linguistic interactions.

Canagarajah cites Bloomaert on the interactional aspect of translanguaging: “in order for an identity to be established, it has to be recognized by others” (5). In other words, language does not occur in a vacuum. In any linguistic interaction, there is a minimum of two participant roles: the speaker/ author and the listener/reader, and it is through the negotiation of these roles that languages are understood and identities are formed. Canagarajah’s explication of translanguaging is useful in that it reminds us that

language is always a negotiation. This negotiation requires a minimum of two parties, and every negotiation of language is an interaction. Even if the exchange of language is the interpretation of a written text, every interaction requires active negotiation by all participants. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) explain, social identities emerge from these interactions. Looking at the identities that emerge from the use of Spanish by the Latina inmate on the show help to better understand these complex characters.

USE OF SPANISH AMONG THE LATINA INMATES

As I mentioned earlier, the scene in which Anglo American Piper Chapman unintentionally reveals she knows more Spanish than Latina Dayanara Diaz is of great importance. I have already argued that *OITNB* rejects racial and ethnic stereotypes; however, this does not mean that all the characters on the series do the same. As I studied in chapter 1, Lorna Morello is one of these characters for whom political correctness has never been a priority. After driving Chapman and Diaz to the prison in the pilot episode of the show, Morello is tasked with giving them the introductory tour. At first, Diaz and Chapman share a temporary housing assignment with three other inmates. Two of these inmates are Anglo American- Anita DeMarco and Nicky Nichols, and one is Latina, Gloria Mendoza. Morello introduces Chapman to Demarco, asking her to show Chapman the ropes, and introduces Diaz to Mendoza asking her to do the same. Mendoza assumes that Diaz at the very least understands Spanish since that is the language in which she first addresses her: “Espérate un minuto. Déjame terminar esto” (Episode 1, Season 1). Since Mendoza does not yet know that Diaz does not speak Spanish, it is very likely that Mendoza has chosen to speak in Spanish instead of English to express their shared ethnic

identity. Diaz sheepishly admits that she does not understand her: “Um, I don’t speak Spanish” (Episode 1, Season 1). The look of disgust that Mendoza gives Diaz as a response exposes her obvious disapproval. Furthermore, her disappointment with Diaz only grows when Chapman, in perfect Spanish admits that she understands some Spanish and speaks a little: “Un poco. Entiendo más de lo que puedo hablar” (Episode 1, Season 1).

In this scene, Anglo American Chapman knows Spanish while Latina Daya Diaz does not. Mendoza considers Spanish to be a marker of Latinidad, and her response to Daya expresses her disappointment in Daya’s lack of knowledge: “You see? Fucking white girl speaks Spanish” (Episode 1, Season 1). In “Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Approach” (2005), linguists Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall provide five principles in which identity can be analyzed as produced in linguistic interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 585). The critical word here is interaction, as these five principles only result from identities that emerge from an exchange among two or more people. Bucholtz and Hall provide an intentionally vague definition of identity, stating that it is “*the social positioning of self and other*” (Emphasis in the original 586). In defining the positionality principle, the authors explain, “identities encompass... temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles” (Bucholtz and Hall 592). Within the interaction among Mendoza, Diaz and Chapman, each participant assumes a stance or role that is applicable only within the boundaries of this conversation. Mendoza takes the stance that language is a critical part of one’s ethnic or racial identity, though this is not a staunch belief that she maintains throughout the series. With the utterance of

grammatically correct Spanish, Chapman positions herself as having more of a *latina* identity than Diaz, who does not speak Spanish. Consequently, Diaz is positioned as unable to fully claim a “truly” Latina identity, as she cannot speak like Chapman and Mendoza. It is important to note these positions are all temporarily valid within this interaction, whether or not these identities were intentionally sought. Bucholtz and Hall’s partialness principle states that any construction of identity is partial and constantly shifting throughout all the linguistic interactions of one’s life (606). As Chapman is prone to do, she unintentionally causes trouble by proving that she, an Anglo American, knows more Spanish than Latina Dayanara Diaz.

This single interaction holds yet even further linguistic importance. After Diaz’s embarrassed confession, the first irritated remark Mendoza makes is an attack on her mother: “Great, another fucking coconut. What’s the matter with your mother, she don’t teach you Spanish?” (Episode 1, Season 1). Though this comment is retrospectively humorous -- Mendoza is actually friends with Day’s mother Aleida-- it also implies Mendoza’s belief that it is the responsibility of the parent to teach the child the language of their shared heritage. This ideology is reflected in Kim Potowski’s study “‘I Was Raised Talking Like My Mom’: The Influence of Mothers in the Development of MexiRicans’ Phonological and Lexical Features” (2008). A “MexiRican” is an individual with one Mexican parent and one Puerto Rican parent, and Potowski explains that having either a Mexican accent or a Puerto Rican accent will label an individual as either Mexican or Puerto Rican (203). That one’s accent identifies them as either one thing or the other is representative of Bucholtz and Hall’s relationality principle. This principle

seeks to prove that identities are not constructed independently, but “always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors” (Bucholtz and Hall 598).

Potowski states that the purpose of her study “was to determine to what degree phonological and lexical traits from the mother’s dialect were present in the Spanish spoken by their adult MexiRican children” (205). Potowski gathered this information from two interviews, one in Spanish and one in English. A very important distinction Potowski makes is that “unlike claims to general ethnic identity, dialect variety in a minority language is usually not under a person’s control” and that one’s dialect is typically dependent on language exposure in childhood (Potowski 206). Potowski found that 20 out of 27 participants (74%) interviewed showed a majority of traits that resembled their mother’s dialect (Potowski 212). Potowski concludes that her findings provide further evidence of the mother’s influence on the language of their children (Potowski 217). While these findings are specific to one’s dialect, they reinforce the importance of the role that the mother plays in their child’s linguistic development. The first time Daya encounters her mother in the prison where they are now both incarcerated, Aleida looks both ways to see if a guard is present and then slaps Daya across the face. Flashbacks in the series show Aleida leaving Daya and her other young children to go out with her boyfriend after the two of them snort cocaine in their kitchen. When Mendoza asks Daya “what’s the matter with your mother, she don’t teach you Spanish?” (Episode 1, Season 1), it becomes clear that not teaching Daya Spanish was the least of Aleida’s maternal shortcomings.

Throughout the progression of the series, Diaz becomes a leader within the Latina inmates even though she does not achieve fluidity in Spanish. That Diaz does not speak Spanish eventually becomes unimportant to Mendoza as the two get to know one another, but that does not negate her linguistic shortcoming in Mendoza's mind within their first exchange. As Angharad N. Valdivia notes, "[t]he language in the dominant culture's construction of Latinidad is Spanish. This does not mean that all Latina/os speak Spanish, or that all Latin Americans speak Spanish..." (16). Similarly, this does also not mean that all who speak Spanish claim a Latina identity. In Episode 2 of Season 1, Miss Rosa briefly hints at her otherwise-unmentioned heritage: "When I first got here... there was a disagreement. Then we brawled. That's how you settled things. And if I'd have won, I'd have been *la jefa*. Instead of this. Thank God I got cancer. No one fucks with cancer" (Episode 2, Season 1). Though Miss Rosa never aligns herself with the Latinas or any ethnic group, her Latina identity subtly emerges when she says *la jefa* instead of "the boss." Miss Rosa has less time to socialize with other inmates due to her frequent hospital visits for chemotherapy, and when she does interact with the other women, she chooses not to reveal her Latina identity or any personal information whatsoever. The fact that Miss Rosa does not associate herself with either the Latinas or the Anglo Americans indicates that she is not trying to hide her Latina identity, rather she is not interested in creating any social-ethnic relationships. Ethnic identity, then, like gender and sexuality, can also be fluid.

Another interesting occurrence of CS occurs in an exchange between Gloria and Galina "Red" Reznikov in Episode 7 of Season 2. Red was once in charge of the prison

kitchen for many years, and through flashbacks we learn that she sought out this position of power not long after she first arrived to Litchfield. Red's desire for control of the kitchen is twofold: first, she used to own a restaurant with her husband in her native Russia and views her cooking as a source of pride, and second, she smuggles in contraband through the produce shipments and this places her in a much sought after position of power. Through a series of mishaps, Red loses control of the kitchen, and the staff delegates this position to Gloria, who repeatedly admits she never asked for it.

In Season 2, a malicious and manipulative woman named Yvonne "Vee" Parker enters Litchfield, and flashbacks reveal that she was previously incarcerated here with Red many years ago when Red first gained control of the kitchen. These flashbacks also reveal that Vee violently attempted to take control of the kitchen from Red so that she could have the power of the contraband business for herself. In Season 2, Episode 7, Red approaches Gloria about teaming up together against Vee, who is African American. Red and Gloria are the unofficially designated leading elders of both the Anglo Americans and the Latinas within Litchfield. Vee has been sneaking in cigarettes and is once again trying to take control of the prison contraband from Red. Gloria tells Red that she has already helped her by hiding some of Red's contraband in the kitchen's walk-in freezer, but she does not want to be caught in the middle of her and Vee's power struggle. Red offers to remove her contraband items as soon as she can. Gloria is frustrated with her involvement in a situation where she feels she does not belong and tells Red: "You've got *tres días*" (Episode 7, Season 2). Gloria walks a few steps away from Red then turns to her and adds: "That's "three days" in English" (Episode 7, Season 2). Red responds: "*Sí*,

señora” (Episode 7, Season 2), and mockingly shakes her head at Gloria’s back as she walks into the kitchen freezer. Here, Gloria uses Spanish to make an argument, emphasizing in her language that she is currently the one in the position of power. This instance of CS occurs within the same sentence, and the timeline Gloria so generously gives Red is given in Spanish, Gloria’s language. Red responds in Spanish in an attempt to mock Gloria’s position of power, proving that she understands her language, too. By addressing Gloria as “*señora*,” Red uses a word of respect in a disrespectful manner, conceding to her temporary loss of power but not giving up.

An exchange between prison guard John Bennett, Daya’s boyfriend, and several Latina inmates includes notable instances of CS or translanguaging. Aleida, Maritza and Flaca have manipulated Bennett into bringing them contraband in exchange for their silence about his impregnating Daya. After sneaking in the requested items once, Bennett later approaches the women to tell them he is not going to continue to do this. Still believing the Latinas have the upper hand in this relationship, Maritza smartly tells Bennett, “I think you forgot how blackmail works, *papi*” (Episode 7, Season 2). Here, the use of *papi* is considered a borrowing or loan word, which is the incorporation of a word in one language into another language. Though it would be a rare intelligent moment for Maritza, she is most likely intentionally making a play on words. In Puerto Rican Spanish, *papi* can be used as an affectionate term for a male, but Maritza also knows that Bennett is the father of Daya’s unborn child. Whether consciously or not, Maritza employs this word in Spanish for emphasis. Bennett interprets this reminder of his secret as an intention to further undermine his position of power, and he no longer accepts this.

Bennett allowed himself to be manipulated by these women before, but he has since realized that (and been instructed to) he must step up.

In response to Maritza's comment, Bennett replies: "I think you forgot how prison works," and adds that the women have taken this situation too far (Episode 7, Season 2). Maritza responds that Bennett also went too far with Dayanara, and after this second display of disrespect Bennett announces to the women that Maritza will not be telling anyone his secret, because he is taking her to the SHU (Solitary Housing Units). The Latinas exclaim that Bennett cannot do that, and as he takes Maritza away he asks the remaining women if they would like to join her. Blanca Flores, one of the Latina women in this group, makes a remark after Bennett has walked away, though her words in Spanish are characteristically difficult to decipher as she mutters them. The subtitles for this utterance read: "[speaking Spanish] I didn't think that fucker had it in him" (Episode 7, Season 2). Here, Blanca uses Spanish as a shared language within the community of Latinas to speak about an outsider of their community who has just wronged one of their own. Officer Bennett may have taken away their contraband and Maritza, but even had he remained to hear this comment, he would not have been able to decipher it.

Blanca Flores is not one of the central Latina characters in the series, but she employs her knowledge of the Spanish language in a very creative way for her benefit. Much to her dismay, Piper Chapman learns early on that there is only one stall with a door in the prison bathroom. Blanca almost always occupies this stall, and it appears as though she is using it to communicate with the devil. In multiple scenes, Blanca can be heard muttering in a low voice in Spanish, and the only intelligible word is spoken

repeatedly-- *diablo*. In one scene, Chapman is waiting for the stall to become available, and transgender inmate Sophia Burset advises her: “That’s Satan’s stall” (Episode 3, Season 1). Chapman responds: “That much I got. At least Satan gets a door” (Episode 3, Season 1). However, the subtitles only read “(WOMAN TALKING IN SPANISH).” Later in the season, Chapman takes advantage of a rare moment when the stall is available, and enters the stall, sits down, and closes the door. While Chapman relishes the luxurious moment of privacy, she hears a vibrating sound behind her. She removes a loose brick to find a cell phone hidden in the wall. Chapman opens the phone to a nude photo, and Blanca’s secret is revealed. Blanca has secretly been communicating with her boyfriend, Diablo, on a hidden cellphone in the one bathroom stall with a door. Blanca takes advantage of the fact that the majority of the other prisoners and prison staff do not understand Spanish and is able to communicate privately, and quite intimately, with her boyfriend.

ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN THE SERIES: GERMAN

In Episode 6 of Season 2, we get to know Poussey Washington more intimately through a series of flashbacks to her life before incarceration. Poussey’s father is in the army, and we learn that he was once stationed in Germany. This particular episode of Season 2 takes place on Valentine’s Day, so a great deal of focus in these flashbacks is given to Poussey’s relationship with her former German girlfriend. What is most remarkable about all of these scenes is Poussey’s proficiency in the German language. Throughout this episode, the inmates give their definitions of what love is. Poussey’s answer is not very eloquent, but it inspires the flashbacks to her life in Germany: “[Love

is] Chilling, you know kicking it with somebody, talking, making mad stupid jokes. And like, not even wanting to go to sleep, cause then you might be without ‘em for a minute. And you don’t want that” (Episode 6, Season 2).

The first flashback shows Poussey and a group of teenagers playing a card game. Poussey appears to have won this round of cards, and exclaims in German with English subtitles: “You can’t touch me, I’m unstoppable” (Episode 6, Season 2). Her girlfriend responds that she thinks she is very touchable, and the two begin to kiss. At this point, a young Anglo American male walks over and tells the two in a British accent, “Get a room!” (Episode 6, Season 2). Poussey responds in English, and again her language is not eloquent, yet the message behind it is powerful: “German, fool. Talk it” (Episode 6, Season 2). The boy responds, searching for the right word in German: “Zing? Zinger?” (Episode 6, Season 2). Poussey answers, “*Das Zimmer*. You’re part of a community. Respect its language” (Episode 6, Season 2). This sentiment expressed is so powerful, especially for a woman so young. Respecting one’s language is a notion that would seem to follow common sense, yet unfortunately it is rarely practiced. Especially profound is Poussey’s acknowledgement to respect the language of the community that all the soldiers’ children are temporarily a part of, regardless of, and perhaps especially because, it is not the community that either of them are originally from. Sadly, though, this young man does not share Poussey’s perspective, and responds with typical teenage angst: “My father is part of a community. I’m the unfortunate appendage he drags about wherever your fight against terror takes him” (Episode 6, Season 2). The profundity of the moment passes, and Poussey turns to her girlfriend and explains in German: “He’s just talking

smack” (Episode 6, Season 2), and begins to kiss her again. The British teen then suddenly displays an interest in the German language, humorously asking “how do you say “I’d like to watch as you two make sweet, sweet lady love” in German?” (Episode 6, Season 2), and Poussey responds with an equally humorous use of CS: “*Nein*, motherfucker, *nein*” (Episode 6, Season 2). For once, the ignorant teen recognizes a word in German.

ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN THE SERIES: RUSSIAN

Even Officer Sam Healy, who once walked away from a violent assault between two inmates, recognizes the value of respecting one’s language. Healy is married to a Russian woman, Katya, whom he paid to marry him. Their marriage has had its share of difficulties, as a previous scene from Season 1 revealed Katya speaking to her mother about her dissatisfaction with Healy in Russian. In Episode 7 of Season 1, Healy, his wife and mother-in-law are eating at their dinner table. Healy asks, “Can we please speak English at the table? Just at the table?” (Episode 7, Season 1). Disregarding his request, Katya’s mother tells her in Russian (through English subtitles) “Just two more years for a green card. Be nice” (Episode 7, Season 1). Katya responds flatly in Russian: “You don’t have to fuck him” (Episode 7, Season 1). The women continue speaking to each other in Russian, but soon the mother turns to Healy apologizing, and says “English” (Episode 7, Season 1). Katya speaks again to her mother in Russian, and her mother scolds her: “English!” (Episode 7, Season 1). Healy’s intentions are clear, and he compliments how pretty Katya looks in the dress he bought for her. Katya’s disinterest, however, is equally clear: “Thank you, Sam. It is very... blue” (Episode 7, Season 1).

During the Valentine's Day episode in the second season, Healy sneaks out of the party to his office to call his mail order Russian bride and gets her voicemail. The subtitles explain that Healy is speaking in Russian at first: "[*speaking Russian*] Hi, honey. It's me" (Episode 6, Season 2). Healy then returns to English to say "I just wanted to call and wish you a happy Valentine's Day" (Episode 6, Season 2). Then, very slowly, Healy speaks in Russian again: [*speaking Russian*] *Would you like... to dance... with me?*" (Episode 6, Season 2). Healy is very proud of this accomplishment, as he smiles and returns to English: "I learned that for you. I'm a good man, Katya. You'll see that. I'm gonna make you really proud to be married to this big galoot" (Episode 6, Season 2). Healy's moral character is constantly in question throughout the series, as he shows moments of genuine concern for his inmates, and at other times he witnesses two inmates beating each other and leaves them to their own violent actions. Recently, though, Healy is searching to gain the inmates' approval, and seeks to do the same with his wife by learning her language.

OITNB is multi-dimensional, and the language use in the show is no exception. The Latinas' use of Spanish is representative of Kerman's novel, and their alternation between Spanish and English reveals much about their identities. That Spanish and English are not the only languages spoken in the series is also unusual and innovative, and furthers the impressive multi-ethnic atmosphere of the show. It is within this atmosphere that the Latina women on the show are able to break away from their former stereotypical representations in US media. I will examine these pioneering accomplishments in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE- CHANGING THE REPRESENTATION OF LATINAS IN US MEDIA

The representation of Latinos in US media is nothing new, but the way in which they are being represented is. For example, Charles Ramirez Berg has stated that Latinas in film have three representational options: “The halfbreed harlot, the female clown, and the dark lady” (cit. Valdivia 92). These are no longer the only options, as evidenced by *OITNB*’s multiple main characters that are Latina. Angharad N. Valdivia states:

Latina/os and the media is not a new subject. Latina/os are not a new population. The fact that we are now studying Latina/os does not mean that they/we recently began to exist. Rather it indicates that a number of interrelated forces have come together so that there is institutional, representational, and everyday attention paid to issues of Latina/os in general, and Latina/os and the media in particular. (Valdivia 4)

As I have argued in chapters 1 and 2, *Orange Is the New Black* breaks the mold in terms of gender and sexuality representations and traditional monolingual television series. The multidimensional and complex Latina characters in *OITNB* create a new conversation about the representation of Latinos in the US media in both their sheer number and their diversity. In an interview regarding the Latina experience, author Désirée Zamorano states that Latinas are “invisible in the fictional worlds of movies, TV shows, and books”

(80). Zamorano continues: “When we do appear, our roles are limited for the most part to those given to us in the mental landscapes of producers and authors. We tend to be hot and sexy temptresses or struggling and victimized immigrants (or both)” (80). The Latina women in *OITNB*, however, are neither of these. They are strong, independent and lively women who reject succumbing to these stereotypes. These Latina characters are central to the series’ developments. Moreover, it is a Latina inmate with whom two prison guards fall in love- and not because she is a “sexy temptress” (Zamorano 80).

In this chapter, I present past representations of Latinos in US media, and analyze these representations in relation to those in *OITNB*. I highlight the characters of Maritza Ramos, Flaca Gonzales and Gloria Mendoza, and show that their roles as comedians and leaders further remove Latina representation from its archetypal history. I also provide an in-depth analysis of the romantic relationship between Latina inmate Dayanara Diaz and prison guard John Bennett. I argue that the sheer normality of their relationship, along with Daya’s assertion of power, further advance the progressive development of Latina representation in US media. Finally, I discuss these representations with respect to the role Netflix and its original series are playing in the field of Television and Cultural Studies.

PREVIOUS REPRESENTATION OF LATINOS IN US MEDIA

To fully appreciate the scope of Jenji Kohan’s transformational Latina representation, one must first understand the history of these representations. Few television analyses have included information about Latinos, but those that do indicate a consistent pattern of underrepresentation since the 1950s. Dana E. Mastro and Elizabeth

Behm-Morawitz (2005) report that the few times Latinos were represented on television, they were “primarily cast in secondary and nonrecurring roles, with males typically outnumbering females. As such, Latinas have been underrepresented in terms of both their gender and their ethnicity” (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 111). Arlene Dávila argues that even the Hispanic media in the US cannot accurately represent the diversity of US Latinos (Dávila 38). The US media has overwhelmingly portrayed Latinos as speaking with heavy accents and has reduced Latinos to being the “brown” race (Valdivia 17, 19). However, as Angharad N. Valdivia notes, “for centuries, the fact that Latina/os have not been, or have barely been, represented in mainstream popular culture does not mean that they have not been there” (Valdivia 70). The US certainly has a long history of a Hispanic population that is ever increasing. In fact, data from the Pew Research Center shows an increase in US Hispanic population from 9.1 million in 1970 to 54.1 million in 2013 (www.pewresearch.org).

Despite new shows such as *Cristela* (ABC, 2014) Latino/a characters still have rarely been featured as lead characters since *Ugly Betty*, (ABC, 2006-2010) an adaptation from the eponymous Colombian *telenovela*. Sofia Vergara’s portrayal of Gloria on *Modern Family* (ABC, 2009- 2015) is one of if not the most recognized Latina character on a major network television series, though this is likely due in large part to her physical appearance. Angharad N. Valdivia analyzes Vergara’s character:

An additional wrinkle surfaces when actors hyper accentuate stereotype and therefore provide a character that can be seen as ironic, though this implicit irony may be lost on general audiences. Sofia Vergara’s character

Gloria in the hit television show *Modern Family* exemplifies this latter development. Playing the gorgeous trophy wife, who always wears high heels, tight and low cut tops, perfectly flowing and bouncy brown hair, red lips, and – of course – the heavy Spanish accent, Vergara has crossed over into mainstream stardom... (Valdivia 21).

Significantly, Gloria's character also represents what Isabel Molina-Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia refer to as "the gendered aspects of the trope of tropicalism...the spitfire female Latina characterized by red-colored lips, bright seductive clothing, curvaceous hips and breasts, long brunette hair, and extravagant jewelry" (211). In the equalizing territory of prison, however, any curves are hidden under khaki jumpsuits, and flashy makeup and jewelry are not permitted.

OITNB is the most revolutionary series in terms of Latina representation in US media for the very fact that so many Latina characters are included in the core group of primary characters. Unlike Cristela, Gloria, and Betty, the Latina women of *OITNB* are important characters entirely because of their characters, not their Latinidad. That is, Gloria, Daya, Maritza, Flaca, and the other Latinas are central to the show due to their storylines and involvement in the plot, and they are not separated or given special attention because of their race or ethnicity. *Orange Is the New Black* paves the way for a new portrayal of Latina lives through US media. Isabel Molina-Guzmán reflects on this: "Latina lives continue to be represented through media archetypes and tropes that have existed since the birth of popular film in the early 1900s, yet the new century also has opened more complex representational spaces" (1). In paving the way for new Latina

representation, *OITNB* embodies this complex representational space of which Molina-Guzmán writes.

This complex representational space also allows for new representations while replacing the traditional, stereotypical ones. In *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race* (2008), Arlene Dávila examines the “selective dominance of some interpretations [of Latinos] over others” (6). This is what she refers to as the “spin.” Her study of Latino/a representation in the US focuses on racial representation, as she discusses “the tendency to describe white Latinos as light-skinned not white, and [...] the total erasure of black Latinos in dominant media representations” (13). Dávila adds: “Latinos have always been more heterogeneous than their public representations” (29). And yet, *OITNB* is changing this representation by showing the Latina women with an array of varying skin tones, including the often-disregarded Afro-Latina (Molina-Gúzman 13). In *Dangerous Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media*, Molina-Guzmán discusses the concepts of symbolic colonization and symbolic rupture with former representations. In breaking with traditional representations of Latinas in US media, *OITNB* embodies this explanation of symbolic rupture: “the way some audiences make sense of the identity of Latina figures [...] unsettles established categories of identity and offers potential moments of social, cultural, and political rupture” (16). *OITNB* does disrupt these previous established categories and disturbs traditional representations of Latinas in US media.

LATINA CHARACTERS IN *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK*

All of the Latina characters on *OITNB* are significant in their very existence and number. Six Latina inmates are the subjects of attention in the series, a number that is quite comparable to the seven Anglo American and seven African American inmates who are main, recurring characters. As is often the case in current television series, one or two Latino/a characters are included in an effort to promote diversity, and this is simply not the case with *OITNB*. It is not my intention to argue that there is no racial divisiveness on the show; there are multiple scenes where Latinas are sitting with Latinas, African Americans with African Americans, and Anglo Americans with Anglo Americans. What is crucial is that there is an equal representation of inmates from each ethnic group, and that all the inmates share in their disempowerment. In other words, the Latina inmates on *OITNB* are not passive characters included in the background in a half-hearted attempt to promote diversity. The Latina inmates are part of the heart and soul of the Litchfield prison population and contribute greatly to the show.⁶

CHARACTERS MARITZA RAMOS AND FLACA GONZALES

Two of the inmates who add so much to the dynamic of the series in their comic relief are the youngest Latinas, Maritza Ramos and Flaca Gonzales. Both young women are attractive. For Maritza, as one character points out, this is especially fortunate, as she is not very intelligent. In Episode 6 of Season 2, many of the Latina women are in the kitchen making cookies for the prison's Valentine's party. The camera focuses in on the

⁶ In any given episode, there are approximately 5 Latina scenes to 7 Anglo American scenes to 5 African American scenes. However, any type of quantitative analysis is not truly representative of the variety of scenes. Characters of all ethnicities have episodes that contain flashbacks, and depending on the ethnicity of that character, that ethnicity will have more scenes in that episode.

women's trays of decorated cookies, and shows Maritza's tray to be filled with burnt, broken and messy cookies. Maria looks at Maritza's tray and tells her, "You're lucky you're pretty. You know that, right?" (Episode 6, Season 2). Maritza's close friend Flaca is never far from her side. Flaca has an opinion on pretty much everything, and is far from hesitant to defend her beliefs. As only young women who are best friends can be, the two girls are always talking, never shy, and always convinced that they know best.

In Episode 5 of Season 2, protagonist Piper Chapman sees a chicken out on the prison grounds. Word of the chicken sighting leads to a reward offering from Red, the inmate prison chef. Outside, the Latina women see Piper and the others searching for the chicken, and discuss what they are up to. Maritza attempts a profound comment: "Maybe it's not the chicken itself but what's inside the chicken" (Episode 5, Season 1). Maritza explains that her "boy" Potato Chip told her about pigeons male prisoners would use to sneak drugs in by having someone on that outside stuff drugs in the bird's rear end. While older Latinas Aleida Diaz and Gloria Mendoza roll their eyes at this, Maritza's other half Flaca legitimates her story, adding that chickens are much bigger than pigeons, so this chicken could be carrying a lot of drugs. The two girls run off in search of the chicken, and Gloria goes after them: "¡No soy estúpida, pero quiero ver a la estúpida!" (Episode 5 Season 1), explaining that while she is not stupid enough to believe that there is a magical chicken stuffed with drugs, she is entertained by the stupidity of those looking for such a chicken.

Another one of many comedic moments including Flaca and Maritza takes place in Episode 6 of Season 1, when the women are preparing to run for the Women's

Advisory Council. Both women decide they are going to run and are brainstorming possible slogans for their campaigns. “If you want more pizza, vote for Maritza!” Maritza proudly announces, adding that pizza is “American and shit” (Episode 6, Season 1). Flaca rolls her eyes at her friend and informs her that pizza is actually Italian. Maritza, discouraged by this revelation, asks her friend what her slogan is: “Vote for Flaca, putas full of caca?” (Episode 6, Season 1), making a rhyming crude joke about “bitches full of shit,” and the two begin to bicker playfully.

Comedic relief is vital to any series that deals with grave topics, and is all the more so for a show set in prison. Maritza and Flaca provide this relief as much as African American inmate Tasha “Taystee” Jefferson or Anglo American inmate Nicky Nichols, and this is further evidence of the advancement of the Latina representation in US sitcoms. In analyzing Latinos and the media, Angharad N. Valdivia states: “[o]ther than the spitfire trope that represents Latinas as ‘hot to trot’, the most often used stereotype is that of the domestic” (18). Latinas are no longer cast as archetypes such as the maid or the sexy temptress; they are also comedians. This has undeniably been the pattern in US media, but *OITNB* begins to transform this stereotypical representation by including such a diverse group of Latinas.

CHARACTER GLORIA MENDOZA

Latinas are not only comedians, they are also leaders. Gloria Mendoza is not only a voice of reason among the Latina inmates but is also one of the wiser and most practical of all the inmates. Like Daya, Gloria is one of the first main characters we meet in the pilot episode, and plays the role of veteran Latina inmate to Daya’s newbie status. When

Maritza and Flaca are bickering about their campaign slogans, Gloria is the one to remind the girls that slogans are unimportant, it only matters that their voices are heard (Episode 6, Season 1). In the last episode of Season 2, Red's silent sidekick Norma is slicing up apples and collecting the seeds. Knowing that Red was recently attacked by another inmate, Gloria immediately tells Norma she won't ever be able to collect enough seeds to produce a lethal dose of arsenic, (Episode 13, Season 2) knowing that she would be looking for a way to seek revenge on Red's behalf. Norma looks at her in silent shock, and Gloria answers: "Yeah. I know a few things. I know she hurt your girl. And I know she gotta go, but... there are other ways. All you gotta do is ask" (Episode 13, Season 2). Gloria's intuition and calm, reserved manner make her one of the sharpest prisoners in Litchfield, again distancing herself from former multi-dimensional Latina stereotypes.

In the last episode of Season 1, Officer Caputo removes Red from the kitchen after he finds out that illegal contraband is being smuggled into the prison via produce deliveries. Officer Donaldson brings Gloria into the kitchen, and Caputo informs her she will now run the kitchen: "Head cook, queen bee. You start now" (Episode 13, Season 1). Gloria assesses the gravity of the situation and looks hesitantly at Red, but she accepts the position. As Gloria makes clear throughout the following season, she never asks for this position of power, but she handles it with what becomes increasingly clear is her natural leadership. Gloria brings several Latinas with her to help run the kitchen, but keeps Anglo Americans Norma and Angie on, as she recognizes their experience and knowledge of the kitchen. Immediately after the transition of power, Nicky asks Gloria where she can find Norma and Angie. Gloria has been in charge of the kitchen for mere

hours, but is already a competent leader: “Out back. But not too long ‘cause they got work to do” (Episode 13, Season 1). Caputo recognizes that Gloria is the best choice for the new head chef, and she does not let him down.

INMATE DAYANARA DIAZ AND OFFICER JOHN BENNETT’S RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between Daya and Bennett begins in an intentionally sweet manner that seems as normal as the beginning of any other television romance. Mutual flirtation leads to mutually expressed interest, and the feelings grow deeper from there. Daya and Bennett first meet in the second episode of Season 1, as Daya is walking down the stairs with other inmates and crosses Bennett’s path. When Daya first sees Bennett, he is chewing gum, and Daya asks if she can have a piece. Bennett smiles and laughs nervously, but tells her he’s not allowed to give inmates gum. Intentionally avoiding eye contact, Bennett adds, “It’d look funny. Like I like you” (Episode 2, Season 1). Daya looks at him and asks genuinely, “Don’t you?” (Episode 2, Season 1). Bennett walks away nervously, never meeting her eyes. Later in this episode, Daya returns to her dorm and finds a wrapped piece of gum under her pillow, and it is with this gesture that their relationship begins. The feelings and emotions expressed between Daya and Bennett are so pure and genuine that one almost forgets the disastrous nature of their illicit situation. Setting aside the fact that they are prisoner and prison guard, the progression and depiction of Daya and Bennett’s relationship is similar to so many other television romances. I argue that the normality of this relationship reflects Molina-Guzmán’s concept of symbolic rupture, as it “...unsettles established categories of identity and

offers moments of social, cultural, and political rupture” (16). However, as I referenced earlier Piper Kerman writes of the extreme inequality between a prison guard and a prisoner (Kerman, *Orange* 129). Regardless of how genuine and mutual Daya and Bennett’s feelings are for one another, their relationship- especially when it becomes sexual- is inappropriate on many levels. *OITNB* ruptures with the traditional in that the only abnormality of Bennett and Daya’s relationship is that they are prisoner and prison guard, not that he is Anglo American and she is Latina.

The hidden stick of gum leads to similar flirtations between Daya and Bennett that could almost be described as innocent- until one remembers their positions. In the third episode of Season 1, Bennett conveniently walks through Daya’s dorm. Beginning with this interaction, a sweet, romantic background music plays when the two are together, and by doing so it appears that the show’s creators intend to further normalize the relationship. In this scene, Daya is changing her shirt when her necklace gets caught. Once given permission, Bennett chuckles nervously and untangles the necklace. Daya is self-conscious, and tells him not to look at her stomach. Bennett finally unhooks the necklace from Daya’s bra and tells her: “There. Now you’re free” (Episode 3, Season 1). Daya laughs: “Yeah, right” (Episode 3, Season 1). This ironic comment about Daya’s temporary freedom further emphasizes her absolute lack thereof. Daya acknowledges the irony, though neither fully factors her lack of freedom into their relationship.

It does not take long for the flirtation to progress to sexual intercourse. The bashful, modest Daya who was covering up her stomach soon becomes sexually in charge. The first time they have sex, it is Daya who initiates. Bennett acknowledges the

wrongness of their situation: “You know, this is inappropriate. What you and me are doing” (Episode 6, Season 1). Bennett is hesitant to reveal his artificial leg that he feels is emasculating, but Daya immediately convinces him to do so anyway. Daya’s power is clear and assertive from the very beginning in the relationship, despite the fact that she is the prisoner.

When Daya becomes pregnant and tells Bennett, he hesitantly suggests the possibility of an abortion, which Daya adamantly and immediately turns down, asserting her position of power as the woman with child. At first, Daya does not want anyone else to know she is pregnant, but her morning sickness eventually reveals her secret when she can no longer pass it off as a stomach flu. Resident chef Red collaborates with Daya’s mother, Aleida, and they devise a plan to attribute the pregnancy to the despised, perverse-minded Officer Mendez. Aleida tells Daya that she can keep her baby without getting Bennett in trouble if they convince Mendez to have sex with Daya and frame it as a rape. While Bennett is understandably not supportive of his girlfriend having sex with his coworker, he does not argue with her. Despite Bennett’s attempts, he is ultimately unable to come up with a better alternative. Daya asserts her resourcefulness as well as her sexuality in taking charge of the plans for their child’s future. Not only is Daya now the object of two men’s desire, she is also the one in charge in both relationships.

As Season Two progresses, Daya’s pregnancy continues to not only empower her but also give the Latina inmates an advantage. Led by Aleida, the Latina women convince Bennett to sneak in contraband for them in exchange for their silence about whose baby Daya is really carrying. Daya continues to be in charge in her relationship

with Bennett. On Valentine's Day in Season 2, Daya asks Bennett where he has made dinner reservations and tells him she can't wait for him to see her dress (Episode 6, Season 2) but Bennett doesn't understand her. Daya explains to him that she is pretending they're a normal couple making Valentine's Day plans. Once Bennett understands, he later approaches Daya and asks, "Are you cooking up something special for me today? The house smells great" (Episode 6, Season 2). Daya, suffering from pregnancy mood swings, responds: "That's what you're gonna expect me to do? Cook for you? Be your little housewife? It's not happening. Bennett is again confused: "No. I thought we were playing the..." (Episode 6, Season 2). For the first time, Daya starts to outwardly acknowledge the impossibility of their relationship: "Sorry, I've just been depressed today. I don't wanna play the normal game anymore cause I don't know how we ever are gonna be normal" (Episode 6, Season 2).

In Episode 9 of Season 2, Daya reinforces her power sexually. She is sexually stimulating Bennett with her hand while he is verbalizing his concerns about people finding out that he is the father. George "Pornstache" Mendez has returned, and this triggers Bennett's anxiety. Daya discourages him from publicly admitting he is the father: "Don't you go doing nothing without talking to me. You hear me? Now, you want me to finish or what?" (Episode 9, Season 2). Bennett may be feeling morally conflicted, but he does, in fact, want Daya to finish, and her sexuality once again overpowers his conscience. This sexual favor is the last straw for Bennett, however. Moments later in this same episode Bennett finds a cigarette butt on the floor, and storms into the dorm. Bennett says he is conducting a search, and starts slamming and throwing items while

yelling “I’m in control! I’m in charge!” (Episode 9, Season 2). While Bennett believes his life is more together than Mendez’s, it is Mendez who enters in this scene and is finally able to get Bennett to calm down.

Daya’s conscience is troubling her a great deal with the possibility of Bennett turning Mendez in: “I seduced him. I set him up. You know what, in my neighborhood, real men stand up and own their kids. I want you to tell the world that you love me” (Episode 12, Season 2). Bennett responds that he would go to jail, and Daya said if he did, then the two of them would finally be even. Later in this episode, Bennett does report to Officer Caputo that Mendez was the one who impregnated Daya. Mendez is arrested; as he is being hauled away, he is the one who screaming that he loves Daya.

In the penultimate episode of Season 2, Daya and Bennett are able to have a relatively lengthy conversation in the hallway since the power has temporarily gone out due to a storm:

DAYA. What’s gonna happen when she’s born?

BENNETT. Umm... Well they’ll let your mom’s family take her. I can go see her sometimes.

DAYA. And then what? You gonna tell her you’re her daddy? But she has to keep her mouth shut because everyone thinks she has a different daddy? And that daddy is in jail because he put his dick in Mommy... but be cool?

BENNETT. I should never have given you that gum... Should I?

DAYA. You did a lot of stupid things... But so did I, it was both of us.

But it doesn't matter anymore. We have to do what's best for the kid.

BENNETT. Which is what?

DAYA. Confess.

BENNETT. And go to prison?

DAYA. Yeah. Go to prison. Do your time. I'll tell him I love you. We'll

both get out in a few years, we're done with this place. We're a family.

Or... walk away. I won't blame you. Get a fresh start. It's like this never

happened. This whole mess is on Mendez. My baby won't grow up

confused.

BENNETT. You think I'm the kind of man that walks away from my kid?

DAYA. Dummy. You got a chance right now to go back in time. If

someone gave that to me, I would sure as hell be thinking about it.

(Episode 12, Season 2)

Daya walks away from the most significant conversation she and Bennett have ever had, asserting her power once again, and leaving Bennett alone to contemplate the uncertainty of their future.

In the last episode of Season 2, Bennett tells Daya he can't confess since Caputo is hinting at promoting him. Daya states what the audience has long known: "I love you John... but you're a pussy" (Episode 13, Season 2). Daya walks away again, again asserting her power. While Bennett is the prison guard, he never has the control in his relationship with Daya. At the end of the last episode, Bennett finally confesses to

Caputo, who is temporarily in charge of the prison. Caputo, trying to prove he is worthy to be the new Executive Assistant to the Warden, wants to minimize conflict during his probationary period. Caputo does not punish Bennett, but accepts his confession and disregards it.

As the season ends with violence and scandal, Bennett and Daya's relationship and the future of their child is one of many loose ends that viewers anxiously await to be resolved with the beginning of Season 3. The centrality of their relationship to the progression of the series again further underlines Daya's importance as a character. In their recent article analyzing Latino perception of US television, Michelle Ortiz and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz write: "Latino images have not only been limited in number, they have also been constrained with regard to the importance and quality of their roles" (91). This is not the case, however, in *OITNB*. Daya and Bennett's relationship is a central storyline throughout both seasons, and undoubtedly promises to remain central in the upcoming Season 3. Finally, it is also crucial to recognize that unlike female Latina characters in US television series, Bennett is not interested in Daya because she dresses provocatively in an attempt to seduce him. Daya wears the same prison jumpsuit as the Anglo American and African American inmates. Inappropriate as their relationship may be, Daya and Bennett express mutual interest in getting to know one another from the very beginning.

THE ROLE OF NETFLIX AND IMPLICATIONS FOR VISUAL CULTURE STUDIES

OITNB carries a great deal of significance as a television series in its

advancement of Latino/a representation in the US. In *Dangerous Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media*, Isabel Molina-Guzmán discusses the role the media plays in creating a discourse about Latinidad. Molina Guzmán explains that the media is especially important “because most audiences live and play in highly racially segregated spaces... audiences rely on the media to teach them about ethnic and racial communities with whom they do not regularly interact” (8). For those in the US who do not have regular contact with Latinos, I believe that *OITNB* can greatly impact the way US Latinos are viewed, whether or not these viewers are conscious of their changing opinion. At the very least, viewers are being exposed to more Latino characters than ever before. Certainly Piper Kerman’s memoir contains strong arguments in support of reformation of the US prison system. One could debate the intentions of the show’s producers, but the mere existence of the series itself has drawn a great deal of attention to the often-forgotten US women prison population.

According to show creator Jenji Kohan, the medium of Netflix has a great deal to do with the freedom she has in designing this nontraditional series. In a 2013 interview, Kohan refers to Netflix as both “freedom” and “the new frontier” (www.latimes.com), and is likely referring to the lack of strict regulations of cable television. Kohan elaborates that after producing the Showtime hit series *Weeds*, she did not want to “take a step backwards, into a culture of fear, and being micromanaged. And Netflix has been wide-open, embracing and smart” (www.latimes.com). Far from taking a step backwards, Kohan shoots *OITNB* what feels like decades ahead of still traditional television series. However, Kohan denies a socially reformatory agenda: “The goal is to write a solid,

entertaining, engaging show. [...] My goal is to start discussions. I'm going to do what I do, and if someone wants to take it and run with it, then I'm thrilled" (www.latimes.com).

Scholars are not the only ones interested in taking this material and running with it. The series has given Piper Kerman a renewed platform from which to advocate for reformation within the US prison system, and the depiction of lesbian relationships is more widely accepted than ever before. The Latinas on *OITNB* are changing the face of Latino representation in US media not because this is the show's agenda but simply in their number and importance as primary characters. The field of Television Studies is now constantly evolving more rapidly than ever thanks to these new mediums such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. Cable television series now have to compete with the immense popularity of Netflix and Amazon Prime. This can be difficult, given US culture's obsession with "binge watching," which, according to Eli Lehrer "became popular largely because of Netflix" (www.weeklystandard.com).

The fact that *OITNB* is a Netflix original series says a lot about its very nature. *OITNB* is a truly original show, as it does not keep with tradition in terms of its portrayal of gender and sexuality, women in prison, language, or Latina representation. The fact that *OITNB* is a Netflix series allows it to accomplish all of these symbolic ruptures. Netflix series do not have to conform to prime-time or cable regulations, and the same freedom that permits Jenji Kohan to vividly display lesbian sexual activities stems from the same environment that also allows for more gender, sexuality, linguistic and ethnic

variety.⁷ The Latina characters in the series are indispensable to its future, particularly as much of the anticipation for Season 3 stems from the speculation of the future of Daya and Bennett's child. Isabel Molina-Guzmán states that... "we are social creatures for whom meaning-making is always informed by the social, political, and cultural context in which we live..." (16). If this is the case, then, there is great hope for not only the advancement of Latino/a representation in US media but also the way Latinos are viewed and understood in general in the US. By being exposed to the multiple strong and entertaining Latina women in *OITNB*, US viewers can gain a lot with respect to their understanding of the US Latinos with whom we live.

⁷ It should be noted that while *OITNB* is a television series, the male gaze is not a factor in this series. Jenji Kohan, the creator of the series, is a woman, as is Piper Kerman, who consults on each episode made. There are male characters that do not respect women (George "Pornstache" Mendez, primarily), but I argue that this does not affect or alter Kohan's creative freedom in any way.

CONCLUSION

There are hundreds of words to describe *Orange Is the New Black*; stereotypical, however, is not one of them. Actress Selenis Leyva, who portrays Gloria Mendoza on the series, stated the following when asked about the show's depiction of Latinos:

Some people ask “well how do you feel about the stereotypes in the show” and I say well you know what I don't think there is a stereotype, stereotypes also come from real truths of reality. We are all portraying different types of Latinas --[we're] different ages, we're Afro-Latinas, we're South American -- there's a little bit of everything. And I think that's very truthful to the world that we live in and we can be passionate and crazy and loud but we're also kind and smart and there's a little bit of everything. It's a beautiful thing and I'm very, very proud to represent the Afro-Latina, we haven't really seen a lot of different types of Latinas in shows all at once. So this is all lovely. (Selenis Leyva, “Selenis Leyva explains why ‘Orange Is the New Black’ is a huge step for Latinas”)

US television series have not seen multiple depictions of Latinas all at once, especially not in a series that is not Latino-centered. Not only are Latinas passionate, crazy, loud,

kind, and smart (Leyva), but all the characters in *OITNB* are similarly multidimensional. The women of Litchfield remind us of the often forgotten women in the US prison system. These women are humanized through Kohan and Kerman's collaborative efforts. Characters such as Piper Chapman, Lorna Morello, and Sophia Burset teach us that gender and sexuality are not static but fluid. Dayanara Diaz reminds us that one does not have to speak Spanish in order to be Latina, while characters like Gloria Mendoza, Maritza Ramos and Blanca Flores inform us that the use of Spanish is multi-dimensional and reveals different aspects of identity. The Latina women of *OITNB* are as multi-dimensional as the show itself, and their number and presence begin to change the history of one-dimensional, typecast Latino representation in US media.

Latino representation is not the only aspect that *OITNB* is changing. Each focus of this thesis – women in prison, gender and sexuality, inter-ethnic relationships and translingualism – is also a conversation that is beginning to take a new direction in light of *OITNB*'s effect. Prison Studies scholars such as Angela Y. Davis have historically called for radical change to the US prison system and proposed abolition as the best alternative. Piper Kerman, however, uses her first-hand experience in this system to call for reform instead. The success of both Kerman's memoir and Kohan's series brings a great deal of attention to what was an often forgotten population.

The depiction of gender and sexuality in *OITNB* is one of the show's most radical aspects. This is not because the show portrays lesbian relationships; though infrequently, successful shows such as *Will & Grace* and *Bad Girls* have done this before. *OITNB*'s impact is in the depiction of fluid sexuality as opposed to the polarizing depictions of

either homosexuality or heterosexuality. Transgender characters have rarely been portrayed in US television series, and have not often been portrayed as likable. Nick Adams of GLAAD explains: “the vast majority of portrayals on broadcast TV can be categorized as straight-up defamatory or inaccurate... and the vast majority of times, the roles of trans characters are either as victim of violence or some kind of psychotic killer” (cit. Rice 16). Transgender character Sophia Buset does not pertain to either of these negative representations; in fact, her character is one of the most compassionate out of all the inmates. *OITNB* creates a discussion where complex gender identities and sexual desires become acceptable and understandable through the humanization of characters.

In a time where incidents of racial tensions frequent the news, we could benefit from the meaningful inter-ethnic relationships of the series. Creator Jenji Kohan wisely does not ignore the often-controversial race discussion, but develops inter-ethnic relationships that overpower petty racism. The scenes in which racial and ethnic stereotyping occur belittle such practices for their ridiculousness. Most important, though, are the meaningful relationships between prisoners of different ethnic backgrounds that overpower trivial stereotyping. In the wake of an inmate’s untimely death, women from each ethnic background support one another in sharing their joint loss.

Finally, multilingualism begins to be portrayed as an asset and not a detriment. Characters such as Gloria Mendoza, Maritza Ramos and Blanca Flores show how knowledge of an additional language can be used as an advantage over those who are monolingual. Different uses of Spanish can achieve different identity stances depending

on the exchange. In addition, Dayanara Diaz proves that one does not have to be fluent in Spanish to claim a Latina identity.

Certainly none of these changing dialogues would have been possible without Piper Kerman and her experience. At the heart of this innovative series is a true story and a woman's genuine concern and call for action. The horrific reality of life in prison is clearly portrayed in both the memoir and the series, but part of what has made both so popular is the very real capacity for female bonding that takes place. Both Piper Kerman and Piper Chapman try to focus on the positive: "...really about finding that value and humanity and warmth in a setting where we're constantly told there's none to be found – people are irredeemable, terrible people. And that's not that case" (Kerman, *Orange*, 322). Prison, like any other communal setting, has both bad and good people, and Kerman and Kohan highlight both.

OITNB is a series whose main characters are women in prison, but it is not just a show about women in prison. As I have argued, the show is incredibly multi-dimensional, and makes advancements in many of these areas. Gender and sexuality are two aspects of the show that are most dynamic. Transgender actor Laverne Cox's portrayal of transgender character Sophia Burset has led the way for other transgender stories to be shared in mainstream US media. In a recent article, Lynette Rice discusses the rise of transgender stories: "Three new reality shows are set to debut in the wake of the groundbreaking work of *Orange Is the New Black*'s Cox- the first transgender actress to earn an Emmy nomination..." (Rice 16). *OITNB* is not a show about fluid sexuality, but the fluid sexuality of characters like Chapman and Morello create a new conversation

about current understanding of sexuality. Even series that have focused on homosexual characters have done just that- focused on homosexuality in opposition to heterosexuality. Didi Herman argues that *Bad Girls* creates a homonormative environment- that is, an environment where homosexuality is considered normal. This is certainly an advancement for media representation of homosexuality, but it is also another either/or option. Piper Chapman and Lorna Morello are neither straight nor gay. Homosexuality on *OITNB* is acceptable, but it is not any more normal than heterosexuality.

The Spanish language that was part of the background of Piper Kerman's prison sentence is foregrounded in *OITNB*. Spanish is spoken from the very beginning of the series in the pilot episode. Anglo American Piper Chapman speaks Spanish when Latina Dayanara Diaz cannot, and the complexity of the application of language is established. The Latinas switch between Spanish and English, and their reasons for doing so are multiple. In a joint article, Isabel Molina-Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia comment on the motives behind code-switching: "Like the everyday practices of some Latina/os, language can be and is often used in a multiplicity of ways depending on the specific situation" (215). Spanish is used in the series to express a shared heritage and to conceal information from those who do not speak it, among many other motives. Just as homosexuality is presented in the show as a fluid concept and not a restrictive alternative, Spanish is not the only additional language spoken in the series. Characters are fluent in German and Russian, and entire flashbacks are represented in these languages.

Not all prisoners are evil, and not all lesbians only desire other women⁸. Not all prisoners are monolingual, either. Latinas are no longer *just* included in US television series as yet another “other” to the Anglo American or African American characters. *OITNB* creates a new representation of Latina women in US media in the inclusion of such a numerous and varied Latina cast, and none of these women is *just* a housekeeper or *just* a sexual seductress. Netflix does not have to comply with the restrictions of cable television, and because of this Jenji Kohan is able to create multilingual characters with fluid sexualities and genders. Shonda Rhimes, creator and executive producer of the ABC series *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Scandal*, and *How to Get Away with Murder* describes Kohan’s characters as “a breathtaking riot of color and sexual orientation onscreen. Jenji shows a passion for diversity by creating characters of all backgrounds who are three-dimensional, flawed and sometimes unpleasant, but always human” (www.time.com). This diverse environment is an advantage of Netflix, and – significantly- it is also a more realistic representation of the world in which we live.

The third season of *OITNB* will be released on Netflix on June 12, 2015. What will happen in Season 3 is uncertain, although anticipation and speculation began right after the release of Season 2 in June 2014. What is certain is the inclusion and importance of Daya and Bennett’s relationship, as both actors are confirmed to return in Season 3. Under head chef Gloria Mendoza, the Latinas are still in charge of the kitchen at the end of Season 2. Viewers can anticipate a continuation of Mendoza’s leadership and wisdom, whether this will take place inside or outside of the kitchen. Viewers can hope for the

⁸ To be clear, of course not all homosexual activity implies exclusive lesbianism

comedy that Maritza, Flaca, Taystee and Nicky provide, and can undoubtedly anticipate more drama between Chapman and Vause. George “Pornstache” Mendez’s fate is uncertain precisely because of his relationship with Daya, and this is further proof of the importance of the Latina women to the show.

While outcomes remain unknown, what is certain is that the Latinas will remain as vital to the series as the Anglo American and African American characters. This alone is revolutionary in terms of Latina representation in US media. Not all may agree that ‘orange is the new black,’ but the following is clear: fluid sexualities are the new heterosexuality and multilingual is the new monolingual. Life in prison is terrible, but the capacity for female bonding is powerful. The often-forgotten women in prison are not as frequently forgotten. Gender and sexuality are fluid, and acceptance of this fluidity has led and continues to lead to more opportunities for transgender actors. Language is a negotiation, and multiple languages begin to be recognized as assets, not setbacks. The era of Latinas as hyper-sexualized housekeepers moves ever farther in the past as *Kohan*’s characters continue to move a more humanized representation of Latinas forward.

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BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Weatherford Millette received her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from Furman University in 2011. She went on to receive her Master of Arts in Foreign Languages with a Concentration in Spanish at George Mason University in 2015. She taught Spanish while at George Mason, and passed her MA Thesis Defense with distinction. On April 21, 2015, she was asked to present a lecture on her thesis to the university. Sarah also received the award for Academic Excellence in Spanish Studies at George Mason University.