

CLEAN U: CLEANLINESS, SOCIAL DIFFERENCE, AND THE DIRTY WORK OF EVERYDAY HYGIENE

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ABSTRACT

Mike Dimpfl: Clean U: Cleanliness, Social Difference and the Dirty Work of Everyday Hygiene
(Under the direction of Sara Smith and Banu Gokariksel)

Being clean takes work. That work – waged, unwaged, or somewhere in-between -- is generally overlooked, despite the importance of cleanliness to modern industrial social life. To better understand the power of cleanliness to the production of individual subjects and institutional power, this project compares the everyday cleanliness practices and hygiene norms of students at the University of Chapel Hill to the administrative organization of the 400+ housekeepers currently employed to maintain UNC's campus. Students experience a campus tuned to their body's every need. But, the intensifying demands of the cleanliness Zeitgeist mediate the newfound freedoms that are characteristic of college life. By way of contrast, UNC's housekeepers are structurally and culturally excluded from the campus communities their labor produces, despite the fact that their work is an animating necessity of the most intimate components of everyday student life and practice. This research explores the production and unevenly distributed cost of this overlapping system of hygienic exclusions, particularly its connection to contested categories of social identity.

I combine ethnographic data from one-on-one interviews with students, housekeepers, campus staff, labor activists, and community service providers with a close reading of the policies and organizational metrics governing housekeeping work practice. Tracing the connections between students, housekeepers and organizational administration reveals the

dependence of institutional systems on the uneven distribution of value through the production of raced, classed, and gendered social difference. This research explores the necessary dependence of students and housekeepers, revealing institutional investment in the production students' bodies at the expense of those who make that production possible.

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It is nothing short of a farce that my name is the only one that appears as an author of this dissertation. This work would not exist without a wide-array of academics, theorists, writers, poets, pundits, agitators, activists, friends, family and things: a cast of characters over which I have little control, but through whom I have built the narrative that follows. The intellectual work of producing a PhD happens as a conversation with a parliament of people and things far exceeding the deceptive finality of the brief turn of phrase on the cover page, “By Mike Dimpfl.”

I think it sad and a mark of a structural failure that this work must stand alone. This is not because I disavow its contents. Any errors of judgment or fact are “mine and mine alone,” as the phrase often goes. Rather, it is because the result will be assembled as a PDF and sent into the bowels of the university archives to sit alone, searchable in my name only. Just think, I think to myself, all that toiling away by candlelight in the quiet of my study, crushed velvet walls looking on as I ponder the function of my intellect from a wing-backed chair. Was it worth it?

It simply did not happen that way. And so, acknowledgments are due to many, with inevitable apologies to the people I have inadvertently left out.

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CHAPTER 1: CLEANING UP AT CLEAN U

To start, two brief vignettes.

1. Purell purity.

Figure 1. Print advertisements from Purell's "You are what you touch" campaign



Did you forget to wash your hands again? In your rush to enter the room, did you forget that every single encounter mediated by those hands is a source of hygienic risk? Was the door handle clean? How do you know?

According to Purell's "You are what you touch" advertising campaign, the fleeting encounters of the day are as risky as they are diverse. Port-o-potties, hands, shoes, and sneezing people. Money, eels, mushrooms, and escalators. Cats, rats, soda, and cell phones.

Clouds. Subway tokens, toilets, and babies. Germs, flies, and video game controllers. Vomit (?) stained doorknobs. Even the most reasonable person would be pricing out hygienic safe rooms following the logic embedded in this pair of images.

Purell's ad is targeted to you, the one with the always-already dirty hands. This is the late modern world figured not only by the proliferation of risk, but by the commodification of that risk in terms of personal responsibility. Given the ubiquity of potential threats, being clean requires constant vigilance. Purell is here to help us all make the hygienic grade.

2. Bad aim.



Figure 2: Garbage Can in Men's Restroom

I am an academic tutor on campus. A few weeks ago, I was using the restroom at the tutoring center. As I finished washing my hands, I noticed the scene at left: a garbage can in the corner of the men's restroom was ringed with used paper towels. Leaving aside the irony that I tutor the university's student-athletes, there is an important lesson here.

Why, for example, is this unsurprising? What is it about the quasi-public restroom that makes such an egregious missing of a not-hard-to-hit

mark go unnoticed? If the expectation is that the restroom – let alone the human body – be

clean, how do we account for cultural practice that presents such contradictory demands? Who are the the individuals who are having such trouble finding a clearly visible garbage can?¹

Both here and above in the ads by Purell, what is left out -- unseen by the naked eye or simply out-of-sight -- is as important as what is visible. In the ads, germs are a figure of risk necessitating personal responsibility. They are everywhere and only sometimes visible to the naked eye. Purell is the commodity that helps the at-risk body realize a personal responsibility to their elimination. In the photo here, the restroom user is known by paper-towel-proxy, but the important invisible figure is the person hailed by the mess: the housekeeper or janitor who is charged with cleaning it up. Their responsibility is twofold: to the mess *and* to the body that made it. In turn, their own body is effaced by these responsibilities, known only by the temporary cleanliness they leave behind so that others may *feel* clean.

These two scenarios are intertwined in our modern moment, characteristic of a type of cleanliness *Zeitgeist*. Purell's narrative of personal responsibility to increasingly micro-particular forms of hygienic risk is only the latest in an ongoing process of intense bodily commodification.² The proliferation of hygienic risk – despite very limited evidence beyond hospital settings of its extent (Owen, 2013) – marks an appropriation of individual effort, of

¹ I have at least a half-dozen other photos of this trash can in similar states of aspirational use, as if a small gravitational force was either a. preventing errant waste from making it into the can or b. would eventually attract the errant paper towels, pulling them under and out of sight.

² I refer, in part, to Harvey's argument that the body itself has become a strategic node of capital accumulation (Harvey, 1998). It is an argument echoed, in part, by Julie Guthman in *Weighing In* (2011) regarding the use of the country's poor urban and rural populations as a "sink" for the excess calories created by government subsidy of commodity agricultural production. Nikolas Rose (2006) offers another important angle of analysis, explaining that strategies of capital accumulation have redefined the contours of the subject by refocusing the scale of commodification from concern with the molar subject – visible, touchable, sense-ible body – to a concern with molecular subjectivity (I discuss turn in Chapter 5).

daily habit, in service of a commonly held norm: the body is, or should be, clean. But, being clean takes work.

Despite popular focus on the individual work cleanliness requires, the (empty?) garbage can exposes a complicated reality. The individual efforts required of everyday cleanliness practices and hygiene norms are always shared. Cleanliness is a relational term, situated not only relative to Purell's world of proliferating dangers and alongside other people and things. Being clean requires focus, time, resources and purpose-built technology. In both domestic and institutional spaces, being or becoming clean also requires the (un)waged work of very particular people to happen at all.

Cleanliness individuates, helping people consolidate and produce their identity, just as it is productive of that identity. It is a subjectifying force. But, in its appropriation of the labor of others, that individuation effects not only the person who is becoming clean, but the person cleaning up for others. The balance of benefit and harm that results is always uneven. In the case of the garbage can, the hidden efforts of housekeeping and janitorial staff ensure that the mess around the garbage can does not become a problem. However, that the mess is there at all, despite the ease of putting those paper towels directly in the trash, is at the *heart* of the problem guiding this research.

Cleanliness Work and Practice

The point is this: being clean takes work.³ On the one hand, individual bodies make themselves clean behind bathroom doors, in showers, and in quasi-secluded domestic spaces.

³ I use "take" in two senses here. Cleanliness both demands/requires effort and serves as a mechanism for the forced appropriation of work.

Their efforts seek to manage the messy materiality of the body: hiding its smell, preventing its sweat, and actively concealing the waste it inevitably produces (Longhurst, 2001). On the other hand, the waged workers charged with the task of cleaning in these same spaces are also hidden from view, though for different reasons. Their efforts mark their bodies as dirty (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999); working with or around the dirt and detritus of other people's bodies is a common metric of social exclusion in the contemporary United States (Drew, et al, 2007). In institutional settings like the university that is the focus of this project, the work of being clean is produced by individual bodies in a range of everyday spaces, requiring an array of technologies and common objects that are often overlooked components of everyday life.

This project uses cleanliness as a framework for tracing the uneven distribution of institutional power at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC). I compare the cleanliness practices and hygienic norms of students living in campus dormitories to the experience and work practices of the housekeeping staff upon whom those students depend, but about whom they know very little. By reading student habit and housekeeping labor together, my analysis reveals connections between the everyday *life* of student bodies and the nonacademic waged work necessary to its reproduction – the work of more than 400 men and women charged with maintaining the spaces central to campus communities, and from which those workers are themselves excluded.⁴ Being clean requires both practice and waged work.

⁴ I use “entitlement” in a general sense here as a way of describing students’ individual understanding of a certain fittedness to campus life. Students *are* entitled to their use of campus spaces, especially the range of spaces specifically attuned to their body’s reproductive needs – dorms, gyms, etc. Though conversations during fieldwork interviews evidenced expectations from which more perjorative understandings of the term also emerge, they also revealed a nuanced awareness of the privilege of being on campus, reflecting the diversity of family experiences and personal histories that informed that privilege.

Understanding why cleanliness informs ethical and political life requires tracing the connections between those practicing for themselves and those charged with cleaning up for others.

Far from incidental to campus life, the possibility of being clean and the work of cleaning up for others reflects *institutional* hierarchies of value that are known in ideologically aesthetic terms. What is seen/heard/smelled/touched informs individual desire just as it produces connections between who belongs and where that belonging can be experienced. Not all cleanliness is created equal. But, ideas about the value of cleanliness are often understood in universalizing terms... cleanliness is next to godliness! Wash your hands before returning to work! The aspirational disciplinarity informing ideas about the value of cleanliness flatten and obscure the production of social difference central to the power of cleanliness in everyday life. This project explores the cost of that inequality, with particular attention given to the mechanisms through which institutional systems use ideas about hygiene and cleanliness to celebrate certain life and bodies at the expense of the lives and bodies producing the conditions for that celebration.

Despite Purell's modulation otherwise in their apocalyptic ad campaign, the foundational "lie of the modern body" is that it is clean (Lahiji and Friedman, 1997, p. 7). Bodies are, instead, only ever made temporarily cleaner through an array of individual practices and systemically devalued forms of waged and unwaged labor. The hygienic risk of dirtiness is only one motivation for the "system of systems" (Shove, 2003) that constitute a cleanliness *Zeitgeist* that has long connected the individual habits of the material body to the construction of the nation-state and extension of its power in everyday life (see especially Elias, 2000 [1938]). As Foucault (1990 [1978]) explained, and Guthman (2011) reframed more recently as "healthism,"

the disciplinary function of cleanliness practices connects the habits and the *health* of the body to the production and distribution of power.⁵ In the United States and the industrial Western world, hygienic disease is a thing of the past. But, expectations to hygienic purity persist, connecting the materiality of the body to the production of porous boundaries between the self and a range of threatening *Others* (Douglas, 1965). But, why the persistence of the “lie” that bodies are clean? What work does cleanliness do in light of the failure of the body to be clean? More specifically, what explanatory power do ideas of cleanliness bring to the relationship between housekeepers and students at UNC?

The difference between students doing the personal work of caring for the self and housekeepers doing the waged work of making that self-care possible highlights the ways in which institutional regulation, sociocultural attitudes about cleanliness and hygiene, the performance of the body, and “dirty work” labor economies stratify participation in and access to everyday campus spaces. College campuses may be social bubbles, but the ideological underpinnings of the “college experience” – for those who can afford to attend – reveal connections between the social relations constituting the bubble and the systems of value and meaning that are its constitutive outsides.

This project explores the only-partially visible overlap between the individual cleanliness practices of undergraduate students and the precarious, nonacademic waged-work of housekeepers on University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill’s (UNC-CH) campus in Chapel Hill, NC. I draw connections between the everyday cleanliness practices of students living on campus

⁵ This is not to ignore the benefit of public health and hygiene to modern existence. But, a strict hygiene/health reading of their importance reifies the social division cleanliness habits produce, over-writing what is, in fact, a political and ethical problem with a technical solution (pace Mitchell, 2002).

and the labor of the housekeepers charged with maintaining the spaces through which student bodies move. I argue that cleanliness defines an important but largely overlooked locus of institutional power. Despite the appearance of autonomy created by their everyday cleanliness habits, students depend on housekeepers to produce the intimate and porous boundaries of their bodies and senses of self. Housekeepers, in turn, are central to student life, but almost entirely invisible, a fact that exposes them to particular forms of workplace discrimination and harm.

Life and Livelihood at Clean U

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC) is an R-1 research university in Chapel Hill, NC. Chartered in 1789, it is the nation's oldest "public" institution and the largest campus is the state's 17 school university system.⁶ As of January 2016, UNC had nearly 19,000 undergraduate students, approximately 11,000 graduate students and employs another 11,000 men and women, roughly 3,700 faculty and an additional 8,300 staff (UNCNEWS, 2016). Their intellectual output, research, and day-to-day work practices stretch from the very local and intimate spaces central to campus communities to far-flung locations around the globe.⁷ UNC is

⁶ UNC's age is an ignominious point of distinction given the university's founding reliance on systems of chattel slavery, both in terms of the structure and function of campus, but also in terms of the institution's connections to the colonial production systems through which it was brought into being (Wilder, 2013). Certainly, to call an institution "public" in an era when the provision of university education was the isolated privilege of white, upper class men strains the definition of the term.

⁷ UNC's stature as an elite educational institution has come under serious fire at least twice in my relatively brief tenure. Both scandals are worth noting, though not the focus of this analysis. In the first case, five UNC students joined the federal Department of Education to sue the university for mishandling its reporting and management of sexual assault (Kingkade, 2013 a/b/c; Abed-Santos, 2013). The repercussions of that federal investigation are as yet unclear, though a survey of 5,200 Carolina students found 20% had been sexually assaulted during their time on campus (Stancill, 2015). Shortly thereafter, UNC's D-1 athletics program was found to have produced "paper classes" for athletes to ensure their eligibility for play without their having to attend class or, in some cases, do any work (Associated Press, 2014; Ganim, Sayers, 2014; Gibbs, 2015; Smith, Willingham, 2015; Wainstein, et al, 2014). In the aftermath, the chair of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies was removed from his post, a response that student activists highlighted as a continuation of the racialization of institutional value on campus: black students are valuable to the university only when producing economic value for the university (RSSC, 2015).

the company to Chapel Hill's town – an economic, social, cultural and political juggernaut shaping the lives and livelihoods of thousands of people.^{8,9}

Students at Carolina enjoy a campus tuned to their every need. State-of-the-art educational and laboratory facilities and dozens of campus dormitories are designed to produce intellectual expertise and strong socio-cultural identification with “Carolina” as their new home-away-from-home.¹⁰ For many, the journey through college marks a “vital juncture” (Johnson-Hanks, 2002), a transitional time period when the normative constraints of familial domestic rhythms are redefined in new surroundings. Under the protection of a range of institutional and administrative systems designed to both shelter them from harm and expose them to new ideas, experiences and encounters, students embrace new knowledge, new practices, and new mobilizations of identity. But, a college education is an expectation as much

Though the administration has taken measures to adjudicate these wrong-doings, that they happened in the first case is evidence of the historical dependence of the institution on systems of value that place certain faculty, staff, or student bodies within an architecture of power that disfavors their access or equitable participation in the breadth of the benefits produced by the university.

⁸ As of the 2014 academic year, UNC reported more than \$2.6 billion in operating expenses and another \$2.6 billion in capital assets captured as buildings and infrastructure (UNC CH, 2015a). Student tuition and fees account for \$360+ million in revenue, though the bulk of inflowing capital comes from grants and contracts for research (\$820 million), and sales and services associated with the university (\$770 million). The National Institutes for Health is the university's single largest grant funding organization, providing UNC with \$428 million in 2014 (UNC CH, 2015a, p. 33). By nature of expense, salaries and benefits occupy the lion's share (\$1.5 billion). By function, instruction costs \$675 million and research another \$540 million. In 2014, UNC spent \$150 million in “operations and maintenance of plant” (UNC CH, 2015a, p. 33). It is these latter expenses that include the Facilities Services Unit and Housekeeping Department that are the focus of this exploration.

⁹ Fall semester of 2014, nearly 4,000 first year students were enrolled; 18% are the first in their families to attend college (UNC OUA, 2015). That class hails from 44 states, 97 North Carolina counties, and 21 countries (UNC OUA, 2015). 59% are women. 71% are white, 15% are Asian/Asian American, 9% are Black/African American, 7% are Hispanic/Latinx, 2% are native American, and less than .2% are Pacific Islanders (UNC OUA, 2015). Notably, though North Carolina's population is 22% Black/African American (US Census, 2015), undergraduate populations are consistently less diverse. African American and Latinx students, especially men, remain underrepresented and are also more likely to not complete their degree at Carolina or the five HBCUs in the system (Cotton, Taylor, 2014; Kent, Chittila, 2016; Vickers, 2016).

¹⁰ Undergraduate students choose from 32 residential dormitories stretching across North, Mid- and South Campus. They are organized in 13 “residential communities” and laid out as apartments, suites, or traditional central-hall corridors. I interviewed students living in all types, and housekeepers who worked in suite-style and corridor-style dorms. Often, students in apartment-style dorms clean their own bathrooms, inspected once or twice a semester by staff in Office of Residential Life (UNC SA, 2015). I turn more to what this means in Chapter 4.

as a means of orienting students to the ideological architecture of late-liberal modernity (Mitchell, 2006). Schools serve as mediators and producers of “cultural meaning” (Alderman, 2002, cited in Inwood and Martin, 2008). For example, a growing connection between education and entrepreneurial opportunity (Davidson, 2008), and a consolidation of dominance by “prestigious” institutions often comes at the cost of institutions focused on educating non-elites (Jeffery, 2010, p. 499). At UNC, contestations over access to the benefits and entitlements of campus life by student activists have asked that university administrators attend to histories of racial and sexual violence, particularly as experienced by students of color (see RSSC, 2015). For some, the experience of being a racial minority reveals connections between student life and the non-academic waged work necessary to its reproduction (RSSC, 2015).

A turn to cleanliness as an organizer of campus life turns the neoliberal ideologies of university life on its side. Despite a popular narrative that highlights the development of students as citizens of a globalized world,¹¹ their intellectual and educational engagements are dependent on and deeply entangled with very local systems of academic and non-academic

¹¹ A range of official communications mechanisms and publications tout connections between UNC’s commitment to public service, local “good” citizenship, and the globalized world-at-large. To start, the full text of UNC’s mission reads, “The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the nation’s first public university, serves North Carolina, the United States, and the world through teaching, research, and public service. We embrace an unwavering commitment to excellence as one of the world’s great research universities. Our mission is to serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders. Through the efforts of our exceptional faculty and staff, and with generous support from North Carolina’s citizens, we invest our knowledge and resources to enhance access to learning and to foster the success and prosperity of each rising generation. We also extend knowledge-based services and other resources of the University to the citizens of North Carolina and their institutions to enhance the quality of life for all people in the State. With *lux*, *libertas* — light and liberty — as its founding principles, the University has charted a bold course of leading change to improve society and to help solve the world’s greatest problems” (UNC, 2015b). This also includes the official accountings of the university’s annual report (UNC, 2015a), and the barrage of information used to encourage new students to apply and become students (UNC, 2015c). The uneven distribution of social capital between and among students is not the focus of this project, though non-local research (Walton, Cohen, 2011) and local activism (RSSC, 2015) make strong points about the connection between racialized identity; equitable treatment by faculty, administrators and other students; and the development of a sense of belonging to campus communities.

work that tether the materiality of their physical bodies to the institutional organization of particular work practices. The fact of learning and *living* on campus extends the demands of the student body – and students’ bodies – well beyond the classroom. As much as worry over GPAs, dying grandmothers, and nominally “friendly” institutional rivalries between athletic teams, cleanliness practices and hygiene norms are common and contested touchstones of meaning necessary to everyday campus life. They are as ubiquitous as they are difficult to see.

Today, UNC employs more than 11,000 men and women, only 31% of whom are faculty (OIRA, 2014). More than half -- 53% -- are non-academic employees. Technically employees of the *state* working according to the provisions of the North Carolina State Personnel Act (SPA), these are the women and men working as housekeepers, groundskeepers, departmental administrative staff, and in countless other positions necessary to the function of campus life (OIRA, 2014). Despite their predominance by number as employees, the men and women doing non-academic work on campus are often less visible members of campus communities. The most emblematic of this invisibility are arguably UNC’s housekeepers. The university’s largest by number of staff, the Department of Housekeeping has more than 400 employees working as housekeepers, Crew Leaders, and Zone Managers, cleaning and maintaining 18 million square feet of indoor space in 300+ buildings (Facilities Services, 2015). Their work is constant, stretching across first, second, and third-shifts, and extending well beyond the 17 week semesters organizing student life.

Despite missionary declarations of the value of “light and liberty,” UNC has a violent and checkered history with its waged-workers, illustrating the confluence of institutional power and broader historical conditions within which the work of being clean occurs (Baumann, 1993;

Chapman, 2006; McSurely, 1993; Wilder, 2014). At UNC, as elsewhere, housekeeping is co-produced alongside the troubling equation of black female bodies and domestic dirty work, their denigration as a result of that affiliation, and the subsequent justification for institutional efforts to de-skill everyday work practices (Anderson, 2000; Glenn, 1992). Adding to local complexities, dozens of non-English speaking Latinx, Burmese, Karen, Chin, Kachin, Rohingya, and Mon men and women work as housekeepers at UNC-CH (PRM, 2011), a shift that began in the mid-2000s. As I will argue, this demographic shift marks a transition away from more than a decade of worker-based activism and organizing in the department.

Given the spatial complexities of the demographic shifts in the department and the embedded historical-contingencies of social reproductive labor in the U.S. South, cleanliness practices and hygiene norms can no longer be reasonably isolated as a set of subjective desires articulated to the quiet privacy of the morning routine. To do as much would require their total isolation from the collectivities that grant cleanliness practices and hygiene norms their freighted cultural meaning. But, the connections between individual cleanliness practices and the nonacademic waged work of housekeeping are structurally illegible. Two forces produce that opacity. First, a cultural *Zeitgeist* long ashamed by the body's mess invisibilizes everyday practice (Elias, 2000[1939], Hoy, 1997; Shove, 2003). Second, a specific set of bureaucratic and organizational mechanisms designed to specify the contours of housekeeping work practice render that waged labor equally obscure. By reading student and housekeeping focus on cleanliness as necessarily interpenetrating terms, I reveal cultural and institutional complicity around the uneven distribution of the "dirty work" required of everyday hygiene on UNC's campus.

Slippery Soaps: Defining Cleanliness in Practice and at Work

When it gets down to the nitty-gritty – or the absence of the nitty-gritty, in this case — cleanliness is difficult to characterize. It is a state of being that involves both a set of practices and a hierarchy of material conditions, both of which are deceptively moving targets. If one thinks about the objects and technologies involved, two characteristics are important. First, the tools are expected to be clean themselves. Second, cleanliness is produced through a system of aesthetic characterizations that tend to hide the work necessary to securing the conditions of that cleanliness. In the built-environment of the bathroom, the tendency is to the smooth, the shiny, the blemish free, the cool and, often, dry. As a cultural form, the tendency is to notions of purity, to whiteness, and to a demanding type of normative embodiment (Dyer, 1997). Despite a cultural insistence that cleanliness is necessary to social belonging, it is only ever temporary, defined in relationship to other bodies, ideas and *things*. Dirt, germs, microbes, out-of-place moistures - sweat, water, mucus, menstrual blood - and the body's natural odors are covered, eliminated, or avoided in an attempt to match the presentation of the body to the clean porcelain, well-stocked toilet paper, and stinging lemon scents that characterize the bathroom in which bodies are made clean.

To be clean for oneself is illogical, in this sense. However, cleanliness individuates. At once subjectifying, it produces systems of subjectification scripted to other bodies, places and things. In the modern industrial West, cleanliness is of central importance to fixing the material coordinates of embodied power. To be clean is a positive achievement. But, this positivity produces and fixes a set of outside terms, a choir of *Others* necessary to the possibility of a hygienic state of grace. The normative material conditions of cleanliness, for example, hide the

work involved out of sight, mind, or polite conversation. Cleanliness hides the body's dirt; cleanliness practices are themselves hidden. As a system of practice, being clean connects individuals and their embodied communal ties through practices of exclusion. As much as the purified whiteness that characterizes expectations of normative embodiment in the modern Western world, it is the *constitutive outsides* of cleanliness practice that make being clean possible.¹² It is these outsides that also spoil its innocence. I argue that being clean is an ethical and political problem more than a beneficial marker of individual or public health.

Cultural attitudes about what is clean, who is clean, and how cleanliness is produced blend uneasily with normative understandings of the materiality of the body, questions of identity and belonging, and the social production of public and private space (Ashenburg, 2007; Grosz, 1993; Longhurst, 2001). These ideas mobilize the breadth of the body's sensory experiences to produce social difference along racialized, gendered, and classed lines (Bourdieu, 1984; Corbin, 1986; McClintock, 1996; Smith, 2006). Being or becoming clean is about the micro-politics of power and desire: over the body, over the production of sexuality, gender, race, and class, over space, and over relationships between people and within institutional systems (Foucault, 1990 [1978]; Osborn, 1996).

¹² The connection between cleanliness and systems of racialization are tied in their mutual social productions. Neither 'cleanliness' nor 'race' are things so much as socially constructed systems of practice made in conversation with systems of social, cultural and economic exclusion. As Shove (2003) argued, cleanliness is a socially produced *system of systems*, a set of habits constructed in conversation with the socio-technical systems in the built environment, the multiplicity of which can produce both expectation and path dependency as much as change. As Babb (1998) explains, picking up the lines of Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation theory, "the devices employed in creating white hegemony are for the most part devices of exclusion. They articulate not necessarily who is or what is white but rather who or what is not white... they reveal the fundamental paradox of whiteness: the persistent need of nonwhiteness to give it form and expression" (p. 42-43). Cleanliness is emblematic of this paradox. The high value of cleanliness depends on the proliferation of an as-yet-unending set of constitutive outside terms. These are the literal and metaphorical dirt of everyday life, a mix of actual things that we touch, as Purell warned above, and *ideas* about dirtiness. It is this secondary term that establishes cleanliness practices and hygiene norms as historically-contextual terms of political and ethical engagement mediating access to livelihood and belonging in daily life.

I use the terms cleanliness *Zeitgeist*, cleanliness practice and hygiene norms throughout this text. The cleanliness *Zeitgeist* describes the specific intensity of modern cleanliness habits and hygiene norms. In the United States, and much of the industrial Western world, assumptions about the basics of being or producing a clean body have always been moving targets (Forty, 1986; Kira, 1966; Wright, 2000[1960]). But, it is possible to trace a through-line from the advent of piped-water-based hygiene practices to the idea that the body can be, in any practical sense, clean (Gandy, 2004/2005; Kaika, 2004a/b; Shove, 2003). A major characteristic of this intensification is a slow, but steady shift from practices centered on the management of very visible dirt to those concerned with a host of microbial invaders.¹³ Today, ideas about microbes, germs, and the cleanliness or health of the body connect individual and collective responsibility for cleanliness habits and hygiene norms to *invisible* forms of risk (Burchell, 1996; Owen, 2014; Pollan, 2013; Scott, 2014).

Cleanliness practices refer to the individual behaviors that produce nominally “clean” bodies. These can be organized under the rubric of the “morning routine,” including simple things like hand washing, showering, shaving, and toileting. They may also include the additional habits common to everyday engagements in bathrooms, bedrooms, or other quasi-secluded domestic spaces, including brushing and treating hair, applying make-up and perfume, doing laundry, and basic housekeeping tasks like sweeping, dusting and vacuuming. For the

¹³ This track is analogous to arguments made by Nikolas Rose (2006) in *Biopolitics of Life Itself*. Though his focus is on the commodification of the neurological, as opposed to the microbial, the worries he outlines remain relevant. What, that is, happens to the subject when the boundaries of the “self” are redefined in ways that extend the reach of existing regimes of power and accumulation well beyond – and *into* – the physical boundaries of the body? Braun (2008) argues, along similar lines, that the emergence of SARS frustrates institutional and national boundaries for securing population health, providing justification for extra-territorial claims by the Canadian state that extend from the streets of Toronto and Vancouver into rural China, what he terms “bio-geopolitics.”

students in the examples below, these practices are central to their senses of self and entitlement to university space (see especially Chapter 4). For housekeepers, these practices organize the working day (see Chapters 3, 5, and 6). I argue that individual cleanliness practices have far more importance as *cultural* forms than they prevent hygiene-related health risk. But, the specter of public health directly informs the way in which cleanliness habits and hygiene norms are institutionalized. I argue in Chapter 5 that considerably vague science about the health of the student body, for example, is central to the organization of housekeeping work at UNC (see Chapter 5).

Hygiene norms describe a more specific set of behaviors connecting individual behavior and health *risk*. For example, hand-washing is a common expectation after using the bathroom. The fact of it being *expected* is largely cultural, but the reason that it initially became an expectation is directly related to the production of public health systems in urban spaces in the 19th century (Hempel, 2007; Miller, 1998; Newsom, 2006). Boiling and filtering water and cleaning hands prevented the transmission of water-borne enteric diseases that made 19th century city-life a public health nightmare (George, 2008; Hempel, 2007). However, alongside their emergence as tools for the prevention of disease, hygiene norms were mechanisms of biopolitical control, producing a hierarchical organization of population health that reflected raced, classed, and gendered understanding of social entitlement and economic privilege (Anderson, 2008; Hoy, 1995). Hygiene norms mobilize scientific understandings of health to produce uneven access to the positive potential of modern embodiment, reproducing systems

of value that place white, Western subjectivities above all others (Hoy, 1995; McClintock, 1995).¹⁴

At UNC, students work to make their bodies happen. Regardless of outward appearance, they do laundry, sweep the floors in their dorm rooms, and stop in the bathroom to manage their bodies' effluent metabolisms. Bowels and bladders are emptied, eye-liner is reapplied, hands are washed, t-shirts folded, and dustpans emptied. This work is rarely framed in terms of problematic excess — of sweat and grease, dirt and germs — so much as a rising to the occasion of a series of utopian demands: the “modern” body *is* clean. Any indicator to the contrary becomes a target of cleanliness practice. The force of cleanliness pushes against the boundaries of social norms as well as the physical limits of the body: cleanliness is both subject and subjectifying. Because of the always-excessiveness of the body to the normative constraints of clean embodiments, cleanliness practice opens bodies to commodification. These practices produce a fleeting territorialization of a porous boundary, focusing a series of risk-averse enactments that frame the body as both threat and resolution to its own metabolism.

¹⁴ The whiteness central to cleanliness practice and hygiene norms is slippery with cultural freight as much as it is produced as a dominating absence signaling the importance of an actively produced *nothingness* to cleanliness practice. This is an ideological falsity: whiteness is not an absence and a socio-political and powerfully affective signifier with specific — and especially violent — material effects (see McClintock, 1996; Dyer, 1997; Babb, 1998). The importance of whiteness to hygienic norms exposes the racist cultural antecedents of hygiene norms just as it orients individuals to the ideological *sturm und drang* animating everyday cleanliness practice. The toilet is clean when the white porcelain is unmarked, smooth, unblemished: the positive achievements of cleanliness practice collapse into the whiteness of the built environment. The body is clean when the skin is, itself, white: the “positive” achievement of the racial state that organizes the value of subjectivity in racialized terms that exceed the phenotypic characterization of the skin (Dyer, 1997; Omi and Winant, 1994). Though it has particular material effects, whiteness-as-cleanliness operates as a hyperreal system of practices. This is not to say that cleanliness is unknowable, or merely discursive. Rather, in its combination of subjective specificity and historically-contingent normativities, cleanliness practices are recursive without clear limit. Popular focus on the positive and negative potential of microbes to neoliberal subject positions reflect this recursive intensification (see Scott, 2014; Pollan, 2013; Owen, 2013). The increasingly microbial boundary line central to the definition of modern cleanliness reveals the slippage of ‘cleanliness’ as a signifier, producing social anxieties that accede to and normalize increasingly micro-specific and obsessive practice. It is not all relative; it is relative in relation to the hegemonic totality of hygienic purity that is the basis for aesthetic assessments of practice.

I read cleanliness as preternaturally unable to escape this predominantly negative framework. This is a long hang-over from the 19th century emergence of public health that mobilized newfound knowledge of germ theory to architect the contours of modern hygienic embodiment: Germs, bad! Cleanliness, good. It is because the body is *not* clean that it *should* be.¹⁵ The consistent failures of the *mess* and *flesh* (pace Katz, 2001) make the body a frontier for domination, control, and commodification (Harvey, 1998).

Though being dirty does not necessarily produce liberation or autonomy, the consistent failures of the body to be clean make ideas about cleanliness and the subjectifying power of hygiene norms contested spaces of resistance to institutional or state control (Halberstam, 2011; Scott, 1999). Everyday cleanliness practices are largely invisible. This leaves them prone to exploitation. But, because they are beyond the grasp and view of domestic or institutional hegemony, they have long been identified in terms of collective struggle central to the construction of more inclusive social, economic and political systems (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Federici, 2006, 2010). In the examples that follow, I argue that the invisibility of housekeeping work tends toward exploitation more than liberation. This is not to discount the active resistance of housekeepers to their everyday working conditions, but to note the effectiveness of institutional bureaucracies at corralling, diminishing, and disaggregating that resistance from the possibility of macro-scale change.

¹⁵ Both Kaika (2004b) and Kristeva (1982) situate this tension in terms of an encounter with abjection. Cleanliness is animated in response to the abject as a *thing* that disturbs the construction of the subject because it cannot be separated from that subject, both *Other-than* and self at once. This disconnect is a source of subjectifying anxiety that is played out in everyday cleanliness practice, but also one that fixes cleanliness to other systems of gendered, racialized and classed division.

The feeling of fresh sheets, the smell of clean hair, a tongue skimming the minty front of de-mossed morning teeth: these are, in the near term, positive associations culturally produced through cleanliness practice. But, who is doing the laundry? Who cleans the bathroom sink? Whose hair is being washed and who is pulling hair from the drain? If, as Lefebvre (1991[1974]) offered, the “great deodorizing campaign” of capitalism is so hell-bent on eliminating the body’s so-called “natural” state, who is doing the deodorizing and who is being deodorized?

Much of this work falls into the quiet corners of half-conscious *habitus*, overlooked elements of the day that function as background noise: washing hands and hair, brushing teeth, doing laundry. But, the *ubiquity* of practice connects the private and deeply personal to larger social systems with far reaching consequences. Cleanliness practices and hygiene norms provide material coordinates spatializing the normative expectations of the subject by locating the body within a hygienic socio-spatial architecture. Both generic and specific, cleanliness practices interpret desire, manage worry, and temporarily alter the micro-ecology of the body, passing germs and bacteria from hand to faucet and back, eliminating dirt to make way for its reappearance, masking but not eliminating sweat, perfuming hair and armpit, calming nerves and psoriasis. It marks a boundary between the hope that the body could be clean and the hopeless realization that the meaningful indicators of success slip through one’s grasp faster than the soap rinses down the drain.

Clean Optimism and the Aesthetics of Institutional Control

Today, at UNC, the codependent obscurity of student effort and housekeeping labor vis-à-vis the potentialities and necessary particulars of *being clean* reveals the way in which the flourishing of life for one group – students – depends on and co-exists alongside the *attrition* of

another – housekeepers (pace Berlant, 2011). A combined reading of student and housekeeper focus on cleanliness reveals that (well-)being for students binds them to life and to *other* people with markedly different articulation to life and livelihood.

This is not especially surprising. The (re)production, condition and uneven distribution of life under relations of capital is a touchstone of critical theory for Foucauldian, Latourian, feminist, and Marxist analyses of a range of types (e.g. Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Barker & Feiner, 2004; Duffy, 2007; Federici, 2006; McCintyre & Nash, 2011; Rose, 2006; Spillers, 1987; and countless others). By way of intervention, my argument focuses on the codependence of students and housekeepers alongside the efforts of UNC as an institution to obscure and invisibilize this codependence. The question is not just how students obsess about their hair, produce their sense of entitlement, or fear germs. It is not just about equitable treatment, or access to university space, or creating workplaces free of harassment. At root, my concern is over *life* and the dependence of the university on its uneven distribution.

The production of hygiene-*cum*-health for the aggregate student body motivates institutional control over the housekeeping labor that body requires. The health of a student body is -- in late liberal capitalism and especially on the campus of an internationally-renowned university picking up the ideology of neoliberal autonomy – the responsibility of individual students. The health of a housekeeper's body is an afterthought. Connecting institutional focus on aggregate health and individual entitlement to subjective cleanliness reveals not only the intimate coproduction of institutional norms and individual entitlement, but the university's active subsumption of housekeeper labor in service of both.

Behind the bathroom door, the discursive and material focus of personal practice or waged work may be some slippery notion of cleanliness or hygiene, but undergirding the architecture of that experience is an idea that the body's fitness – its *fittedness* to existing regimes of accumulation – requires that individuals seek cleanliness. The fact that bodies fail to make the grade is what makes the optimistic promise of cleanliness cruel for students; the fact that housekeepers' working conditions are as poor as they are reveal the connection of that cruelty to the production of what Berlant (2011) termed 'slow death.'¹⁶

Today, the gap between expectation — purity! — and constitutive outside — filth! — opens the bodies of students and housekeepers both to systems of intensification. Nothing requires more work than shoring up a porous boundary in a constant state of quasi-collapse. Since the advent of modern water-based cleanliness practice in the mid-19th century, people have only ever been expected to bathe more frequently, bought and used more products to manage and produce the increasingly sculpted contours of the body, and have identified ever more specific sites of hygienic risk and embodied worry on which to focus daily cleanliness practices (Ashenberg, 2007; Forty, 1986; Gram-Hanssen, 2007; Pollan, 2015; Shove, 2003). But, the burdens of intensification are themselves unevenly distributed. I argue that the uneven distribution of benefit and harm establishes the value of the cleanliness practices and hygiene

¹⁶ Berlant notes Harvey's comment in *Spaces of Hope* (2000) that the definition of sickness in capitalism is an inability to work. I would extend that formulation to the production of modern cleanliness practices and hygienic norms. Like capitalism, crisis is built into the social relations that inhere in the habits themselves. For students, cleanliness is a "domain of ordinary revelation where an upsetting scene of living that has been muffled in ordinary consciousness is revealed to be interwoven with ordinary life after all" (Berlant, 2007, p. 761). Despite cleanliness practices and norms being necessarily shared, they are isolated and isolating. It is a confusing mix, part and parcel of the liminal spacing that feeds the intensification of the practices themselves. All bodies sweat and smell; the sweat and smell of bodies is a source of shame and derision. All hair becomes dirty; dirty hair is a mark of gendered, classed and racialized failure. Skin is imperfect; imperfect skin can and must be managed into appropriate form. The experiences are combined to create the social isolation – the muffling -- that threatens unclean bodies with non-belonging.

norms central to the ideological constructions of institutional life at UNC. Critical to my intervention is a claim that to separate student practice behind bathroom doors and the housekeeping work occurring in those same spaces as ontologically different is to miss the way that cleanliness architects not just particular kinds of social relations at the scale of everyday life and subjective embodiment, but political and ethical frameworks central to the division of life and livelihood in institutional space more broadly.

The Clean State of Things

Cleanliness practices as *institutionalized* norms translate and remake populations in the idealized image of institutional logics. There is nothing quite so appealingly illegible to power than the chaos of the unwashed. But, the ability to enforce the necessary particulars of *washing* requires much more than sloganeering from on-high.¹⁷ UNC cannot force an individual student to bathe or wash his or her hands – as Foucault (1990 [1978]) and Berlant (2007) remind us, biopolitics shores up this gap. But, UNC can – and does – direct a housekeeper to ensure that the bathroom is always clean. Acting as an institutional administrator charged with protecting the students under its care, UNC’s autocratic management of housekeeping work practice attempts to secure the porous boundaries of the student bodies swapping germs, fluids, and sharing intimate space-times in campus dormitories.

Because these two sets of actors are intimately co-dependent, it is impossible to consider the material/technological engagements of everyday cleanliness practices without

¹⁷ Anderson (2008) uses the experience of American colonization in the Philippines to note the ways in which hygiene, scientific knowledge, environmental determinism, and colonial domination inform the emergence of a particular ‘tropical medicine’ desperate to accommodate the figure of the white, American military man in the archipelago, a project that used disciplinary sanitation policy to construct the native Filipino body as, alternately, a source of threat, generally indigent, or worthy of pity and aid.

incorporating the materialities of racialization, alongside fluid categories of gender and class, as formative to social reproductive labor systems more broadly. Bodies are racialized, gendered and classed by both institutional systems and more-than-human means in moving through their everyday worlds (Mark, 2006; Slocum, 2008).

At the same time, how people survive, nourish, and sustain themselves and others -- the embodied materialities of social reproduction -- is insufficiently framed in terms of the relationship between sexist, racist, gendered and classed divisions of labor-power, on the one hand, and systems of commodity production, on the other (Mitchell, et al., 2004). First, social reproductive labor exists regardless of macro- or micro-economic production framework (Federici, 2011; Katz, 2001). Second, what was historically *unwaged* social reproductive labor is increasingly marketized as low-wage, precarious work, often in globalized, service-oriented – as opposed to production-oriented – labor markets (England, 2010; Kalleberg, 2011; Parreñas, 2012). Ideas about race and systems of racialization that emerged in the US South during chattel slavery inform, but do not determine, the experience of race, ethnicity, sexuality, or class for the communities of color in their articulation to the retrenchment of the modern international division of labor. Third, a focus on production and labor-power overwrites the persistent connection between certain types of *technology* and social reproductive labor, especially the gendering of domestic technologies like mops, vacuums, and washing machines (Neuhas, 2013; Schwartz-Cowan, 1983). Lastly, the opportunity for building a progressive politics of social reproduction and an ethics of everyday practice cannot be framed in solely economic, productive, exclusively anthro- and often andro-pocentric terms, especially in light of the historically masculinist, racialized exclusions of social reproductive labor from economic and

popular social consideration as legitimate forms of “work” (e.g. Frederici, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Rose, 1993; Weeks, 2011).

As a system of meanings and practices, cleanliness marks the intersection between Foucault’s (1990 [1988]) ethical self-care and feminist Marxist analyses of the “care work” of social reproductive labor (pace England, 2010; Parreñas, 2012). In reading the work of students and housekeepers together, this project argues that cleanliness establishes the terms of individual ethical behavior and outwardly-focused social relationships in relationship to particular formations of institutional power. In part, this ethical reading exposes individual subject positions as fundamentally precarious, dependent on others in ways that “[dispose] us outside ourselves or [set] us beside ourselves” (Butler, 2006, p. 26). As individuals seek to manage and dispose of the dirt of everyday life, the individual subject is exposed to both invasive germ ecologies and other bodies and technologies. In the bathroom, in the intimate spaces of everyday cleanliness and shared spatial topographies of UNC Chapel Hill’s main campus, what are the ethical demands of being enmeshed in “the dirt and danger of location, interpersonal engagement, and the labors of becoming” (Gibson-Graham, 2001, p. 4) and how are these demands specific to constructions of cleanliness?

Chapter Summary

With the exception of Chapter 2 – the bit about data and methods -- each of the following chapters is framed as a specific case study highlighting different aspects of my fieldwork. In each case, I draw connections between data from fieldwork and specific discussions in different subsets of literature in critical human geography and cultural studies. The case studies open and close with feminist Marxist analysis of social reproductive labor. I

discuss cultural theory about aesthetics, the politics of everyday life, cultural geography and political ecology in between. This is pragmatic, motivated by the very real need to quickly transform this document into publishable work. But, it is also a reflection of what motivates me to do the thinking that grounds my intellectual curiosity. My hope is that there is more evidence of engaging theoretical promiscuity than discombobulating lack of focus. The challenge of starting with an idea like cleanliness – as opposed to a specific event or place – is the quiet, scale-jumping, space-time-collapsing pervasiveness it presents. Like dirt, it is everywhere and nowhere all at once. The who, what, how, where and why of this necessary tension is what guides me.

There are yawning gaps in what follows, most of which relate to my approach to the field. What started with an intended focus on the working lives of housekeepers and their relationship to students was reformulated to include a much stronger engagement with the role of UNC as an administrator of housekeeping work and student life. This had its own limitations, but turning my analyses toward the progenitor of local hygienic hegemonies seemed a better use of my time. No doubt, the problems it will create are only just now settling in.

Studying “up” presented its own challenges. But, I knew it was a mistake to miss the Orwellian bureaucracies operating behind-the-scenes as unsurprising or dull. There is a lot to be said for turning things on their side to mark the contours of the status quo, especially when the production of the public face of the university necessitated millions of dollars, hundreds of people, and around-the-clock effort. What I did not know was the extent to which UNC’s bureaucracies and extra-personal operational ideologies would make the problems I was

interested in difficult to see. The result is a bit of circumlocution, an outline of a system of practice, of organizing labor, and of experiencing life and livelihood that stretches from the intimacies of the steam-fogged bathroom mirror to the other side of the planet. Pardon the bumps along the way.

In Chapter 2, I describe the methodological framework for my fieldwork and the data that I was able to obtain during 18 months of exploration. I discuss my approach to the archive of my material in the context of the challenges I encountered, limitations that reoriented what was possible in terms of the arguments that follow and my desire to preserve the anonymity of the people who were generous enough to share their experiences with me. I then turn to the nuts and bolts of my data. It is here that I explain the importance of anonymity to the analysis that follows, specifying the reason that there is so little ethnographic data from housekeepers themselves in the chapters that follow.

In Chapter 3, I describe housekeeping work on campus as far as my research has revealed. I situate the work practices of housekeepers within now longstanding feminist Marxist critiques of social reproductive labor that have articulated the connections between the value of work and the production and division of systems of social identity. I explain the reorganization of the department that began in 2005 and present some ethnographic data from housekeepers to describe their experience of work in light of that reorganization. My focus is on the shifting demographics in the department, particularly the emergence of a group of housekeepers from Southeast Asia. Though it is likely the case that zero housekeepers in the department were non-English speaking refugees in 2000 – a demarcation that I have been at pains to specify with limited luck – today they account for nearly 40% of the university's line

housekeepers. I close by clarifying connections between housekeeping work, the treatment of housekeepers, and the production of racialized and sexualized systems of labor.

In Chapter 4, I turn to my interviews with students. Using the work of Jacques Rancière (2003, 2010), particularly his ideas about the politics of aesthetics and the necessity of disagreement – what he terms *dissensus* – to small “d” democratic praxis. I argue that the embodied demands of cleanliness practices and hygiene norms are foundational to a politicized aesthetics of everyday being, a system of often hidden, though no less ubiquitous and demanding, evaluations of everyday embodiment that seek dominance and control through particular orderings of sensory worlds. I discuss student attitudes about their bathrooms and everyday cleanliness practices, and ideas students and housekeepers share about cleanliness and each other.

In Chapter 5, my focus is on microbial life (I attend to the specific definitions there). Using ethnographic data from students and housekeepers alongside a report about housekeeping work produced in 2006, germs are revealed as subjectifying double-agents. They are essential to cleanliness, but understanding their different mobilizations reveals connections between microbial life and the uneven distribution of benefit and harm by institutional means. I argue that germs are intimately enmeshed with the boundary-marking exclusions central to ideas about cleanliness on UNC’s campus. These entanglements govern both the everyday practices of students and the waged work of the housekeepers charged with cleaning up alongside and after those students.

In Chapter 6, my analysis turns to a shift in the housekeeping department’s management tactics that began in 2004-2005 that directly informs working conditions in the

department in the present moment. At that time, the university dramatically reorganized housekeeping work practices, marking the end of a decade of strong labor organizing and relative workplace autonomy. The period marks a shift in the balance of power and the start of a demographic transition amongst housekeepers themselves. In 1990, the department was predominantly African American women and men – mostly the former – from the surrounding communities (McSurely, 1993). Today, more than 40% of the housekeepers are Burmese, Karen, Chin, Kachin, Rohingya, and Mon men and women from Burma, Thailand, and Malaysia (PRM, 2011). I place these demographic changes alongside a series of revisions to the university's grievance policy, tracking 11 revisions to that policy from 1990 to the February 2016.¹⁸ I argue that the university has used both the grievance policy and the reorganization of the daily work practices of housekeepers to ensure their precarious position at the university. I close with a discussion of a report published by PRM Consultants (2011), a DC-based consulting firm that was hired in 2011 to analyze the department's problematic working conditions and persistent personnel challenges. The report is a damning indictment of the university's policies and practices towards its nonacademic workers. Despite comprehensive, statistically-supported evidence of problems, and a clear path to their remediation, it is unclear as to what substantive, structural changes have been made to improve working conditions in the department, now five years after the report was produced.

¹⁸ Between the time I finished this document and the time I defended it, the university revised the portion of the grievance policy related to recording grievance hearings. Staff are now allowed to record their grievance hearings, a change from previous policy that prevented them from recording the proceedings in any manner.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND DATA

Studying Up and Down: Institutional Ethnography and Clean Campus Life

This project uses three interlocking ‘case studies’ to explore cleanliness and hygiene — as sets of practices, terms of art, and regulators of space and culture — and the construction and differentiation of social worlds at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC). By way of précis, I often say that I talk to students about what they do in the bathroom to make their bodies *happen* and then interview the housekeepers that clean up after them about their work practice and everyday working lives. There is a certain epistemic violence in that reduction, but it gets to the problem that undergirds my concerns.

Cleanliness requires a great deal of work – as practice and waged labor, both. But, the body itself is expected to remain effortlessly hygienic, a conceit tied to the ideological terms of embodiment in the modern western industrial *Zeitgeist*. Though the ideologically clean body very clearly occupies both a considerable amount of space *and* time to meet the conditions of normative embodiment, the pervasive myth of that body is that it is “clean” (pace Lahiji and Friedman, 1997).¹⁹ The logic follows thus: a preternaturally clean body requires limited, predominantly cosmetic, upkeep. The upkeep to this preternaturally clean body, however, is not only a de facto inevitability, but extensive and demanding of time, resources, and the built

¹⁹ When I teach about my research, I frequently show a video produced by Kohler, Inc. advertising their most technologically-advance toilet, the NuMi. The ad is a perfect example of how ideas about cleanliness are tied to particular socio-technological conceits in the built environment – techno-modernism -- and the persistent idea that the body is only ever referentially dirty. The actuality of the shit it produces is always outside the frame. The video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFRC37si8xw>

environment. The work — either as individual practice or waged “dirty” work — is hidden from sight to maintain the farce that the body is clean in the first place. My curiosity herein is to the differential effects of that process of hiding by three particular groups: students, housekeepers, and the managers and university administrators charged with their oversight.²⁰

When I began fieldwork, I was operating under the notion that my work would be predominantly ethnographic, a combination of interviews with students, housekeepers and a range of relevant stake-holders combined with observations from field-notes. Not only did my fieldwork quickly become fraught with personal anxiety, but I was at pains to secure a research focus. Who or what was I studying? Cleanliness as a type of “vibrant” materiality, following the work of Jane Bennett (2011), Sarah Whatmore (2002), or Paul Robbins’ Heideggerian turn at the conclusion of *Lawn People* (2007)? The commodities, tools and purpose-built technologies organizing the practice of students and the work of housekeepers, a take influenced by first-world political ecologies connecting the built environment, resource productions, urbanization and the production of modern subjectivity (pace Kaika, 2004a/b; Gandy, 2002, 2005)?

²⁰ My initial approach was informed by a masters’ project that started with a piece of nominally ‘alternative’ technology — composting toilets — in a specific place — the Skaneateles Lake watershed — and looked at the network of human and non-human relationships enabling and frustrating its utility in everyday practice. At stake was the success of a watershed policy central to keeping an unfiltered water resource clean enough for 250,000 people to drink (Dimpfl and Moran, 2014). The singularity of focus tightened the scope of what was a fast moving summer in the field and though the result proved a critical stepping stone to me, it also left me with a rather large grab-bag of unanswered questions. A comment at my defense stands out. I had offered an in-depth look at questions of everyday practice, and a connection between everyday domestic practice and resource production that often exceeds the grasp of policy-makers. But, I had largely left aside any understanding of how the households in my study were articulated to larger political economies of production and consumption. I had, in effect, missed the Marx. This project does not correct this gap, but the comment has lingered as emblematic of a tension that still holds my interest. The thing-y natures of everyday life constitute the warp and weft of connective tissue between individual desires and larger systems of power, but figuring out the how and why requires focus that only ever partially reveals their networked connections. I chose three small slices of what is a much larger and considerably more tangled set of practices, policies and cultural assumptions related to everyday cleanliness practices and hygiene norms on a university campus. Where these three angles of analysis do not constitute the universe of possible mechanisms through which bodies happen, make space, and experience differential access to life and livelihood, they expose what are often invisible connections between different kinds of human and non-human *life* on a university campus.

To understand the challenge of being a housekeeper at UNC — and account for students' professed, though understandable, ignorance of their working lives — a tactical reorientation was needed. I wanted to trace the micro-intensity of the material engagements of what I thought *overly*-hygienic lives, but not miss the proverbial forest for the trees. A key contribution of this project is an insistence that students' and housekeepers' hygiene-focused work and practice do not merely overlap, but are intimately co-produced, despite the fact that they see so little of each other in day-to-day experience. But, a focus on cleanliness as an organizer of everyday life only explained one aspect of that connectivity: as everyday practice or individual focus of waged-work, ideas about hygiene and cleanliness are central to the construction of hygienic subjectivities. Less clear to me was how I might understand the power of the university itself, the institutional system producing the conditions for connections — or a lack therein — between students and housekeepers.

The students I ended up speaking with knew very little about housekeepers, evidence of a structural space-time discontinuity that all but guaranteed they would rarely see each other. When queried about housekeeping during interviews, student responses ranged. Some were indifferent, some knew bits and pieces about their work, others shared sympathy over the presumed difficulty of their jobs. As a bellwether, I would ask if they knew of their housekeeper's name; none did. Housekeepers' experience of students was more diverse, informed in part by the diversity of spaces in which housekeepers encountered — or did not encounter — students during their working hours. Some cited personal friendships, commenting on connections built over years of casual interaction. Others never saw students, working in the dead of night cleaning offices and laboratories.

My focus was greatly improved by tracking the contiguities in the focus of their efforts in terms of their differential placement in the architecture of university life.²¹ Being clean requires intimately contextual practice, lived through the commodities, spaces, policies and systems of governance mobilized in the production of hygienic norms. This project examines connections between and among specific bodies with particular attention to their conscription within and resistance to the institutional systems of power and control central to the production of university life. This was pragmatism; I had almost no access to the workers I had naively decided were central to my project and remained stubborn in my focus on their working lives.

As my project unfolded, it became increasingly clear that the mediation of institutional and administrative systems was a central and essential locus of power and control. Because of this, I was drawn to the function of institutional ethnography as a mode of critique concerned with the production of bureaucracy (Smith, 2009). Institutional ethnography starts from the idea that “social control is increasingly and pervasively textual and discursive” (Smith, 2009, p. 33). But, as opposed to post-structural analyses that use the slippage of discursive meaning to decenter systems of power, institutional ethnography “suggests that, frequently, and in systematic ways, the categories and conceptual frameworks of administration are inattentive to the actual circumstances of the diverse lives people live in contemporary societies” Smith, 2009, p. 34). IE starts with the “recognition that institutional ideologies typically acknowledge some kinds of work and not others” (DeVault, 2006, p. 294). The connection between

²¹ Whether a “vital conjuncture” (Johnson-Hanks, 2002), or a key site for the inculcation of neoliberal subjectivity (Mitchell, 2006), the university campus – and educational institutional architectures – operate by way of differential, and hierarchical, productions of power-knowledge.

inattention, ideology and value emerged as a central analytical lens in my understanding of UNC's organization of housekeeping work (see especially Chapters 5 and 6).

Smith's (2005) challenge is to "begin in the actualities of the lives of... those involved in the institutional process and focus on how those actualities were embedded in social relations, both those of ruling and those of economy" (p. 31). Her framework is explicit about its articulation to the concerns of activism, social change, and a reading of institutional power that grants central importance to the organization of work at the intersection of policy – the actual texts informing work practice – and the lived realities of those situated within the bounds of institutional control (Smith, 2009). The goal is to trace "textually-mediated workplace organization" (Smith, 1990b, as quoted by DeVault, 2006). This textual mediation is literal – related to the policy documents, workplace organization memorandum, job descriptions, etc – and metaphorical – an archive of statements and systems of statements that grant subjects the authority to speak (Foucault, 1982). Rather than stopping at an analysis that situates individual subject positions, institutional ethnography starts from the specificities of individual experience and connects them to the bureaucracies and workplace organizational practices to "bring into view a 'regime'," ultimately pointing to "solutions that involve changing the organization" (DeVault, 2006, p. 295).

As I turned toward UNC organizational practices as a way of fleshing out the findings of my interviews with students, housekeepers and other informants, a new set of concerns emerged. First, the bureaucracy of institutional systems is relatively obscure, necessitating a multi-part approach. Monahan and Fisher (2014) outline nine potential approaches to the study of bureaucratic obscurity, ranging from the benefits of cold calling, to the use of Freedom of

Information requests. My attempt utilizes many of their suggestions, though the most successful was the data contained in UNC's response to two public records requests (see Appendix IV, V). Repeated emails and calls to Human Resources and housekeeping management and attempts to interview members of the management team in the housekeeping department have shown limited results to date, though my work remains ongoing and I am eager to understand the position of a breadth of stakeholders informing the frameworks that are the focus of my intellectual curiosities.

Given the information constituting my data archive, I focus heavily on the production and evaluation of a range of administrative and organizational *texts* as they mediate student experience and the work practices of housekeepers. The resulting analysis reveals a system of contradictions: cleanliness is valued by bodies and devalues bodies, individual student practices depend upon but also invisibilize the waged work of housekeepers, the body is clean because it is always at risk of being dirty. This is the paralyzing dissonance of what Lauren Berlant (2007, 2011) termed *cruel optimism*, made and remade in the minutiae of biopolitical recalibration. For Berlant, the point is not to seek resolution, but an analysis that “[clusters] disparate explanations of phenomenon...[that] cross over dissimilar domains of bodily, subjective, and institutional practice” (Berlant, 2007, p. 763), a generalizable analysis of counter-intuitive realities. Using an institutional ethnography framework informed by Berlant's theory, I argue that everyday practices articulated to the body can be analyzed as systems of social reproductive labor, contested focal points of desire, or objects of institutional regulation. An exploration of the cleanliness *Zeitgeist* at UNC Chapel Hill does all three, revealing how the

interrelationship of those systems is central to the uneven distribution of power on UNC's campus.

Precarious Work and the Necessary Limitations of Anonymity

I rely very heavily on anonymity to tell the stories that follow. I changed the names of all of the students and housekeepers I interviewed, at bare minimum. For students, I preserved only the gender of the interview participant and their age. Their risk for participation is minimal and the stories they shared were focused on personal practices and the opinions they had about the topics at hand. Though there was some experience of embarrassment during sensitive components of our conversations together, we spoke in the confines of the Coates Building conference room and connecting them to the project would necessitate their telling others about their participation.

I do identify some UNC staff by name. These include former Housekeeping Department managers, former members of the Facilities Services' administration team, former participants in the UNC Employee Forum, and individuals with known and public ties to campus organizing efforts. In each case, their names are widely available in local and regional press, or were featured in publicly available records, usually inter-departmental memorandum or emails obtained through two separate public records requests. In the case of all interview subjects, I obtained verbal consent to use their real names and identifying information during our interviews.

After a lengthy and only partially successful period of finding and interviewing existing housekeepers, it was clear that I had grossly underestimated their precarity and the extensiveness of the problems in the department. Housekeeping staff struggle with specific

structural forms of workplace discrimination at UNC and are involved in ongoing grievance processes in an effort to improve working conditions (PRM, 2011; Reeder, 2015; SAW, 2012). Though not all of the housekeepers I met are equally precarious vis-à-vis UNC as their employer, I was and remain concerned that the production of this document might provide a source of information that could be used to discipline workers in the department.

Three methodological conceits result. First, the housekeepers I spoke with who do appear in this document have been anonymized. Though I provide a demographic sketch of current staff in the department, I conceal the ages, genders, and names of specific interviewees, speaking only in aggregate terms. Even so, pseudonyms have been particularly tricky to create. Eight (8) of the housekeepers who spoke with me are people from Burma whose names serve as identification of specific ethnic groups from the region. Working with an interpreter, I created a set of pseudonyms that reflect this ethnic heritage, though have altered the gender and ethnicity of some individuals and do not share the details of those linguistic and gender identity distinctions here.²² Second, when possible, I use the publicly available external analysis of the department's personnel challenges as a primary source of information, enabling me to conceal identifying specifics while discussing the conditions of housekeeping work (PRM, 2011). Third, I use an extremely limited amount of ethnographic data from housekeeper interviews. As a result, I often speak in what may seem like obfuscating generalities. I say "the housekeepers I interviewed," "a housekeeper working third shift," or "a majority of those with

²² Steiner's (2013) discussion of the naming traditions common to the range of ethnic identities in the country mirror what I learned working with my interpreter.

whom I spoke,” for example, not to recast my findings as generally applicable, but to avoid identifying information that might risk exposure to retaliation or other workplace harm.

The narrative I constructed is limited by these terms, but the fact of that limitation itself speaks to the urgency of this inquiry. I argue that contested productions of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality have been connected to the distribution of work and clustered by shift-time by UNC. As a result, working first vs. second- or third- shift, or working in specific sections of campus, functions as a short-hand for the length of job tenure, or the likelihood of a housekeeper being African American, Latinx, or a person from Burma. This is not always true, but it is directly reflected by the housekeepers with whom I spoke. Part of my contention is that these divisions are central to the organization of the labor that is integral to the production of every single space on UNC’s campus. My accounting seeks to better grasp the administrative production of these divisions. Because of that, the invisibility of my interview subjects is all the more essential.

In the end, I have far more specific information from housekeepers than I am at present willing to publish. This has created serious representational challenges: I am focused on the actual experience of housekeepers, have obtained considerable detail therein, but have ended up abstracting that experience here. The result is a sort of crippled representation where I am “speaking for” or “on behalf of” the people who were so generous with me during fieldwork. For someone who identifies strongly with the engagements of feminist geography, the tension is at the forefront of my concerns. I am unsure as to any resolution, though I am equally cautious to understand my own power and position at the university as directly connected to the access I was granted, and the candor of the responses I was able to obtain, especially from

key informants. Part of the benefit of my project, that is, has been my ability to use what I do know about campus to navigate aspects of UNC's institutional architecture that may have been obscure to other researchers. I have tried to best use that knowledge to build connections between specific aspects of UNC's organizational bureaucracy and the mechanisms of control used to produce the contours of housekeeping work practice (see especially Chapters 5 and 6).

Coding: Just the (Overdetermined, Hopelessly Mediated) Facts

Because of the diversity of my research material, I was drawn to coding approaches that would help me build connections between disparate and discontinuous types of data. I had interviews with current and former staff, current students at all stages of their undergraduate experience, stake-holders with strong connections to campus organizing and local community providers deeply critical of UNC's institutional power. My exploration of the university archives yielded an even more diverse set of documents: newspaper articles, budgets, policy documents, job descriptions, incidental memos, internal emails, and workplace training manuals. I needed a coding framework equal to the challenge of building a narrative that preserved the difference between and among these sources, but revealed the architecture of power – and inequality – that was my central concern.

It was clear from the start that housekeepers would be hard to interview. The terms of my IRB prevented me from approaching them at work, I had no personal connections to existing housekeeping staff, and my social position — white, male, middle-aged graduate student critiquing the institution that was providing my degree and paycheck — made me an unlikely confidant or ally. After six months of failed attempts to connect with currently employed housekeepers, I needed to figure out another way to understand their working lives

at the university. A series of institutional, project-design related, and personal problems left me at loose ends, trying to chase down interviews at the same time increasingly less confident that the ethnographic “data” those interviews would provide would be the most salient and powerful means of understanding the challenges in the department. In addition to the structural challenges I faced, I am a student at the institution that is the object of my research. This grants me unique access and awareness of the contours of my object of study, but also complicates the possible risk for study participants and compounded what was intense anxiety about the potential of “getting caught” being deeply critical of the hand that was feeding me.²³

Beyond the necessary accounting of the risk to my subjects, and myself, UNC’s power as an institution is explicit. More than ideas about “cleanliness” or “hygiene,” it is the university that has brought students and housekeepers together. Because of this, a major focus of my project is understanding the bureaucratic means through which UNC governs its workers. They are considerably opaque, especially when you declare yourself focused on the work of housekeeping, a known source of legal and ethical problems for university administrator’s that stretches back to the beginning of the 20th century (see Baumann, 1993; Chapman, 2006; McSurely, 1993). My repeated attempts to connect directly with human resources and housekeeping management were largely fruitless. After multiple calls to members of human resources and department management, I gave up trying to interview them. Though the EEO office was initially responsive to my inquiry about the available languages of their office’s

²³ In Smith’s (2014) assessment, the potential benefit of intimate engagement with research subjects can be productive but misleading, creating rich and close connections between researchers and interview subjects in the field, but also obscuring the power relations that attend “translation across contexts,” i.e. the necessary writing up that translates the field to the halls of the academy where “it is the written word that lingers” (p. 136).

resources – they are produced on an “as needed” basis – I was intentionally vague about the intent of my call, scared that my project focus would cause a circling of administrative wagons. A public records request submitted on June 28, 2014 remains partially unfulfilled. After 18 months of research, it was clear that two things were happening. One, more often than not I was asking the wrong questions. Two, UNC administration had limited cause to speak with me and my persistence risked exposing my research subjects to retaliation. However limited the latter possibility, I was overly cautious in trying to avoid exacerbating potentially contentious working conditions.

Because of this, my understanding of the nuances of my data was informed by the subtle and overt challenges my respondents faced, as well as those I experienced during fieldwork. Taking a cue from Blumenthal (2014), I use Hycner’s (1985) coding methodology. During interviews, I was particularly keen to note “non-verbal and para-linguistic cues” (p. 285, cited in Blumenthal, 2014, p. 18). These would become anchor points for organizing data that built from the focus of my interview questions. The benefit of Hycner’s approach is certain analytical freedom; the restrictions of a given methodology do not close off potential fruitful lines of inquiry. I transcribed interviews with students and housekeepers verbatim. I read through transcripts, collecting data in reference to answers to specific interview questions as well as common themes and points of discordance, listening for changes in tone of voice, pauses, or indications of emotion. I would then organize those elements *across* interviews, gathering them in separate files, labeled by pseudonym and theme. For key informant interviews, I listened to interview recordings twice, first to annotate common or unique thematic elements, second to transcribe quotations that would bolster my analysis.

Data Collection and Accounting

For the duration of my project, all data has been kept securely by me, either in my private residence, or under lock-and-key in an office. I have a password protected hard-drive with recordings of interview data and archival materials. All interview data is stored by pseudonym. I took field-notes that are kept in a separate password-protected folder so as to ensure that any identifying information from interviews is disconnected from interview recordings. In addition, I have a separate file with notes during the period when I was attending meetings with Student Action with Workers (SAW), including 6 off-site meetings with 15 housekeepers who had approached SAW about grieving working conditions.

One-on-one interviews included:

- 28 semi-structured interviews with UNC-Chapel Hill undergraduate students (See Appendix II for guiding questions). Interviewees ranged in age from 18-21. 22 women and 6 men participated; 18 of the interviewees were 19 year-old women. I asked students to fill out a brief demographic survey in addition to recording interviews (See Appendix I). All but two were currently living in dormitories with at least one — and sometimes up to seven — roommates. All described themselves as sharing living space in some manner, usually both bedroom and bathroom spaces. Nine students identified as Asian, one as Asian/Indian, two as Black/African American, one as Black/Nigerian, one as Native American/Alaskan, and thirteen as White. Sixteen identified as full-time students who did not do additional work for wages, eleven identified as working part-time for wages and as full-time students. I recruited students by posting signs on campus and through word-of-mouth, paying

them \$20 for their time. All student interviews took place in the first floor conference room in Coates Hall.

- 12 semi-structured interviews with housekeepers currently employed by UNC-Chapel Hill's Facilities Services Unit in the Department of Housekeeping. I did not collect identifying demographic data for the housekeepers I interviewed. During fieldwork, I interviewed men and women employed during first-, second- and third-shift, as well as day-porters. I used the same interpreter for five interviews with Burmese and Chin-speakers and a Karen-speaking interpreter for three additional interviews. In both cases, my connections to translators was provided by an informant working for a local service provider working with people from Burma living in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Eight interviews occurred in the homes of interview subjects, two in Coates Hall, and two at the participant's job site. All of the Karen, Chin or Burmese people with whom I spoke were interviewed off-site. I paid housekeepers \$25/hour. For non-English speaking people from Burma, I relied on connections made by my interpreters to friends they knew of who worked for UNC. In two cases, I recruited interview subjects through a group of public health students doing a fitness project with housekeepers. In two cases, I was connected to interview subjects at the recommendation of a staff member at UNC with close ties to the department.
- 14 open-ended interviews with a range of stake-holders with relationships to housekeepers, connections to current or past campus worker organizing efforts, and/or affiliation with local service providers. These included undergraduate

students who were current or past members of Student Action with Workers (SAW); current staff, some of whom self-identified as invested in organizing non-academic workers on campus; former housekeepers, one of whom was fired and in the process of contesting the terms of that dismissal; a local civil rights lawyer; and individuals working for non-profit service providers supporting people from Burma living in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Interviews took place on- and off-campus between June, 2014 and October, 2015.

As a result of a connection with a former UNC student with ties to both Student Action with Workers and the Department of Housekeeping's reorganization in 2005-2006, I was able to obtain a folder of documents that proved essential to my understanding of work practice in the department, enabling me to glimpse some of the behind-the-scenes discussions among department administrators during the department's reorganization in 2005. Documents include:

- The official "charter" document and meeting notes from the Department of Housekeeping's *(OS1) Evaluation Committee* meetings during 2005 and 2006²⁴
- Evaluation reports produced by ManageMen, Inc. in 2005 and 2006 assessing housekeeping efforts before and after piloting *(OS1)*TM in the Bioinformatics Building
- Housekeeping evaluation reports for Dey and Carroll Hall produced by Michael Berry, the "technical consultant" on the *(OS1)*TM *Evaluation Committee*

²⁴ "(OS1)TM" or "Operating System 1" is the name of the janitorial workforce organizing system that UNC currently uses in the majority of its facilities. I discuss the contours of the system at length in Chapters 3, 5, and 6.

- Training materials for (OS1)[™] produced by ManageMen, Inc. targeted to management and line housekeepers, including a set of materials with former head of Facilities Services' Jim Alty's personal notes in the margins.
- Employee surveys completed during the piloting of the (OS1)[™] program, completed by members of the *(OS1)[™] Evaluation Committee*
- Emails, memorandum and other communication among Alty, former Director of Housekeeping, Bill Burston, members of the Employee Forum, and members of the Facilities Services administration during the piloting and initial roll-out of the department's reorganized work systems

Employment and administrative management and policy data from two public records requests includes:

- A list of current employees working as groundskeepers and housekeepers, including names, age, gender, worksite assignment, position, salary, and date of hire.
- Portions of organizational charts for the Facilities Services, Housekeeping and Grounds Services Departments.
- Nearly 3,000 pages of documents detailing changes to UNC's grievance and sexual assault policies dating from 1990, the formation and dissolution of the Sexual Harassment Office, and all EO/ADA reporting. This includes copies of the actual policies; marked up versions of revisions before their final approval, some with notes about changes in the margins; internal emails and memorandum detailing those changes, including conversations with the North Carolina Office of Administrative

Hearings and Office of Human Resources; and internal communication between HR and members of the Employee Forum.

The above materials are central to my analysis in the following chapters and constitute the bulk of the information that I analyze in relation to this project. In addition, I searched for additional documentation about the operations of the housekeeping department as recorded in various sections of the University's official archival holdings and materials from UNC's *Carolina Collection*. The materials listed below are only those that I had photo-copied from the archives — a process that involved specifically tagging and ordering individual pages or folders to be scanned by staff librarians. The photo-copied documents include a mix of:

- Internal and external communication related to janitors, housekeepers, and groundskeepers dating from the mid-1960s to the present, including letters from department chairs, members of the surrounding community, and university administration.
- Internal communications about the operational expenses, services provided by, and eventual dissolution of the Laundry Services Department dating to the late 1960s and early 1970s.
- Letters about working conditions from janitors and housekeeping staff addressed to administrators charged with overseeing those staff.

In the end, the world of my data is only partially revealed by what follows. In large part, the process of doing interviews was difficult and, as I explained above, I am concerned that more specific inclusion in this document presents risks to those I might include, even within the constraints of my IRB protocol. More powerfully, it was the trove of documents about UNC's

actions as an employer, producer and organizer of social relations, and only partially visible institutional power that focused a great deal of my interest. The materials that I was able to obtain through personal contacts, public records requests, and archival exploration reveal a great deal about the way that UNC's actions as an employer strain its own definition of its public, institutional commitment to the ethical treatment of the diversity of communities central to the function – and dominance – of campus life.

CHAPTER 3: HOUSEKEEPING

A major challenge in my research has been my representation of the working experiences of housekeepers at UNC. Their work is central to my analysis, but the complexity of their working lives is overwhelming. In interviews, I heard stories about life in the department that frequently featured routine sexual and physical harassment, wage extortion by managers, experiences of racialized and ethnicized discrimination, and the repeated denial of legal workplace protections by direct supervisors, management, and university administrators. Because of this, I am concerned that their participation – or even unidentified representation – will create unwanted exposure to workplace retaliation, discrimination, and harm. Again and again, the department has shown itself capable of some of the egregious examples of worker mistreatment in the University as a whole (PRM, 2011).

On the one hand, I consider it naive, ignorant and ethically problematic to make any claims that my efforts herein will do anything to change their working lives. On the other, I feel compelled to share what I can as an indicator of the generosity that was showed me during interviews and fieldwork. Most of the housekeepers who spoke with me made some mention of the privileged position of students vis-a-vis an administration they often described as the source of unfair treatment. The University's nonacademic waged workers are some of its most precariously positioned staff, housekeepers especially so.

Given these conditions, it is quite difficult to obtain a clear picture of what is happening in the department in terms of the specifics of everyday work practice and the known challenges

experienced by housekeepers. Ample evidence points to serious and ongoing difficulties in a wide range of categories, from the design of the training systems used in the department to significant illegal activity (Baumann, 1994; Chapman, 2006; Courtright, 2013; Daily Tar Heel, 2015a/b; McSurely, 1993; Niss, 2012; PRM, 2011; Schwartz, 2011; UE 150, 1999; Waxman, 2012; Willard, 2013). My own fieldwork reveals the persistence of these difficulties in the present moment. But, who are housekeepers? What is housekeeping? What do housekeepers do at work? How are they trained? How do they spend their working hours? Below, I describe what I have been able to learn about the department's current staff and the basic organization of housekeeping work practices. First, though, I locate the production of housekeeping in the context of the institutionalization of social reproductive care work.

Everyday Practice, Social Reproduction, and the Wage

Ideas about cleanliness and hygiene are rendered material by inscribing porous boundaries between related terms: clean/dirty, inside/outside, pure/tainted, self/Other, human/nature, State/subject (Hawkins, 2006; Kaika, 2004b; Kristeva, 1982; Laporte, 2000 [1978]; Sundberg and Kaserman, 2007). At the scale of the body, cleanliness and hygiene connect the subject to its spatial extension in the world. As a locus of practice, the skin is not only contested cultural terrain, but a material and ontological lightning rod through which individuals are oriented to and by power, producing and produced by wide-reaching categories of social identity – race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. At the same time, hygiene and cleanliness organize systems of social reproduction in wide-ranging ways, impacting livelihood access, informing everyday behavior, and marking the literal and metaphorical boundaries of

acceptable practice in public and private space (Douglas, 1966; Federici, 2012; Schwartz-Cowan, 1983; Shove, 2003).

The emergence and proliferation of modern American cleanliness practices depends on socially- and structurally-embedded *labor* inequalities – the racialized, gendered, classed, usually precarious “dirty work” that makes everyday cleanliness possible in the first place (Bushman & Bushman, 1988; Glenn, 1992, 2006; Hoy, 1995). The unpaid work of being clean as an individual and the waged-work of making spaces clean for others highlights the contradictory, everyday demands of social reproduction, “the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life” (Katz, 2001, p. 711). If social reproduction is the “creation and recreation of people as cultural and social, as well as physical, beings” (Glenn, 1992, p. 4), hygiene norms and cleanliness practices bridge the gap between paid work and the unpaid labor that is necessary to survival. In systems of globalized capitalism, this social reproductive labor is often shunted to the side, despite the absolute necessity of *flesh* and inevitability of *mess* to the function of capital accumulation (Katz, 2001).

In the United States, and especially the US South, racialized connections between unpaid domestic social reproductive labor and the institutionalization of that labor are explicit (Duffy, 2007; Glymph, 2008). The social and economic value of what was once the work of “mother” or domestic “help” – for those with enough capital, class and race privilege – was recreated as janitorial and housekeeping work in commercial and institutional space, recapitulating its racialized and gendered origins (Duffy, 2007; Federici, 2006, 2010). This has long-ensured that the waged work of caring for, cleaning up after, and cooking for others is done by black and brown women and men with limited control over their working lives (Branch,

2010; Duffy, 2007; Glymph, 2008; Nakano Glenn, 1992). Connecting *individual practices of cleanliness* to the *systems of labor* that make those practices possible decenters the pre-given status of cleanliness, opening space for inquiry, revealing connections between mundane habits, waged work, and the racial, ethnic, gendered and classed dependencies of *institutional power*.

I focus on the overlap between the efforts of students and those of housekeepers, reflecting on both in terms of their relationship to broadly held ideas about hygiene, health and embodiment, with particular concern over their uneven articulation to institutional power. A major contribution of this project is invigorating the explanatory power of “dirty work” and the uneven distribution of social reproductive labor by focusing on the spatial and scalar complexities informing the relationship *between* the waged and unwaged work of being clean. Individual students mobilize body-oriented habits and technologies in quasi-private spaces. This is cleanliness as a material engagement with the body in terms of its social reproductive needs and individual understanding of a far-reaching cleanliness *Zeitgeist*. At the same time, sometimes in the very same spaces, housekeepers labor to make spaces clean for students. This is the invisible and low-waged nonacademic “dirty work” of more than 400 men and women in the UNC’s Department of Housekeeping.

Though the efforts of housekeepers make student cleanliness regimes practicable in any real sense, the non-overlap of their lives reveals a great deal about the connection between cleanliness and the predominance of certain forms of embodiment – that of students or white bodies, for example – over others – that of waged workers or black and brown bodies, for example. As an institutional power, UNC depends on the separation of these groups – despite

their intimate co-dependence – by creating conditions that exacerbate the uneven distribution of power in terms that I argue are distinctly racialized, ethnicized, sexualized, and gendered. Connecting individual cleanliness practices to the dirty work that makes them possible exposes the operation of these institutional contingencies.

A New Context for Housekeeping at UNC

Today, the UNC Chapel Hill Housekeeping Department looks considerably different than it did twenty years ago. At that time, the Housekeepers Association had successfully sued UNC for workplace discrimination, formed a union, and received more than a million dollars in back-wages (UE 150, 1998). The suit also required UNC administration to address specific mismanagement in the department, as well as acknowledge the work and importance of African American employees to the function of the university. Though the lawsuit was a major victory, the gains were temporary. As the university made efforts to mark the contributions of its black workers (see Brien 2015b), conditions in the department remained problematic despite the university's acknowledgment of wrong-doing.

Starting during the 2004-2005 academic year, UNC began the process of reorganizing the housekeeping department. It was a relatively familiar scenario in terms of the managerial adjustments required to maintain the operational efficacy of an R-1 research university. University departments at all levels are periodically required to assess their operations, both as an internal matter of organizational *housekeeping* and to meet the accountability demands of public university funding systems: the state legislature and Board of Governors charged with oversight of the university system and the state's voting citizenry. It was also, coincidentally, a period of time when former Chancellor Moeser's *Taskforce for a Better Workplace* had assessed

the effectiveness of the university grievance policy and reformulated its provisions in response to gaps, oversights, and perceived limitations (University Gazette, 2004).

The changes in the housekeeping department follow an important historical moment for the university's non-academic workers. Picking up a thread of strong labor organizing dating to the 1930s, culminating in the Lenoir Strike at the end of the 1960s, and jump-starting again the early 1980s, a consolidation of labor power in the housekeeping department had resulted in a number of workplace organizing gains addressing some of its more entrenched problems (Ashton, 2013; Baumann, 1993; Chapman, 2006; McSurely, 1993). Ten years following that historic lawsuit, the balance of power shifted under a new set of administrative mechanisms for organizing the department's more than 400 employees. Upon closer examination, the institutional reorganization of the department reveals not long-standing institutional attitudes toward non-academic workers, particularly the efforts of the black men and women in the housekeeping department. The changes that were put in place reveal a unique and complicated network of connections between local labor demands, recent industry-wide shifts in the so-called janitorial/building management sciences, and the retrenchment of the international division of labor. The work of being a housekeeper at UNC is defiantly local, fixed by the needs and built environment of UNC's campus and body politic. The housekeepers doing that work, however, are increasingly not.

Shifting Demographics on the Job²⁵

Today, UNC's Department of Housekeeping is the largest department in the state university system by number of staff (PRM, 2011). The department is part of the university's Facilities Services Unit, housed under the auspices of Facilities Operations, Planning and Design, a group of departments that also includes Building Services, Facilities Planning and Design, Ground Services, Energy Management, and Construction. These are the people who clean, replace lights, repair broken locks, fix and install boilers and air conditioning, maintain the brick-work snaking across campus, move furniture, and do countless other tasks necessary to everyday university life. The smooth functionality of campus requires far more than the celebrated knowledge-work of its student and faculty populations.

Maintaining the university campus is a large operation, requiring constant attention to 18 million square feet of building space in 300+ buildings on 4,000 acres of land, 700 acres of which are on UNC's main campus (Facilities Services, 2015).²⁶ Today, the housekeeping department has 400+ housekeepers, 33 crew leaders, 19 zone managers, four assistant directors, and one director. Operating costs hover around \$20 million a year. Their work is complicated by the diversity of buildings that must be cleaned as well as the administrative effort required to organize a large number of employees for 1st, 2nd and 3rd shifts across the entirety of UNC's campus. What is remarkable is that given their number, most people see very

²⁵ All employment data for the department's existing staff, including the name, age, date of hire, status (permanent/temporary), work zone assignment, salary and job title, was obtained by public records request (See Appendix IV). It was current as of April 22, 2015.

²⁶ Though the university publishes a range of on-line resources explaining the operations and services available through the department, the details, especially budgetary information, is harder to come by. For example, *all* of the links on the Facilities Services website to the department's annual reports – the last of which was published in 2013 – are broken.

little of the work of the unit, save large campus construction projects that disrupt building use or public walkway and road access.

Staff in the department have one of the following job titles: Building and Environmental Services Technicians, Crew Leaders, Housekeepers, Night Housekeepers, Housekeeping Managers, Janitors, OS1 Crew Leaders, Temporary Housekeepers, and Zone Managers. An overwhelming majority of the department's staff are Building and Environmental Services Technicians or Housekeepers, the so-called 'front-line'. Today, housekeepers apply on-line and are brought on as temporary employees, paid \$22,068.80. Temporary hires go through a probationary period before becoming permanent staff. This period can be as short as 6 months, but housekeepers who spoke to me frequently mentioned working as temporary staff for longer than a year and being forced to take furlough for a month over the summer before being "re-hired," a practice that exempts the university from obligation to providing additional employee benefits and limits access to certain provisions in the State Personnel Act to remediate problematic working environments (see Chapter 6).

As permanent staff, annual pay ranges for housekeepers from \$25,300 to slightly above \$29,000; housekeepers working third shift earn slightly more than those working 1st or 2nd shift. Crew Leaders – a position that was created with the institution of (OS1)[™] -- are housekeepers with an additional responsibility to distribute the chemicals and supplies housekeepers need to complete their daily work assignments. They work for an additional hour each day, 30 minutes at the start and close of their shifts, and are paid slightly more, \$29,775 to roughly \$32,000. Though there are hundreds of housekeepers, there are only 33 Crew Leaders currently on staff, each assigned to a specific areas of campus. The 19 Zone Managers earn \$42,551 for their

efforts and are charged with oversight of clusters of buildings – “zones” – and the staff within those zones, including Crew Leaders and front-line staff. The department’s four Assistant Directors each earn between \$53,000 and \$55,000.²⁷

Employees in the department are diverse, though the terms of that diversity have changed dramatically over the last 20 years, especially in the period after 2005. For example, at the time of the historic University-Housekeeping Agreement that emerged from the lawsuit filed on behalf of housekeepers for racial discrimination (UE 150, 1998), the department was predominantly comprised of African American women from the local area (McSurely, 1993; Chapman, 2006). As of 2011, non-English speaking men and women from Burma – including ethnic Burmese, Karen, Chin, Kachin, Rohingya and Mon -- made up nearly 40% of line housekeeping staff (PRM, 2011).²⁸ Their numbers have continued to grow. Since the mid-1990s, the gender of housekeepers has shifted from a department that was predominantly female, to one that is a mix of men and women (PRM, 2011). Today, housekeepers range in age from 21 to 71: 57 are aged 21-30; 115 are aged 31- 40; 137 are aged 41-50; 141 are aged 51-60; and the remaining 22 are between 61 and 71. In terms of tenure, the longest employed was hired in 1985, though it is very likely that the department is in a near constant process of hiring and training new staff.

²⁷ By way of categorically sloppy, though perhaps necessary, contrast, starting salary for an assistant professor position in the Department of Geography is \$72,000.

²⁸ It is important to note that though the PRM Consultant’s (2011) report is the most comprehensive available about the demographic make-up of staff, they are notably unspecific about the diversity of housekeepers, particularly the people from Burma employed in the department. The report collapses this ethnically and linguistically diverse group into the single category, “Burmese,” reproducing not only long-standing forms of racism that relegate the diversity of the populations of South, South East, and East Asia into monolithic categories, but one that is particularly problematic given the fractious history of the nation-state of Burma, where intra-ethnic and state-sponsored violence has displaced hundreds of thousands of individuals since the mid-20th century (see Scott, 2009; Steinberg, 2015).

Housekeepers and day porters are divided into one of 33 zones on campus, clusters of buildings organized by proximity, type and shift-time: a zone number is an indicator of a place as well as the time that housekeepers work. 1st shift housekeepers are predominantly focused on campus dormitories, starting their 8-hour shift at 7a.m. 2nd and 3rd shift housekeepers clean everything else, starting at 4p.m. and 11p.m., respectively. Their work is focused on libraries, office spaces, laboratories, classrooms, and UNC's extensive athletic facilities. The majority of the department's housekeeping staff work 2nd shift (20%) and 3rd shift (47%), and the majority of these shifts are staffed with non-English speaking housekeepers (PRM, 2011).

(OS1)TM and Specialization

Starting in 2004, UNC's Facilities Services Department reorganized the housekeeping department, purchasing a new workplace organizational program known as *Operating System 1* or (OS1)TM. Designed by Salt Lake City-based ManageMen, Inc., it guides the training of housekeepers at initial hire and, for the majority of the housekeepers in the department, specifically outlines their daily work practices. As soon as 2006, the university had dramatically changed the contours of the department, reorienting what had once been a place-specific focus – formerly known as “Zone Cleaning” – to one newly organized around *process* – (OS1)TM or “Team Cleaning”.

The dominant feature of (OS1)TM is the division of work by specialization. Instead of being charged with a particular area to clean, housekeepers were charged with the completion of a particular set of tasks as a member of three-person team. Teams work alongside a Crew Leader, a person who occupies the same rung in the institutional hierarchy, but has additional duties related to the distribution of chemicals and job cards at the start of the shift, and the

collection of anything that remains at shift's end. Crew Leaders work an hour more each shift, and thus are paid slightly more.²⁹

Each team in (OS1)TM has a specific set of specialist duties, a division of labor that means housekeepers spend two-week shifts doing one of three sets of tasks.³⁰ *Restroom Specialists* clean bathrooms, *Light Duty Specialists* dust and clean all surfaces and remove trash from bins, and *Utility Specialists* are charged with vacuuming, cleaning stairwells, and hauling collected trash to dumpsters. The latter position is a collapse of two roles – *Utility Specialist* and *Vacuum Specialist* – an interpretation of ManageMen's design of the system as it was instituted at UNC.

Employee surveys of the department, as well as emails solicited by the housekeeping department's (OS1)TM Evaluation Committee in 2005 revealed concern that the system would not only decrease control over the workday, but was designed to increase housekeepers' work load.³¹ Despite assurances to the contrary from management, it is revealing that the design of

²⁹ Conversations during fieldwork and PRM's (2011) analysis reveal tension between line housekeepers and Crew Leaders. PRM found that their training was insufficient to clarifying their role – *assisting* other housekeepers, as opposed to serving as a liaison between housekeepers and zone managers. Housekeepers with whom I spoke commented that Crew Leaders often acted as managers, or were thought to be working on behalf of Zone Managers, a point of frustration where the new job title has created what was perceived to be an unfair or uneven distribution of authority.

³⁰ Housekeepers learn about the specialist duties in their initial training, though the terms of the job are also explained in simplified form in the (OS1)TM *Field Guide*, a wallet-sized fold-out pamphlet that can be carried by housekeepers on the job (ManageMen, Inc, 2011). The Guide has a flow-chart for each specialist position, describing a specific order of work tasks. It also has a schematic ideal "room" illustrated to show housekeepers how to move through a space with the most efficiency. In a side-bar, the specific "functions" of the job are explained and the footer of each section lists the tools and chemicals that will be required.

³¹ Brenda Denzler, then a member of the Employee Forum, sent an email to David Brannigan, the Forum's chair at the time, explaining her reaction to a presentation by Jim Alty and a set of materials produced by ManageMen that had been provided to Employee Forum staff (Denzler, 2006). She offers 6 bullet points of "pros" and 5 pages of "cons" related to the potential of (OS1)TM. She mentions on-going challenges with backpack vacuum cleaners at UT Austin, Alty's previous employer. The backpack vacuum cleaners escape mention in PRM's (2011) report, but were mentioned on numerous occasions in both meetings with SAW and as a component of my own interviews. They are a flawed technology, the major challenge being the fact that despite their increased efficiency, they lack protective padding to prevent excessive heat transfer during use. Over the course of a two-week specialist shift, three different housekeepers mentioned the discomfort and pain from the amount of heat they produce, as well as from the noise. Notably, the current terms of UNC's grievance policy explicitly prevent staff from grieving the use of specific technology as "required" by a job (see Chapter 6 for more details). They are common points of contention. As Aguilar (2001) notes in his study of high-rise janitorial staff who had been forced to use backpack vacuum cleaners,

the system specified four-person teams, though UNC immediately relegated the same amount of work to three housekeepers. Furthermore, the training materials and training videos are entirely in English, despite the fact that UNC continues to hire significant numbers of non-English speaking men and women to work in the department. Of the 8 non-English speaking housekeepers I interviewed, only 3 mentioned access to an interpreter during training. PRM (2011) reinforces the ongoing weakness of departmental communication, mentioning a specific need for interpreters and language-specific materials in their recommendations (p. 47).

In addition to the specialist positions, housekeepers receive job cards at the start of each shift. These are the de facto recipe for the days' duties, including a set of times that indicate where a housekeeper should be at various points during their shift, but also specifying any additional cleaning that needs to be done that exceeds the specifications of their specialist position.³² 3 current staff and 1 former housekeeper explained during interviews that job cards

"They expressed concern about the way they looking with the vacuums on their backs. Some cleaners said they did not want to be viewed as 'freaks' or 'aliens' with those things harnessed on their backs" (255). I will spare you the literary theory analysis that would apply to the term "alien" in this context, spare marking its resonance to the demographic realities of the men and women who are frequently employed as janitors and housekeepers at UNC and across the sector.

³²The times are themselves based on a book published by the International Sanitary Supply Association called *612 Cleaning Times*, an update from the previous guide, *540 Cleaning Times* (ISSA, 2015). The book was originally assembled by John Walker, the founder of ManageMen, Inc. and is an industry-wide tool for economizing work practice. As the title indicates, it provides exact times for 612 different cleaning tasks, as well as a series of conversion tables that enable computation for chemicals, tools, and labor per task and square foot. The times are *dizzily* specific. Measurements are counted in seconds and miles per hour for workers as they crawl, walk and ride the equipment necessary to their jobs. Categories are divided by speed, type of room, or the material being cleaned. For example, time 215 specifies .60 minutes to clean "scale removal under toilet rim (heavy dark) w/ bowl brush and chemical descaler" (ISSA, 2015). Time 216, however, explains that "scale removal under toilet rim (heavy dark) w/ cone brush on sonic type machine and chemical descaler" should only take .50 minutes (ISSA, 2015, emphasis added). There are 119 different times related to "carpet care" and an additional 167 for "floor care" (ISSA, 2015). UNC does not take a stop-watch to employees to test their adherence to this manual, but this tool for measuring work output undergirds the organization of the (OS1)TM system and is used to specify the labor, tool and chemical supply needs for a given set of tasks and buildings as organizations are converting to its use. These are then used to determine staffing levels and the tasks delimited by job cards. As ManageMen claims on their website, "ISSA's 612 Cleaning Times is not a time motion study. It is designed to be an estimating guide. Most if these times could be improved after actual on-site productivity studies. This publication does not substitute for adequate training and properly operated equipment" (ManageMen, 2015). It is unclear what the result would be for workers if a booklet that specifies work tasks down to the fraction of a minute "could be improved" with "on-site productivity studies."

were used by their Zone Managers to retaliate against housekeepers who speak up about unfair work assignments. In one specific case, a Zone Manager repeatedly ignored the concerns of a housekeeper with a work-related injury and a notice from a UNC doctor explaining the limitations necessary to accommodate a serious back problem, assigning him the floor cleaning regime on his job card that had been the initial cause of his injury.

The job cards are emblematic of the effacement that is central to the effectiveness of (OS1)[™]. But, they also function in relation to the specific goals of the Facilities Operations, Planning and Design Department that includes Housekeeping. The regulation of work practice in the department is framed in service of institutional goals related a “safe, clean, functioning and picturesque campus” (Facilities Operations, 2015). But, the change to (OS1)[™] marks a foundational rearrangement of the work practices of housekeepers in terms of the organization of their day alongside a retrenchment of forms of workplace organization used in the lead-up to the Housekeeping Association lawsuit in the 1990s. Two key informants – one current and one former staff-member with significant ties to the department -- noted that the (OS1)[™] system looked very similar to the former “gang cleaning” system against which housekeepers organized, suing the university for endemic and long-standing workplace discrimination. It took nearly ten years for the gains from that organizing effort to slip away, but the institution of (OS1)[™] is a turning point from a period of relatively strong housekeeper power and workplace autonomy to a department that is — again — struggling with problems between management and front-line staff. This tension is more than merely inter-personal or a variation on the “one

bad apple” motif where structural violence is written-off as isolated, incidental, and remedied by existing human resource mechanisms. Not only are those HR mechanisms flawed, but the persistence of the problems speaks to considerably more foundational problems. The materials central to the janitorial “science” of (OS1)[™] reflect that tension, especially the training materials provided to the department’s management team that portray housekeepers in a considerably negative light (something I turn to in specific in Chapter 6).

(Re)training Staff, Recalibrating Workplace Difference

During the change to (OS1)[™], the department needed to re-train old employees and institute a new training system for new hires. I asked all of the housekeepers I spoke with about their training: how long did it take, where was it provided, what did it entail, what kinds of materials were involved. For those with long-term ties to the department, re-training marked a distinct change in work patterns and the end of a period of relative workplace autonomy. Housekeepers would no longer be in charge of entire sections of campus buildings on their own; they would work in three-person teams and their working days would be newly *timed*. For housekeepers with limited English skills or who did not speak English at all, training was a challenging source of workplace integration. Only some of the non-English speaking housekeepers with whom I spoke were provided interpreters during training. A few described asking other housekeepers to help them understand. One respondent, a Karen man, described going home to “study” printed materials and learn, a source of personal pride in terms of his language acquisition efforts. Some were unbothered, mentioning that the work was not difficult and thus the training relatively easy to understand, despite the language gap.

ManageMen, Inc. produces materials for both line-staff and managers, establishing a workplace organizing system that seeks to shore up inefficient variations in practice. The materials provided to line-staff and those provided to management overlap. But, like the difference between a student and teacher's edition of a textbook, the managerial marginalia pulls the curtain back. As I explain at length in Chapter 5, the science of hygienic risk prevention that is front-and-center in party-line discussions of the (OS1)[™] program's efficacy and importance to UNC institutional life is clearly a secondary concern to management. What is more relevant is not the terms of work practice set out by the program, but the efficiency of (OS1)[™] in redistributing workplace autonomy away from individual housekeepers in terms that housekeepers are themselves enacting. Doing the job "correctly" ensures that the productive potential of practicing otherwise is impossible.

Despite its totalizing competency based in the latest janitorial science, (OS1)[™] was put into practice on an incredibly diverse campus, in a widely-divergent set of built environments, and through the daily efforts of more than 400 housekeepers. Below, I turn to some of the lived realities of everyday work with a particular focus on housekeepers' responses to the shift to (OS1)[™].

From Manual to Management: Translating Taylorism

(OS1)[™]'s Taylorized utopianism prescribes an unevenly practiced ideal. In the first case, though it is more than ten years after it was first piloted, the university is still converting remaining buildings to the system.³³ It is likely that certain work areas will remain beyond its

³³ A day porter and long-time employee that spoke with me in November, 2015 mentioned that all of his non-OS1[™] equipment had been taken away without notice, indicating that "OS1 was coming" to his worksite with some frustration.

scope. In discussions with housekeepers, and tracking information from key informants, the university archives, and public records requests, it is clear that the system has dramatically reoriented the efforts of the department in ways that present unique difficulties in the department. For example, the redistribution of work away from specific areas to a focus on specific tasks has created an uneven bottle-necking of work practices, especially in buildings that require specific kinds of work in one particular area more than others, i.e. high numbers of bathrooms or large clinical practice spaces. All of the housekeepers who spoke with me complained specifically about this effect, often locating blame on co-workers for not completing their assigned job tasks. Many characterized that blame in terms of the race or ethnicity of the individual failing to do the work, revealing connections between the implementation of (OS1)[™] and the hardening of racial and ethnic tensions in the department.

Again, well before (OS1)[™], problems in the department were well-known, predating the lawsuit in the 1990s (see Baumann, 1993 and McSurely, 1993 for more on this history) and persisting in the aftermath of the lawsuit and well into the present (see PRM, 2011). Working as a component of UE-150s organizing efforts on campus in 2004, the head of the Employee Forum, David Brannigan, submitted a lengthy memo to the SPA Dispute Resolution Review Committee, compiling a list of problems with the policy. Between 1999 and 2003, 90 grievances were filed by Facilities Services employees, a group that includes both housekeepers and grounds keeping staff, though the former are far more numerous. Administrative Information Services (AIS) was the second most likely to file; employees in AIS filed only ten (10) in the same time period (Brannigan, 2004, p. 5). More than half — 53 — of the grievances in Facilities Services were for lack of just cause, an indication that workplace management systems were

perceived by employees to be, at the very least, unfair (Brannigan, 2004, p. 5). Brannigan's memo notes a range of issues: the uneven application of time limits during grievance processes, where the university has unlimited time to respond to grievances, but employees are held to strict deadlines; clear conflicts of interest, particularly around the use of internal legal support for grievants and the inability of employees to choose their own support people during the process; and, the fact that the grievance policy is being reviewed internally in a way that effectively excludes the safe and equitable participation of the university's lowest-paid, most precariously positioned staff (Branningan, 2004, p. 6-7). PRM's (2011) report reiterates all of these concerns 7 years later.

But, how do housekeepers themselves describe work and its challenges?

Job Card and Organizing Housekeeping Space-Times

In conversations, one of the most frequent points of critique for the housekeepers with whom I spoke was the uneven use and perceived-to-be unfair distribution of work tasks. This was discussed in general terms, but also in specific reference to the (OS1)[™] job cards. The cards describe additional work assigned to the specialist role for a given housekeeper, describing additional cleaning tasks for a work shift. In the training manuals for management provided by ManageMen, Inc. to the department's management team, the framework for the job cards is predominantly time management and the organization of work practice, not the purported benefits of the system, i.e. to produce hygienic, healthy buildings for the users who occupy them. In short, alongside the micro-specifics provided by the specialist positions in the program, the job cards ensure that nearly every minute of work time is pre-determined by the

(OS1)[™] system. As such, there was considerable frustration, confusion and dissent over their use.

At a basic level, job cards guide work practice. Linda, a housekeeper involved with the initial piloting of (OS1)[™], explained,

...depending on what my job card is, then I start on whatever the job card says we start with. We start with the public areas first because we can't go down the hallway where the students are and do the restrooms until after 9 o'clock until after our 9 o'clock break. That way you're not disturbing people while they are trying to get ready or while they're still trying to get up.

I find this noteworthy not because of the specificity of the card, but the way that it explicitly produces the invisibility of housekeeping work in relation to students. For first shift housekeepers, work practice is designed so that cleaning efforts do not interrupt students' days.

Margie, also hired during the initial piloting of (OS1)[™], explained the card in relationship to a similar organization of work routine, but also the amount of housekeepers assigned to clean a given dormitory:

MD: There's two of you in the building?

Margie: Mm hmm. Two of us in the building. So, we start immediately in the restrooms. Most of the times, the students are pretty much gone by the time we get there, because they're at classes. That's the majority of them. So, we hit the bathrooms. We have a schedule. We have a routine. We have a job card. The job card tells us not exactly where to be at exactly a time, but a roundabout timing. So, we start and each room, each bathroom if you're doing... there's two types of cleaning. Routine cleaning or deep scrub cleaning. Now, routine cleaning is cleaning everything. But, deep scrubbing that's when you pull out to do showers. Showers and everything. Everything.

MD: When you would switch spaces was that because of gaps? What accounts for the moving?

Margie: Because it's rotation. It's just mainly rotation, which is fair. Because some dorms have steps and some dorms have elevators. So, whatever supervisor at the time... it's called rotation. And I think it's better. Because you shouldn't get used to one area or you're ... you should be able to work anywhere with anybody.

Note the different understanding of the timing of the restroom cleaning. Here, they are cleaned “immediately” according to the scheduled routine, putting her in the restrooms as early as 7a.m., which would be earlier than Linda’s own recollection that the restrooms are to be left until after 9a.m.: practice makes imperfect. In addition, her comment that “you should be able to work anywhere with anybody” speaks to two things. On the one hand, it reflects what was her heartfelt attitude about being a member of a group of staff dedicated to service at the university. In our conversation, she spoke highly of her care for the students in the buildings where she worked, mentioning casual conversations, longer-term acquaintances, and student experience as a motivation for her work. On the other, it reflects one of the major changes brought by the (OS1)[™] system. Housekeepers were no longer charged with cleaning a specific area. Instead, their jobs became task specific, replacing what was a work-based pride of place over a particular space on campus with a work routine organized around a set of tasks. Her comments reflect the *dissonant* confluence of the university’s efforts to encourage housekeepers to take pride in their work with a system that discourages any place-based specificity to that pride.

As Ma Pyone Cho explains, the job cards in her work site have been used to assign additional work duties to her that were previously the responsibility of her crew leader,

The most difficult part would be when... we used to get job cards, in the job cards, the description would say I had to work, check the toilets, if the toilet paper is missing, I have to put it back. And then clean the fiber cloth and wash them and then put the supplies... restock the supplies and all and clean the entrance. The classroom entrance. All of those were my job card duties. Job cards that would describe my responsibilities. But, lately, the second shift crew leader asked me to do extra work, the work he was supposed to do.

She continued that she felt she had limited power to refuse the extra work or risk being written-up for not doing her job.

Thomas, a day porter whose work site is currently not included in the (OS1)[™] system was explicit about the disciplinary messaging undergirding the changes. As he explained,

From my understanding... (OS1)[™]... how it is supposed to work... it's like you're supposed to go in and like... if you come in and work the first part of the week, you might be assigned to do the bathrooms for the whole week. Then, the following week, they switch you over to maybe vacuuming the whole week. Then, the next week, they switch you over to doing something else. From there point of view, they say that keeps you from getting too familiar with one... with one working thing to the point you can hide. They say it keeps you from hiding! I don't understand that.

MD: Hiding on the job? Literally?

That's what I was told!

During our conversation, Thomas also mentioned former Facilities Services Director Jim Alty's history at UT Austin with the program and his short-tenure at Facilities Services director in terms of the potential challenges in the program at UNC:

I heard that (OS1)[™]... the guy that brought it to the university, he had come from Texas... They said it didn't work down there too danged good, but he brought it here and introduced it. And now he's gone. So, he's not even here to oversee how it's going to work here. I don't see it working too good.

Denise also works outside of the metrics of the (OS1)[™] system, doing contract-based work in UNC-affiliate programs that are housed on or adjacent to campus. She is notably relieved to not be working under the auspices of (OS1)[™]:

I go in there [to the Cheek Clark Building] and punch in. I sit and they tell me what to do. I know, I've got this to do. You see? When I was in the [Team/OS1[™]] Cleaning, you was in one building. One person pulled trash for a whole week. One person vacuumed. And it was kind of hard. Because most people didn't understand how to do the job. When they first done it, they didn't really know what they was doing neither when they was training us. So, a whole lot of people have said, things have gotten a little better. But, I don't know. I'm glad I got out.

On multiple occasions during our conversation, she mentioned the difficulty of the repetitive focus of work practice under (OS1)[™], framing her comments in terms of the department management's imperfect training efforts. She continued,

...like I said, people didn't understand how to do it. Okay. One week, you might be the utility person, which takes... go get the trash, take it out. For a week. Next week, you might have to clean the bathrooms. And just think if you're in a building with 8 bathrooms. You got to start from the top and come all the way down. ... You do it for one week. One person. Say you had to vacuum. You had to start from the top and come all the way down. Can you imagine you're in a building with 8 floors? How many little cubicles they have in them buildings? The offices?

I discuss the specific terms of (OS1)[™] in Chapters 5 and 6, elaborating more on the specific effects the system has had on housekeeping work practice. Like Ma Pyone Cho, Denise, Margie, Thomas and Linda, the perspectives of housekeepers about the system are varied. Some housekeepers were unbothered by the program, though most of those with whom I spoke, as well as the group of housekeepers who met with SAW, shared concerns about the uneven distribution of work tasks that the system has created.

In the end, the diversity of housekeeping experience with (OS1)[™] -- as a pillar of team-building or deleterious Taylorization, as objectifying practice or disciplinary regime -- does not coalesce into a single narrative through which housekeepers can collectively identify with widely-shared work-place challenges. Even though other analyses of the department (and this project) indicate the persistence of those challenges, the atomization made possible by (OS1)[™] align with other institutional measures to effectively prevent housekeepers from using the experience of the program as a means for creating change, barring a revolutionary work stoppage or collective walk out. This is not to argue for the futility of resistance, but to claim that the system as currently in place renders the potential of collective organizing to change the

current scope of work practices difficult, if not explicitly outside the bounds of the university's own grievance policy (see Chapter 6 for a more in-depth analysis of the grievance policy).

Category Collapse: Sexuality, Race and Ethnicity on the Job

Before turning to my interviews with students, I want to mark a point of engagement that has informed my research efforts from the start. The organization of the housekeeping department at UNC is not independent of macro-economic and socio-cultural forces that structure “dirty” social reproductive labor regimes, writ-large. In particular, the connection between the low-waged and exploited work of African American women and their mistreatment by the university is clear.³⁴ But, to stop here would grant insufficient explanatory power to the current state of affairs.

Even before going “into the field,” I heard about the challenges experienced by “the Burmese housekeepers” on UNC’s campus. I use the scare quotes to indicate the short-hand of others, including the university-hired management consultants brought in to analyze — as opposed to reproduce — the interpersonal, racial and ethnic tensions in the department. Today, the majority of the department’s non-English speaking staff are from Burma or adjacent nations in Southeast Asia, primarily Thailand and Malaysia. But, even this description simplifies what are very complex relationships to a fractured nation-state, the range of trajectories that brought these men and women to the local community, and the university’s own ability to

³⁴ Baumann’s (1993) description of his involvement with the Housekeepers’ Association in the early 1990s lays the groundwork for the employment discrimination lawsuit that culminated in 1996. McSurely’s (1994) archival research traces more than 60+ years of active resistance by the university’s janitors and housekeepers, with particular attention to the African American women that had long constituted the majority of the department. Chapman’s (2006) dissertation project contextualizes the history of black struggle for autonomy, respect, and livelihood in the US South and US more generally, drawing connections between the labor activism of UNC’s black employees especially food service workers, and broader social movements addressing systemic structural racism.

accurately assess the demographics of its staff, let alone building meaningful connections between the unique life experiences of their employees and the specific work-related accommodations those experiences may engender.³⁵

I heard from housekeepers who had spent their entire lives living in refugee camps in Thailand. Others fled Burma in the late 1980s or early 1990s for Malaysia, often spending time in prison there for being stateless and undocumented. Some spent time in other US cities before coming to the Chapel Hill or Carrboro. They do not all identify as Burmese, though “Burmese” is a commonly used catch-all, a well-intentioned “epistemic violence” (Spivak, can The subaltern). I spoke with individuals who described themselves as Karen, Chin, Ka-Chin, and “ethnic” Burmese as a way of specifying their relationship to a particular community of individuals, or a specific geographical area, or both. Some referred to their home country as Myanmar, others Burma, others made no mention of the state at all.

Over the course of two long conversations with Ma Pyone Cho, ideas about the nation-state, the identity of individuals from the region, and conditions of workplace exploitation merged. She highlighted the connection between language ability, the importance of “Burmese housekeepers” to the university as workers, and systemic mistreatment:

Actually, UNC has to rely on us as workers. And as workers, we rely on our employers. That's how business runs. But, it's not like... This place, it doesn't happen like that. We understand that we come from different countries and have to be here and that the language is not our own language... our mother tongue. So, we have problems with the language. But, now, if we don't speak properly and we don't understand, they laugh at us. That's one of the discriminations that I feel. But, the previous supervisor, they never laugh at us. But, just ask if we understand. They try to make us speak. They try to

³⁵ More than two years ago, a local refugee support organization was invited in to do a cultural sensitivity training for housekeepers, Zone Managers and department leadership to directly address the experience of cultural difference in a department with so many women and men from Burma. According to the trainer, the people doing the training were impressed with the university's pro-active stance and declared sensitivity to the connection between cultural and work practice. They have yet to be invited back, despite reaching out to do so.

understand us. But, not now. The supervisor and the crew leader, they are the same. They laugh at us. And then they don't treat us properly.

She returned to the topic later in our conversation, clicking her pen rapidly as she spoke.

Her comments situate her identification with her own migration from Burma and her language ability to her treatment by her supervisors:

I'm really grateful that we are in this country, but sometimes I'm discouraged because at work, how I've been treated by supervisors... is like an animal. Don't talk back! Whenever we talk to you, you just listen! That kind of manner... we have been treated. Even a director said to me, "I don't come to your house and knock on the door and ask you to come in and work for us. You only came to our door and asked us for the job, so you'd better listen to whatever we say." Something like that. They treat us badly. So, that's the part I don't like... There's one thing. They always take advantage of us knowing that we don't speak the language properly. We have a language barrier problem so... [...] They themselves... the supervisors... they speak out, "With a language barrier like this, you can't find a better job. You can't find a job and get this much pay and work, so this is a good job for you." That's what they say...

She is explicit about the connection between her status as a refugee and her mistreatment, in this case noting an instance of the uneven distribution of work tasks in contravention of the department's standards. After describing being forced to do the work of the Crew Leader in her zone, I asked her why she thought it was happening and she explained,

Because I'm from Myanmar, they know that I will not say "no" to them. So, working as a day porter, I feel so ... congested... working is congested. I have to fear the day supervisor and the evening supervisor as well. I'm in-between. In-between. I answer to these two people.

In our conversation, the experience of being "in-between" extended far beyond the job. It was both a source of her passion for making change at UNC as much as a source of exhaustion at how unnecessary the problems she experienced felt in relation to her own life-history.

It was not just non-English speaking housekeepers who expressed opinions in terms of their ethnicization and the abuse they experienced. Denise recalled the period when “the Burmese” were first being hired – roughly 2006 – in dark comic reference to the university’s racist ideas about longer-term African American staff. As she explained, “they take advantage of them because they come to work, and we don’t. (Laughs). That’s what they say... They say we are lazy and they are not.” Far from anomalous, her short-hand grouping of staff by stereotypical commitment to work is reflected in the university’s organization of the department, a discussion I turn to in earnest in Chapter 6.

In part, my concern is that the system of work organization hyper-particularizes everyday work practice in ways that reify racial and ethnic division at the same time as changes to the official grievance policy have decreased access to the university systems designed to remediate workplace wrong-doing and harm. As Gam Jar explained,

There is no use to complaining. Before people used to talk about it, but it’s no use. Since they are born here in this country, they are citizens here, they are also permanent staff. So, it’s no use. Before we used to do house cleaning. That’s why they changed this pattern to OS1. Among the two Asians, they will include one black because they cannot ask them to do the work. They are difficult to ask to do the work properly. When they do their job, it’s still very dirty. Among the Asians, it’s like one black, one black, so we have to work more.

Gam Jar’s frank and racist assessment of the efforts of his black co-workers is emblematic of the tensions that are now built-in to the organization of the department. In conversations with current and former housekeepers, the failures of (OS1)[™] were often scripted in racial or ethnicized terms. But, in addition to a reliance on racial or ethnic stereotype, the efforts or lack therein of co-workers were also specified in terms of the specific work practice regime in place in the department. In this example, questions of belonging – as a

citizen, as a worker deserving of fair treatment, as a member of a local community – are figured through particular relationships to (OS1)[™], including the distribution of job cards, their use by managers to relate against subordinate staff, or assumptions made by housekeepers about other housekeepers in relation to the organization of the working day.

Clean Citizenship, “Race” and Ethnicity at UNC

For low-skill nonacademic work like housekeeping, ideas about race, gender and “productive” citizenship often create an uneven hierarchy of risk and reward meted out in the minutiae of the working day. Of particular relevance at UNC is the overlap between the shifting demographics of housekeepers, the reorganization of work practice to increasingly atomized specialization, and the production of social difference connected to an uneven distribution of workplace benefit and harm. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2002) argues, though constructions of citizenship flow from federal policy and constitutional statute, they are lived at considerably closer scales. If one must work to survive and if citizenship and labor are interpenetrating terms, as Nakano Glenn claims, then it is “localized, often face-to-face practices that determine whether people have or don’t have substantive as opposed to purely formal rights” (2002, p. 2).

For the housekeepers that talked with me, the connection between citizenship and work is experienced in both explicit and implicit terms, as Ma Pyo Chone and Gam Jar illustrate above. Despite the present-tense of these connections, it is essential to contextualize this experience in terms of the commitments of the racial state to the systemic depletion of racialized – and ethnicized – populations, especially through the organization of waged work (Omi & Winant, 1994). In this case, the experience of newly *ethnicized* difference marks a rearticulation of previously racialized norms, an “investment of *already present* ideas and

knowledge with new meanings” (Omi & Winant, 1994; cited in Nakano Glenn, 2006, p.15, emphasis mine). In the housekeeping department, old ideas connecting the devalued labor of local African American men and women to the “dirty work” of housekeeping are brought to bear on a new, and growing, group of ethnicized workers. Contested ideas about ethnicity, race and gender are lived through the conditions of the working day, reflecting the dissipated, micro-political means through which the racial state constitutes uneven distributions of power.

In speaking with housekeepers, it is clear that the tensions that pre-dated the institution of the (OS1)[™] program have been reanimated by the changing demographic conditions in the department. The opacity of the challenging day-to-day experiences of housekeepers results not just from racialized and ethnicized constructions of personhood, but the micro-specificity of work practice. (OS1)[™], according to its progenitors, is defiantly proud Taylorism, a system that effaces the subjective experience of housekeepers *by design* (see Walker, 2005 and Chapter 6). This disarticulation between ideal work practice and housekeepers’ subjective experiences is central the value (OS1)[™] seeks to create for the university. Today, the organization of housekeeping work ensures housekeepers’ invisibility to student life *and* insists that their subjective experience is irrelevant to the value their work produces for the university as a whole.

As Katherine McKittrick explains, “if *who* we see is tied with with *where* we see through truthful, commonsensical narratives, then the placement of subaltern bodies deceptively hardens spatial binaries, in turn suggesting that some bodies belong, some bodies do not belong, and some bodies are out of place” (2006, p. XV). In this example, the commonsensical narrative is that the body is or can be clean. But, bodies are only ever aspirationally clean.

Cleanliness is ideological. The terms of practice always prefigure the inevitability of dirtiness, setting the stage for the intensification of practice and the hardening of norms. That cleanliness practices and hygiene norms produce value is not in question; that cleanliness practices and hygiene norms produce anything that can be secured as a broadly experienced or universal benefit – even to public health – is. As the shift to (OS1)[™] and the retrenchment of racial and ethnic divisions in the department reveal, the terms through which the value of cleanliness practice and hygiene norms are distributed is uneven *by design*, dividing housekeepers from the communities their labor benefits just as they divide housekeepers in and among themselves.

Work practice adds a dimension to McKittrick's spatial/racial binary such that what a housekeeper is doing – vacuuming, taking out the trash, scrubbing shower tile -- conditions where that housekeeper might be *seen*, and by *whom*. With (OS1)[™] -- and arguably well before then – assumptions about race, ethnicity and, newly, *citizenship* are being connected to work practices themselves: the racialized *who* of housekeeping practice has become a racialized, ethnicized and spatialized *how* of housekeeping practice. Perceptions about *how* housekeepers work are tied up with the racial/spatial binaries informing their belonging in university spaces.

Parsing the production of cleanliness in an institutional space like UNC's campus is particularly effective in tracing connections between work, space, and social difference. My focus above has been on the nuts-and-bolts of housekeeping practice, especially as the university's housekeeping staff are as invisible as they are ubiquitous. My goal has been to set up some of the working conditions that undergird my other empirical analyses, explaining how

the production of cleanliness depends on the exploitation of particular employees, the terms of which are known, explicit, and currently in place at UNC.

Key to my understanding is the *connectivity* between students, housekeepers and UNC as an institution. These connections are necessary to and hidden by ideas about cleanliness. What follows is my attempt at exploring the connectivity of cleanliness central to campus life, employment and power. My hope is to use cleanliness as a lens for understanding how “power is lodged in taken-for-granted assumptions and practices, takes forms that do not involve force of threat of force, and occurs in dispersed locations” (Nakano Glenn, 2002, p. 16). Students are an important part of this equation. My next chapter explores their understanding of cleanliness in the context of their entitlement to university space and articulation to the work practices of housekeepers.

CHAPTER 4: OBSESSION, BELONGING AND THE AESTHETICS OF EVERYDAY CLEANLINESS PRACTICE

Introduction

There is no 'real world' ...there [are] a multiplicity of folds in the sensory fabric of the common, folds in which outside and inside take on a multiplicity of shifting forms, in which the topography of what is 'in' and what is 'out' are continually criss-crossed and displaced by the aesthetics of politics and the politics of aesthetics.

Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus*, 2010, p. 148

In this chapter, I explore the portion of my research focused on the everyday cleanliness and hygiene routines of students living in UNC's dormitories. Interviewing students was a highlight of my project. Two things were rewarding and surprising. First, I had an inkling that students would reveal more than I had asked, that I would be able to convince them to “fess up” when it came to their daily hygienic micro-obsessions. From my own experience and what I have heard from friends, family, and strangers alike, I suspected there would be a considerable amount of labyrinthine thought, not all of it rational, informing their ideas and practices. This proved true. Being clean is demanding. Though it makes senses, central to the experience of sensory ordering in everyday life, it does not always make sense, per se.³⁶ Why is Old Spice™ deodorant so evocative for men and women alike? How is it that an errant pubic hair half hidden behind a toilet bowl presents revulsion to the point of nausea? Second, the way students spoke of their behavior in the context of life on campus presented nuanced and

³⁶ As I will elaborate, cleanliness practices skirt the line between rational thought – making sense – and the production of sensory experience in the everyday world – the affective experience of the body's senses of touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing.

tangled ideas informing genuine, passionate and often anxious feelings of belonging — to communities of friends, to their own ideas of self, and to the university they temporarily know as a kind of home-space. A primary objective of this project has been to establish stronger and more visible ties between the first idea — the obsessive nature of cleanliness, despite its techno-social peculiarities — and the second — the terms of everyday belonging mediated by the materialities of the very demanding human body. I argue that the embodied demands of cleanliness practices and hygiene norms are foundational to a politicized aesthetics of everyday being, a system of often hidden, though no less ubiquitous and demanding, evaluations of everyday embodiment that seek dominance and control through particular orderings of sensory worlds.

Terms of Engagement: Obsession, belonging and aesthetic demands

I use the term “aesthetic demand” or “aesthetic conditioning” to describe the social force and collective expectations of modern embodiment: the body *should* be clean, the porcelain *should* be white, the skin *should* be smooth. As systems with interpellative power, these expectations order the sensory experience of the body within and in resistance to existing social relations. For example, cleanliness is not just about being dirt-free, it is about the production of *whiteness* as an unmarked norm (Ashenberg, 2007; Babb, 1998; Dyer, 1997). These norms are contested, though they occupy a hegemonic position in the modern industrial West. Below, I focus on the aesthetic demands that produce the cleanliness of student bodies on UNC’s campus. The myriad ways in which bodies *should* and often fail to be clean mark the boundaries of hegemonic ideas about cleanliness. That bodies so often fail does not displace that hegemony. Instead, these failures, and the organization of student practice around the

positive potential of cleanliness practice, specify the spatial, socio-economic and ethical dependencies of those practices. They inform the possibility of social belonging. I trace some of the contours of the demarcations below with particular attention to their limits, the places where failed productions of cleanliness and the possibility of belonging sit in dialectical tension with each other.

The fragile conditionality of cleanliness fuels the obsessive regularity and intensity of student practices. Cleanliness conditions the everyday nature(s) of power through the regularity of practice, a collective and *obsessive* consensus. Cleanliness practices happen every day lest individuals risk failing to meet normative expectations of the body's preternatural cleanliness. This is not about public or personal health, but the social acceptance of a set of aesthetic demands connecting normative embodiment to everyday practice.³⁷ Clean hair *demands* x set of practices; clean skin *requires* y set of practices.

Being clean requires practice. The resulting embodiments are not about the productive presence of cleanliness, but the production of invisibility, of *absence*. Being dirt-free, germ-free, white, pure is about ascension to culturally produced unmarked norms. It is through this absence that the *why* of cleanliness is framed as a beneficial status quo: cleanliness is good because it marks the absence of dirt, germs, or any number of pathologized *Others*. If the

³⁷ In *The Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre talks about the importance of transformation to understand the power of everyday life, explaining "To study everyday life and to use that study as the guideline for gaining knowledge of modernity is to search for whatever has the potential to be metamorphosed and to follow the decisive stages or moments of this potential metamorphosis through: it is to understand the real by seeing it in terms of what is possible, as an implication of what is possible. For 'man will be an everyday being or he will not be at all.'" (pp. 98-99, Cited in Loftus 2012, p. 115). Though I am more directly concerned with politicizing the normative demands of cleanliness in my work, revealing their socio-cultural, material, and political dependencies, it is perhaps also important to note that it is in the transformation of the body from dirty to clean that the hope of belonging takes root. It is here that the 'would that we could be' aspirations of cleanliness teach bodies that the possibility of care is conditioned by the successful navigation and adoption of normative forms of embodiment.

cultural consensus is that the body is or should be clean, deviations from that norm are not only a threat to public health, however minor, but mark the potential for exclusion from social life. The question of hygiene falls away, replaced by aesthetic determinations of who belongs and who does not. This is biopolitics in action: cleanliness practices and hygiene norms “[act] to affect the way in which individuals *conduct themselves*” (Burchell, 1996, 20, emphasis in original). It is their *aesthetic* demands that make them especially “dense transfer points of power” (Foucault, 1990 [1978], p. 100).

The obsessive terms of practice emerge from the body’s failures to be clean in an aesthetic regime structured by hygienic normativity. In a world where an impossible racialized, gendered and classed purity is the norm, attempts to shore up a consolidated, “modern” subject position become especially precarious (pace Butler, 2006).³⁸ People obsess over their hair, or the smell of their bodies, or their ill-mannered suite-mates because having a clean body *mediates* the possibility of belonging. Belonging, then, is as tenuous a state of being as cleanliness. I use obsession not to cast aspersions on the inevitable failure of the body to make

³⁸ In *Precarious Life* (2006), Butler outlines the conditions for a more progressive, inclusive politics to address the common experience of violence and vulnerability. As she explains, “the fact of enormous suffering does not warrant revenge or legitimate violence, but must be mobilized in the service of a politics that seeks to diminish suffering universally, that seeks to recognize the sanctity of life, of all lives” (104). She is interested in exploring the “framing” of what is politically possible, probable, or practiced. This is, in part, about controlling an Arendtian “sphere of appearance” in an effort “to establish what will count as reality, and what will not” (xx): who counts as viable subjects, what losses are grievable, how do we constitute sensible evidence, guilt, culpability, responsibility, and politically legible or meaningful speech. She criticizes a political field that has enabled us to “become senseless” to the suffering of others (xvii). If violence – or, as I would like to argue, the unevenly distributed productions of the body in everyday life – reveals a vulnerability to the ways in which we are “as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another” (27), how do we respond in ways that do not simply recreate the conditions out of which that violence first emerged? For Butler, we are “attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure” (20). Recognition of this interdependence, both through discursive formulations and in political praxis, reorients the political field. She asks: “Is there a way in which the place of the body, and the way in which it disposes us outside ourselves or sets us beside ourselves, opens up another kind of normative aspiration within the field of politics?” (26). For her, we cannot understand our own precariousness without “understanding the precariousness of the Other” (134). But, to understand this, we must question, deconstruct and decenter existing dominant forms of representation and the political subjects and violences they enable or disallow.

the grade. The Sisyphean terms of the game are well-known, but showering is not evidence of false consciousness. Instead, I invoke obsession to mark the intense regularity and focus of everyday cleanliness practice. Students describe a wide array of routines that are well within the bounds of social acceptability. What is notable is their *unmarked* ubiquity. Aesthetic demands are normalized in their regularity. This has a depoliticizing effect: bodies are expected to be clean therefore cleanliness is a fact of daily life, not a political or ethical project. This aesthetic conditioning disguises cleanliness as an innocent component of an always-already beneficial status quo. It is through daily hygienic worry that specific presentations of the body condition the possibility of belonging in everyday life by excluding the people and things that threaten the aesthetic condition of the cleanliness status quo.

Clean, hygienic, neat, fresh-smelling, and sweat-free. These terms are shared, but unique to individual experience. They can also be contextualized in aesthetic terms: clean/white, hygienic/invisible, neat/smooth, fresh-smelling/pleasant, sweat-free/dry. As a type of aesthetic demand, cleanliness practices and hygienic norms shed their innocence, revealing expectations of everyday embodiment as powerful arbiters of social identity. As a type of everyday aesthetics, cleanliness has tendencies, general directions of expected movement that inform the terms of everyday embodiment. These aesthetic characterizations connect what happens in the bathroom to the differential distribution of power in everyday life.

In a general sense, the “great deodorizing campaign” of late modern capitalism serves a type of social confinement against which the body must defend itself, or be subsumed (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]). Today, behind the bathroom door, in the semi-privacy of dormitory suites and the fleeting reflections of plate-glass storefronts, particular individuals and particular

kinds of bodies are pulled, pushed and prodded into forms of hygienic embodiment that do little to serve physical health and much by way of opening the body to the pernicious effects of gendered, racialized and classed social division. This is to say nothing of the systems of commodification, accumulation, and abstraction that follow-on. At the same time, cleanliness hides its own effects. It is an absent presence — *dirt-free, germ-free, grease-free* — hiding the work involved.

And herein is the problem.

The expectation to be clean alongside the invisibility of the effort involved creates a substitution. A single strand of hair disrupts a visual assessment of a sink bowl or toilet seat, marking the failure of a roommate to implied or explicit social norms about shared space and hygiene. The cleanliness of a toilet – free of urine stains, shit, used tampons, vomit or last week’s leftovers – indicates the labor of an unseen housekeeper, revealing the aesthetic mechanisms through which cleanliness produces and corrals the terms of normative embodiment by appropriating certain forms of *labor*. With cleanliness, the production of gender, class, race, and place-based social identities requires not only specific habits, but aesthetic evaluations of the embodiments those habits require. The quiet mobility of cleanliness norms in relation to these aesthetic assessments makes their specific interrelations difficult to pin down. Cleanliness practices, though appearing fixed by the hyper-dominance of their standardization, are fragile, easily dislocated, and threatened by all manner of social, spatial and virtual others.

Shared worry consolidates norms, even if it can never quite stabilize the suite of cleanliness practices common to everyday practice. In the capital “M” estimations of

modernity, bodies are *always* both dirty and clean and thus must practice to avoid failure. That practice effects an ordering of the sensory world, creating systems of value for particular commodities, built environments, institutional forms, social expectations, and subjective desires in clean or hygienic terms. Cleanliness is not just the thing-y affair that is the prototypical morning routine, but a network of human and more-than-human things through which social identities arise as objects of particular kinds of hygienic – and, in this case, institutional -- focus. In the micro-acts of showering, shaving, toileting and washing their faces, students know and change their physical bodies to their interconnected social and psychic selves, laboring against the contractual obligations of an idea — the body is clean — with particular social markers: whiteness, fresh-scents, neat clothing, grease-free hair, etc. It is time consuming work and the body always rebels, pushing back against the terms of engagement in decidedly messy ways (Longhurst, 2001). It is no wonder that individual experiences of belonging can feel precarious, fleeting, and contingent. There are a thousand ways the body's irreducible difference, the specificity of embodied subjectivity, sets people apart. As a type of everyday aesthetics, cleanliness practices enroll and discipline the body, insisting that the potential separation this difference creates can be eliminated through practice. It is a false promise the effects of which clarify the ethical and political contingencies of what is going on behind the bathroom door.

Making the body clean happens in seclusion and remains largely beyond the bounds of polite discussion. But, the way bodies look, smell, and feel is central to individual fittedness to a larger, public, body politic; to friends, family and loved ones; to the campus communities chosen by students, and those to which students are placed without consent. This is cleanliness

habitus: half-conscious and affective modes of enacting belonging to effect social differentiation (pace Bourdieu, 1984). Though often framed in terms of individual desire, the responses of students during interviews reveal a shared hierarchy of aesthetic value mediated by broadly-held cleanliness norms. These aesthetics guide individual subjectivities just as they justify the disciplinary treatment of housekeepers by the university that I turn to in chapters 5 and 6. My goal here is to trace some of the discursive and material mechanisms that reveal the aesthetic character of cleanliness regimes. Doing so clarifies not only the sensory dependencies of embodied belonging, but the backstop of expectations against which students study into adulthood with their bodies as much as their minds.³⁹

The chapter proceeds in two parts. First, I frame my discussion as an exploration of the aesthetics of political life, using the work of Jacques Rancière and Mustafa Dikeç. Second, I present the responses of students from semi-structured interviews undertaken during fieldwork (See Appendix I for the original set of interview questions). During the course of interviews, I asked students to rank the relative cleanliness of the bathroom plumbing — the sink, shower, toilet, floor and mirror — and provide an explanation as to their rationale. I also trace their wide-ranging concern with hair in the context of the gendering of cleanliness practice as it emerges on campus.⁴⁰ Though these snapshots reflect small pieces of larger

³⁹ Of course, I do not mistake a pat turn of phrase here as ignorance of the complex of critical feminist and post-humanist theory – Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Grosz, Bruno Latour, Sarah Whatmore – that makes hay of the body/mind distinction. Here, I refer to the work of the “mind” in terms of the ideology of campus life for students, not the theoretical or metaphysical possibilities presented by post-Cartesian frameworks for understanding the subject or the construction of agency.

⁴⁰ I interviewed far more female (23) than male (5) students. But, their rationale as to the gendering of cleanliness expectations and their ideas about the uneven participation rate say considerably more than reflecting the uneven gender split for the student body as a whole; 60% of undergraduates are women.

conversations, they were central to student anxieties and emblematic of their conceptual frameworks for understanding the demands of cleanliness practices in their everyday lives.

Making Clean Politics: Aesthetic Hierarchy and Everyday Cleanliness

The what, when, where and how of being clean depend on the sights, scents, sounds and physical feelings through which bodies become subjects. It is not just that a person washes their hair, or applies deodorant, or cleans a toilet. Those engagements have specific sensory indicators: organic mango leave-in conditioner for curl and bounce, facial scrubs with “coconut husks and a scent of the ocean breeze”, the evocative eyeball-sting of a toilet doused in bleach. Understanding the importance of cleanliness to everyday life involves not only understanding the utility of a given suite of practices and norms, but the aesthetic characteristics that establish their desirability or effectiveness.

After Rancière (2010), I argue that ideas about and practices of cleanliness and hygiene inform common hierarchies of meaning and value organizing and dividing sensory worlds, what he terms an *aesthetics of politics*. Cleanliness not only corrals the material transgressions of the body in terms of broad notions of public health and hygienic risk, it effects what Rancière terms a ‘distribution of the sensible’ conditioning political and ethical life. This distribution is central to the contentious nature of politics: what is seen, heard, and felt is reflective of particular orderings of power. These sensory orderings, and their uneven presence in everyday social and political life, mark the contours of small “d” democratic engagement. I am drawn to his tracing of politics and extend the question of sensory distribution to explore the social and political weights that order the normative demands of cleanliness practice.

Rancière is critiquing connections between democratic political praxis and consensus. He argues, instead, that consensus is anathema to real politics, an effect of what he terms *police*, “not a social function but a symbolic constitution of the social... a certain way of dividing up the sensible” (2010, p. 36). *Police* is not simply the state-led deployment of a particular disciplinary consensus, but “a form of symbolization – with material manifestations – that institutes orders of time and space, hierarchies of space, and, through these, institutionalized and legitimized forms of domination” (Dikeç, 2012a, p. 673). The power of a given aesthetic *regime* depends on controlling sensory order such that “consensus is the form by which politics is transformed into the police” (Ranciere, 2010, p. 100). This policing renders the dominance of certain groups by regulating and excluding alternate modes of ordering sensory worlds that contradict dominant ideologies.

By way of contrast, “a *dissensus* is not a conflict of interests, opinions or values; it is a division inserted in ‘common sense’: a dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we see something as given” (Rancière, 2010, p. 69). *Dissensus* disrupts existing symbolic orders by reordering the “sensible evidences” that structure existing aesthetic regimes, both the *means of* making sense and *what* makes sense, “what is evident and what is *evidence*” (Dikeç, 2012b, p. 2). As a type of ideological regime based on a given set of sensible evidences, cleanliness norms and hygienic practices are not fixed. The persistent intensification of their demands requires a constant keeping up, a constant reminder of being potentially outside-the-norm. Instead of a fixable achievement, cleanliness practices and hygiene norms function as components of shifting ideological regimes, aesthetic ideologies of process, an always-becoming-ideologically-clean, that demands constant policing.

In this framework, politics is a fight over what can be seen, heard, felt: *sensed* and, thus, embodied. Alongside feminist geographers who refute the isolation of the political sphere from the world-making of the body-in-practice,⁴¹ I would like to extend Ranciere's thinking to the especially sensual intimacies of everyday cleanliness practices and the production of hygienic norms. As a hierarchy of sensory embodiments, practices of cleanliness effect not just political possibility, but determine who belongs, how to mediate that belonging, and what social and political access that belonging creates or forecloses. In this example, the uptake and normalization of everyday cleanliness aesthetics effects and normalizes social division between and among students, housekeepers, and an extensive parliament of things.⁴²

If the everyday engagements of specific bodies create and are made meaningful through the distribution of sensory experience, the effects of this distribution are spatially, and thus politically and ethically, uneven. As Haraway (1990) argues, the senses themselves may well be immanent to practice, but they are historically conditioned, mediating political and social life as much as subjectivity. The aesthetic hierarchy of embodiment that produces and is produced by everyday cleanliness practice and hygienic norms situates insides and outsides, belonging and exclusion. Critically, as a *spatial* practice with aesthetic contours, cleanliness extends into and

⁴¹ The list of work that qualifies for inclusion in this footnote is long, marking a decades-long tradition of feminist analysis starting in the 1970s and extending to the present. Here, I am particularly cognizant of Sara Smith's (2009, 2012) work on the geopolitics of inter-religious marriage relations that serve to connect statecraft, domestic space, and the experience of love; Banu Gökarişel's work in collaboration with Anna Secor (2012 a/b) on the production of religious and secular identity and the *hijab* that reveals the spatial specificity of intersectional embodied identity; and Sylvia Federici's (2006) foundational work on the centuries-long structural adjustments that created the conditions for the gendering of social reproductive labor regimes in the transition from feudal economies to mercantile and later industrial capitalism in Europe, as well as her excoriation of globalization and its continued dependence on the labor of female bodies to reproduce the conditions of possibility enabling its continuation. In each, a sensitivity to the everyday-ness of gendered power relations is given a depth of analysis that reveals not only the persistence of the problem, but the connection between compassion, the possibility of practicing otherwise, and the ways in which individuals – through their relationships with themselves, each other, and the conditions through which they produce their lives – are forced into and resist positioning by dominant practices and modes of power.

⁴²After Latour (1993).

organizes a “mode of political thinking [such that] different spatial imaginaries inform different understandings of politics” (Dikeç, 2012, 670). If cleanliness practices spatialize particular aesthetic regimes, so too do they inform the possibility of specific political imaginaries. Conflicts over which kinds of cleanliness practices or hygienic norms are valued and which are not make everyday spaces central nodes in the aesthetic production of political imaginaries. I argue that it is this *aesthetics* of politics that conditions cleanliness practices, informing determinations over who or what is entitled to space and thus the political and ethical contours of those spatial imaginaries.

The establishment and consolidation of cleanliness practices and hygienic norms establishes a “conflict between sense and sense” (Rancière, 2010, p. 139), pitting bodies against themselves and each other. For Rancière, this conflict is ontological to political life, pulling the curtain back on a problematic modern political orientation that features consensus as central to ‘democratic’ or representational political practice. In his estimation, *democratic* politics has always relied on a constitutive, and excluded, outside term — the Athenian *demos*, or Marxian lumpenproletariat. It relies on those whose existence, whose sensory worlds, are excluded in order to establish commonly-held ideological frameworks for political and ethical life. Recourse here is not to an abandonment of democratic practice, but a reformulation that places dissent, contention, dis-agreement, at the heart of the matter. Cleanliness practices and hygienic norms are particularly well-suited to this reformulation, a point that a range of feminist scholars have made regarding the political and ontological instability of gender (Butler, 2004), the temporalities of queerness and social alterity (Halberstam, 2004, 2011), and the politics of

embodiment, difference and the failures of redistributive justice (Young, 1990, 2002). The body resists.

As a shared, if personal, hierarchy of aesthetic experiences, cleanliness practices and hygienic norms reinforce the hegemonic ideologies of modern embodiment. The collective consensus, however contested, is that the body is or can be clean. Consensus here reinforces cultural attitudes about what can and cannot be the topic of polite conversation. If the body should always-already be clean, any deviation is formatted as a source of shame and exclusion, regardless of the inevitability of that deviation. The effect is a consolidation of a wide and wildly divergent suite of behaviors. This flattens space and identity both, depoliticizing everyday practice and alienating individuals from real and perceived entitlement to life and livelihood. Bodies that hew closer to normative forms of embodiment — by dint of how they smell, feel, look, or sound — are more likely to find the aesthetic character of that embodiment reinforced by broader cultural beliefs about why cleanliness is valuable, who is and is not clean.⁴³ This inevitably uneven distribution of sensory worlds undercuts the supposed social benefit of cleanliness and hygiene, revealing the divisive character of the modern cleanliness *Zeitgeist*.

This exploration uses the specificities of student cleanliness practices to uncover this hygienic hegemony and deconstruct supposedly normative cleanliness practice. The aesthetic contours of cleanliness practices and hygiene norms are easily unfixed; the intensity of their demands reveals as much. By tracing the specific sensory orderings that expose the gap between expectation and reality, my hope is to better understand the dependence of *already*

⁴³ As Smith (2007) notes, this ordering of sensory worlds was central to the historical devaluation and violent exclusion of black bodies during chattel slavery. In his example, the hegemony of white power was not simply political or economic, but established in contrast to the aesthetic evaluation of black bodies: how individuals smelled or felt to the touch, for example, became as central to the production of racial categories of difference as skin color.

existing cleanliness practices on a mobile outside term: dirt, germs, the *Other*. This is not a naive cry to a deodorant-free future, but an accounting of the ways in which the lived experiences of students are evidence of an infinitely differentiated spatial totality that is not necessarily physical, but “constituted within the ensemble of practices and discourses” at hand (Dikeç, 2012, 672). The problem is not that the body is dirty, but that existing social relations devalue this inevitability in deference to norms that are, by design, impossible to achieve.

Institutional and macro-social disciplinary power may beg for the security and false stability of synchronizing bodies within a hygienic state of grace. But, the aesthetic consolidation effected by smooth skin and mirror-white porcelain tell us as much about the dominance of existing norms as they do failed attempts to be clean. Ask anyone who has used a bathroom and it becomes quite clear that *failure* is the norm. The body always gets dirty, a well-spring of contravention pushing against hygienic ideologies. The everyday demands of modern cleanliness are forced into practice by a cultural consensus to be clean, but lived as a type of *dissensus* against those practices.

For Ranciere, *dissensus* is the rare truth of democratic praxis. It is both a threat to and refutation of the sensory given, the wool-pulling reveal of the ideological underpinnings of democratic consensus and its politically flattening exclusions, constantly embattled as much as actively suppressed. I invoke the term here to situate the gap between the dominant ordering of the body realized through cleanliness norms – the hygienic state of grace against which bodies are measured – and the reality and possibility of practicing and being otherwise – bodies as irrefutably singular, unique, always-already dirty and *valued* as such. Though dominant norms consolidate cleanliness aesthetics around notions of effortless purity, discussions of daily

practice reveal those aesthetics to be wildly divergent, indicating the potential of being and practicing otherwise — to more equitable political and ethical ends — within an already existing set of lived realities.

For the students interviewed below, the sensual, visual and olfactory benchmarks against which their bodies are produced, measured and judged were more often implied than directly addressed. This, too, is an effect of a set of norms that hide the body's failures behind a façade of anti-microbial anxieties. But, regardless of their being close-at-hand to the discursive frameworks students' use to describe their social worlds, the aesthetic evaluations they describe orient belonging, determining the embodied condition of everyday entitlement. Exploring the aesthetic hierarchy of cleanliness practices and hygiene norms as they are lived lends specificity to the demanding intensity of students' experiences, connecting the normative expectations of the everyday body to a spatial politics of everyday life.

Practicing Aesthetics: Order, Utility, Frustration and Blame

Ugh...I'm gonna describe it in terms of what I would lick.

- Kimberly, 19-year-old sophomore

It's the hair. It's always the hair.

- Thea, 19-year-old sophomore

Bathrooms, especially in institutional space, have a limited and common range of fixtures: a toilet (with or without stalls), sinks, showers (with or without curtains or privacy dividers), mirrors, tiled floors, soap-dispensers, garbage cans. Save an errant corner closet reserved for the behind-the-scenes necessities of janitorial work, there is little else. Except for the people. And the mess: allergy-inducing mold and wart-causing fungus, invisible microbial disease vectors, all manner of out of place moisture, errant urine, vomit and fecal matter, used

tampons, and hair. Lots and lots of hair. This second set of materials is no less common, though considerably less welcome. Both are necessary elements to everyday cleanliness practice and hygiene norms. In everyday routines, relationships with the first “help” people address inevitable encounters with second, producing the spatial, affective and aesthetic contours of those engagements. It is a fraught situation.

The possibility of social belonging attached to the performance of everyday cleanliness is mediated by a shared, if divergent, set of cultural scripts. These are themselves produced and limited by the socio-technical systems of bathroom spaces tuned to the obsessive contours of cleanliness practice. Today, the hygienic anxieties that structure bathroom technology reinforce the possibility of obsession, but are largely background noise: instant and constant hot water, shining stainless steel fixtures, smooth white porcelain. Students and housekeepers both share expectations about how the bathroom should look, smell, feel, or – shudder to think – taste, as Kimberly offered in the quote above. But, failure is as necessary to the value of cleanliness as being dirt- and germ-free is impossible.

Dirt – along with broken plumbing – exposes the chinks in the armor of clean normativities, revealing the tense interdependence of controlled interior spaces on an unruly natural world (Kaika, 2004). Broken plumbing, errant hair and sinks full of rotten noodles motivate individual desire to be clean and frustrate its possibility all at once. I trace students’ aesthetic evaluation of the socio-technical systems in their bathrooms as a means of better understanding how they orient themselves to the obsessive terms of practice. Often, failures indicate technical problems, or a lack of effort on behalf of suite-mates or housekeepers. They

are also benchmarks of worry. Despite the diversity of concerns presented here, the animation of students' responses point to the threat to belonging presented by the risk of being unclean.

I was interested in knowing more about how students understood both the socio-technical elements of the built environment and the non-human invaders with which they shared space. How did students rank the relative cleanliness of the plumbing fixtures in light of the dirtiness of their various interlocutors, including the challenges presented by their own bodies? I was interested in both the order and the ordering, in the specific policing of the aesthetic hierarchies of cleanliness. What constitutive outsides inform the stability of the spatial aesthetics of individual cleanliness practice?

This line of inquiry forced students to think through the ways in which cleanliness practices are not isolated within the body, but produced through shared ideals of sensory experience, specific kinds of spatialized effort, and the built-environment. As a critical moment of intimacy muddying the terrain between self and world, these practices influence “not only the psychical but also the physiological changes the body undergoes in its day-to-day actions and performances” (Grosz, 1993, p. 83). Cleanliness produces and is produced by the body/subject in terms that are irrefutably specific, but always shared. The terms are also mobile: bodies are never the same and the historically-contingent aesthetics of public and private embodiment are constantly shifting, if strongly tendential.

Today, much of cleanliness practice is invisible and consolidated around an impossible ideal of not just hygienic, but *microbial* purity (I discuss this turn in Chapter 5 as well). The inevitable deviations that result can be isolating and frustrating. Though living with different types of dirtiness is common, most students triangulate away from or against this as a potential

form of embodied normativity. Remember, the body is *normatively* clean, not dirty. After Rancière, I argue that situating ideas and practices of cleanliness as conditional roots of political and ethical life requires revealing the common experience of this deviation.

Rank and File: Ordering Plumbing

When prompted to rank the common socio-technologies of the bathroom – the sink, toilet, floor, shower and mirror -- students wrestled with what was often perceived as a set of impossible decisions. Was the bathroom sink or floor the relative filthiest? How dirty is the toilet? In their machinations, it became clear that the built environment was expected to provide access to certain types of embodiment, but often thwarted that possibility. Their experiences outlined the gap between the fantasy that their bathrooms, or bodies, existed in states of optimal perfection and the realities of everyday use and embodiment. In these examples, in fact, the expectation to perfection is upset not by failures of individual practice, but material and aesthetic disruptions to the spaces on which those practices depend. These failures mark the fragile dependencies of individual norms, and the ease with which those norms effect subjective displacement. The bathroom is the central built environment necessary to cleanliness practice. Encounters with other individuals, commodities necessary to cleanliness habit, and the non-human invaders that threaten the subject all happen behind its closed doors. These encounters mediate belonging just as they are a material resource for the development of the obsessive terms of practice.

As they puzzled through their rankings, frustration combined with comic and sincere disgust. Their experiences of unclean spaces and dirty plumbing often forced abrupt and intrusive changes to “normal” routines. Conflicts between expectation — smooth skin, a clean

toilet, a mold-free shower stall — and reality — acne, hair clogged drains, sinks filled with rotting food — revealed a tendency to externalize the everyday failures of the body as much as it indicated their regularity. This often sparked interpersonal conflict. But, more importantly for my purposes here, it revealed the ease with which aesthetic evaluations of everyday embodiment that depend on impossible standards are knocked into disarray. That disarray is as much the source of the standards informing cleanliness practice as it is the foil to their achievement. This is hygienic *dissensus*.

For Dorothy, a sophomore living in a triple and using a hall-style bathroom, the toilet was the cleanest because it was the only surface in the bathroom not threatened by errant hair. Again and again, respondents commented on hair in terms that combined disgust, exasperation, and self-deprecating humor. Though this rarely meant any change or diminution of intensity for daily routines, the possibility of cleanliness in both private and shared quasi-public space often turned on the presence or absence of hair. She explained,

Dorothy: Probably the toilets are the cleanest.

MD: Why is that? Why do you go to that first?

Dorothy: Because it's a hall full of 40 or 50 girls and we all have a lot of hair and it's all over the bathroom and it's so gross.

MD: So, the hair is the thing making everything else dirty? Even more dirty than the toilet?

Dorothy: Yeah... because the toilets get cleaned every day. And there's not any hair in there. You don't clean yourself in the toilets. So, those are usually pretty clean. And then the mirrors are clean... And then, I would say the sinks, but sometimes people wash their dishes in there and they get clogged. Or, there's hair in there. So, those can be pretty disgusting.

Initially, everyday use is not sourced as a hygienic threat so much as the excesses of the gendered body politic — 40 or 50 girls and a ‘a lot of hair.’ The hair-shedding body refigures the

hygienic contingencies of the bathroom in relatively hopeless terms — ‘it’s all over.’ Though housekeepers clean the toilets daily, they are also *expected* to be hair free — ‘you don’t clean yourself in the toilets.’ What remains an open question is her implication that the hair would make the toilet dirtier than the shit or urine that might linger in – or on – the toilet as well.

The cleanliness of the entire body is managed in the bathroom. But, embodiments of cleanliness practice themselves acquire a type of utilitarian segregation in coordination with expectations of and limitations to the built environment. This socio-technical differentiation is about the particular history of bathroom technology – separation of waste, flush-toilets, hot- and cold-freshwater sinks, ceramic tile (Forty, 1986; Kira, 1865; Shove, 2003; Wright, 1960). This reveals connections between the hygienic necessity to be clean and the cultural lexicon informing cleanliness practice — a system of signification dependent on privacy, shame and disciplinary normativity. Though cultural forms of practice have long superseded the minimal necessities of living free of hygiene-related disease, the influential turn to germ theories of disease lingers in the built worlds that make cleanliness possible (Fawcett and Black, 2007; George, 2008).

In the absence of disease, how do people know hygienic risk? From visual and olfactory cues, disruptive encounters with blood, shit, dirty water, and hair⁴⁴ that re-order sensory experience away from expected norms. In this case, the toilet’s frequent use marks the

⁴⁴Though hair presents limited hygienic risk in these environments, this is not always the case. Kamal Kar, the developer of the Community-Led Total Sanitation system that has been used across South and Southeast Asia, places hair at center stage in CLTS interventions. The story goes something like this: a given community struggling with disease-risk from open defecation is brought together in a central gathering point for a sanitation teach-in. A glass of water and plate with human shit sits at the podium. The audience is asked if they would drink the water. Many say yes. As the instructional intervention continues, flies gather, buzzing from glass to shit and back. The audience is asked if they would drink the water. There is less enthusiasm. Finally, the speaker removes a piece of hair from his or her head, drags it lightly in the shit and dips it in the water. The audience is asked if they would drink the water. They would not. (Black and Fawcett, 2008)

likelihood that it would be cleaned, but the fact that it is not a space for cleaning the body separates and secures it from the polluting power of loose hair. Not just incidentally, the work of housekeeping ensures that standard use does not quickly devolve into a space of abjection, though the hair-covered remainder of the bathroom reveals just how much the body flaunts that effort.

Elizabeth, a junior living in one of the university's oldest dorms, had a similar framework, explaining that "the shower just kinds of sits around in its own filth whereas a toilet kind of cleans itself" – it *flushes*. Stefanie, a sophomore living on south campus echoed Elizabeth's sentiment, "toilets are always the cleanest because they are always the dirtiest... they always need to be cleaned, I guess." A third, Annie, was comforted because "housekeeping comes and cleans that so often." These run parallel to Dorothy's explanation that regular use ensures the toilet would be clean.⁴⁵ Underlying each is the basic aesthetic divide of bathroom practice: clean or dirty. Though these terms collapse a range of sensory experiences, in this simple first example the hierarchical ordering of the terms is clear.

Janet, a sophomore living suite-style with seven roommates, shared a similar connection to housekeeping work as a backstop, based on a combination of her present-day experience and the accumulated frustration over past misbehavior. To her, the shower was the cleanest and the sinks the dirtiest. As she explained, "I feel cleaner about the shower because I know that the bathroom, the custodians and janitors... they clean it thoroughly. I've seen them clean

⁴⁵Four students cleaned their own bathrooms. That any did was a surprise to me, though the diversity of housing options on campus means that certain dormitory spaces have enclosed or entirely interior bathroom spaces. Housekeeping would need to intrude on "private" bedroom space to access them for cleaning.

it thoroughly.” Here it is not simply the visual registers of cleanliness, but the visual confirmation of cleanliness *labor* that informs her assessment.

The previous year, Janet lived in a four-room suite with a group of girls she referred to as “nasty,” going so far as to worry whether or not the custodial staff “hated” them because of their accumulated messiness. Though her current situation is an improvement from the year prior, there remain considerable and specific kinds of hygienic risk to negotiate. An encounter with menstrual blood on the toilet seat was particularly objectionable:

They're disgusting. I remember when the school year started... ok. This is going to be so gross. I remember when the school year started, there was period blood on the toilet seat. That's a "no" for me. That's... NO! And then there's like used tampons, open! They just throw it away without wrapping it. The agreed thing to do with pads and tampons is to wrap them up in what they come in and then toilet paper and then throw them away. They just threw them away. And then pads... it's like they just rip off the pads and threw it in the toilet. And they don't wash their hands. I know they don't. So, the toilets are gross. My suite-mates are gross. And, I don't know why, but they find the need to dump ramen noodles in the sink. Why don't you just flush it? Why? And then they do it on the weekend. So, on the weekend, there's just whole food in our sink. And that sits and that festers and it just drives me crazy. Ugh!

Where her response is hardly atypical, I want to tease out the difference between what happens and what remains unsaid. She tacks quickly between a material offense to the implied mechanisms of their production, to a broader cleanliness consensus — ‘the *agreed* thing to do.’ The experience was conditioned by what she saw, a deviation from expectation. The usually clean white porcelain is stained with menstrual blood, the usually concealed used tampon is no longer out of sight. Though her frustration is understandable given common practice, her response begs the question: agreed by whom? Between which parties? Refusing these norms is socially problematic and experienced in relatively aggressive terms. But, the implied consensus that animates her response is rarely the topic of direct conversation. It is an expectation known

by implication and understood in terms of a particular hierarchy of aesthetics constituted by the normalized relationship between the bathroom's built fixtures and the body's interactions with them.

As the tone of her response becomes increasingly agitated, she notes the connection between time ('on the weekend'), the disruption of hygienic norms through misuse ('whole food in our sink'), and her own experience of abjection ('that *sits* and *festers* and it just drives me crazy'). The timing of the offense contributes to her frustration, but also flags the connection between individual practice and the work of housekeeping. Housekeepers do not clean in the dorms over the weekend during the spring and fall semesters, increasing potential risk from accumulating waste material. Often, the responsibility for fixing the problem is externalized, first to the room- or suite-mate who put it there and then the housekeeper held institutionally responsible for its removal. What I want to note is that the organization of the entire experience — the encounter, the offense, the externalization of responsibility, and the remediation — is understood in light of a particular organization of sensory experience. It emerges from an encounter that disrupts a particular hygienic consensus, revealing the chaotic disarray that is as much fact of everyday life as attempts to produce normative embodiments of cleanliness.

The triangulations of students to accommodate the moist vulgarity of the rotten-noodle sink reveal the aesthetic evaluations that order the sensory world. Like ideas about cleanliness, these sensory signifiers are inter-dependent. A strong smell absent a physical anchor is disorienting in different ways than one emanating from a specific object, a visual disruption less intrusive absent a smell or sense of touch. It is in the combination of factors that the field of

cleanliness *habitus* emerges as an object of practice and concern. As Kimberly declared, “the sinks are the grossest.” She elaborated:

Because the food chunks are there. And there's also a lot of hair in them often. And people do their dishes in them so they get a lot of traffic. They probably get the most traffic in terms of things that have a probability of spoiling and being gross. So, they have the food which isn't something that the toilets and the showers have, which is, I think, revolting. And they have the hair factor from the showers. And then they have the toilet functioning germs that the toilets have as well... from hand-washing. And they also have a lot of face washing products and lots of toothpaste. So, it's kind of a perfect storm of grossness. And they're also white, so everything is very visible.

Her ‘perfect storm of grossness’ is a multi-layered assault on the senses that combines the messy realities of everyday practice and the abjection that can result. She situates her understanding of cleanliness in relation to the array of interrelationships at play, both among students (‘a lot of traffic’), in terms of proper (‘toilet functioning germs... from hand washing’) and improper use (‘food chunks’), and the specific aesthetics of the plumbing (‘they’re also white’). This final comment draws my attention (‘they’re also white, so everything is very visible’). Though her ordering combines visible (‘food chunks’) and invisible (‘toilet functioning germs’) threats to her chosen hygienic hierarchy, both are mediated in the final case by the expectations enabled by the *whiteness* — as a ‘color’ as much as a socially-constructed absence — of the porcelain.

Though the specter and reality of misuse informs some of the responses above, *standard* practices well-within normative expectation effect the aesthetic hierarchy of sensory experience as well. For Christina, a first-year sharing a suite with seven other women, the shower was dirtiest because “it's sort of like very closed off so after you take a shower when it's still wet, it just always feels damp and maybe mildew-y, which it's probably not, but it's still feels a little slimy.” Though only a brief comment as part of a larger interview, I was

immediately drawn to her notion that the shower was dirty not only because it “always feels damp and maybe mildew-y,” but because it was “closed off.” The material shape of the built environment engenders a particular aesthetic ordering, but also signals a kind of affective engagement. Being “closed off” can be as much physical as emotional. Though she was not concerned by any mortal threat from exposure to damp air, the connection between enclosure and risk echoes considerably older ideas about hygienic risk.⁴⁶ With predictable irony, when I asked if she wore shower shoes to fend off any potential hygienic threat, she responded in the negative.

Smooth Negotiations: Shaving Legs

More than once, I joked with students that I could write my dissertation about hair. Taking second place only to the litany of practices focused on facial care, hair was as much a bogeyman as a locus of desire. Hair-related concerns were complicated. Hair proved a yardstick for measuring relative dirtiness, but was also central to some of the more sensual practices connecting the construction of identity to cleanliness routines. The spaces occupied by hair, attached to the body, or detached and floating free, were some of the most cited touchstones of personal engagement and frustration. The tactile and visual considerations

⁴⁶Historically, there existed a longstanding connection between constructions of cleanliness, the contested development of water-based practices as determinant therein, and the social production of air flow. Largely absent from the modern cleanliness *Zietgeist*, air — as spectral vapor, as miasmatic disease threat, as a cleaning agent — was long central to securing the integrity and “cleanliness” of the body. Before water-based cleanliness practices were standardized, early American cleanliness practice often relied on specialized fabric (linens) and access to free-flowing air to render connections between hygiene, health and the built environment (Ashenberg, 2007; Brown, 2009; Bushman and Bushman, 1988). Though John Snow’s discovery of bacterial vectors of infection for cholera occurred in 1854, it took more than 50 years for the power of miasma to fade from popular consciousness (Hempel, 2007; Shove, 2003). Hygienic attachments die hard. I would argue that their lingering influence is recontextualized with new systems commodifying the experience of hygienic anxiety: the ubiquity of hand sanitizer, or perfumed baby wipes re-packaged for adult use, or disposable paper towels, or anti-microbial dish soap. Yes, these are evidence of the commodifications of practice in late capitalism. But, they are meaningful in the present because of the hygienic risk they present and purport to hold at bay. My point is that these commodities and the practices that they necessitate are performative, first and foremost.

demanding by hair management were a powerful means of hailing students to everyday subjectivities, or forcing them away from them. Hair was both an unmanageable source of abjection and an aesthetic mechanism through which students communicated their own constructions of self.

During interviews, I asked women about their shaving habits. I suspected it would already be noted as a “problem,” though probably not a source of contamination, per se. Secured within normative cleanliness practice, leg hair was framed as uncomfortable or a nuisance, to be removed, evidence of the uneven and gendered demands of modern hygienic norms.⁴⁷ Shaving highlighted the way in which visual cues and a sense of touch informs cleanliness practice. Having smooth legs was desirable *and* onerous. Letting leg hair grow was seen as a release from a demanding practice, but also a mark of social failure with especially sensual characteristics.⁴⁸ At the same time, the difference in responses from students about the presence of hair in the bathroom and the practice of removing hair from the body reveals the way in which social productions of cleanliness can turn on the possibility of subjective control. An errant pubic hair is outside the bounds of propriety and presents considerably more worry than leg stubble a week overdue for removal.

⁴⁷Notably, and to flag my own methodological failings, I did not ask my few male respondents to weigh-in on their shaving habits in any in-depth way. Given the celebration of male embodiment, and the freedoms it allows vis-à-vis acceptable embodiments and their relative diversity, shaving is less a marker of social exclusion for men, particularly when the norms informing male shaving habits are framed by a culture of gendered entitlement, an ascension to manhood, and the shaving ritual as a resource for the confirmation of male power.

⁴⁸I was not bold enough to inquire about genital hair removal, though some offered opinions and experiences with demands to keep pubic hair trimmed as well. The “Brazilian” is a recent but increasingly common component of modern hygienic lexicons. The intensity of effort — hot wax applied to the body’s most sensitive and intimate surfaces — and the result — total genital hairlessness — are emblematic of the aesthetic intensity of cleanliness practices. The skin may be a malleable surface, but the work of shifting its “natural” states is time consuming, painful, and requires constant renewal. But, shaving also renders the connection between the aesthetic conditions of practice and the cultural production of cleanliness norms. There is no biological reason to shave, quite the contrary. It is a “purely” social phenomenon.

Tess, a first-year living with a roommate in one of the newer dorms on campus, was defiant in her discussion of shaving, “Social norms: I do not like you.” The remark highlights a common tension. Certain cleanliness practices are just as likely to be enjoyable as they are rejected. They take time and require specific tools and spaces, but frequently lag behind new attitudes about normative embodiment. On a college campus, it is unsurprising that students would test the boundaries of their own experiences of embodiment, try new things, and reject demands perceived to be out-of-touch with their values. After conducting my interviews, I am left with a strong sense that given the choice, many would abandon much of their daily routines, relishing the time that would return to their day, as well as the satisfaction that the opportunity to do *less* brings to an already crowded social existence.

For Tess, shaving marked an aesthetic shift in her fashion and her relationship to her genetic heritage, “I started shaving late high school. I started wearing skirts more. I have Middle Eastern blood in me... so I have the hair. Thank you, father, so much for your genes. But, why did you give me the hair gene?” The burden of being hairy locates her as a member of her family but places that membership in tension with the expectation that women keep their legs free of hair. In particular, it is her ‘blood’ that serves to displace, marking the racialization of this expectation as well as a certain lack of control over this aspect of her body.

Lisa, a first-year living suite-style with seven others, brushed off the idea of shaving everyday, though also marked the architecture of expectation that surrounded maintaining improbably hair-free legs. Her comments are a good crystallization of the range of concerns I had heard from many others:

Well... like, I have really coarse hair, so umm... I don't like to feel that. I mean, I don't shave my legs as often as most people, but after a while I don't like to feel it like that.

And then I don't like to be able to see it, which is obviously, I guess... a societal thing. Like, I've been trained not to want to see it. But, you know, that happens... umm... But, I feel that the more often I shave, the more often I have to shave. So, that's why I try to... I don't want to start shaving every day because then I will have to shave every day [because] the more you cut hair, the faster it grows, they say. [...] In the winter, it's a lot longer. Because I'm not wearing shorts and I don't care, usually. Maybe if i'm going on a date. I mean, with my boyfriend I'll probably shave, it's a thing. He's not very... he's like, "Whatever, legs are legs." Luckily, I don't have much pressure from him, telling me I have to shave my legs all of the time.

The disciplinary underpinnings of the practice are quite clear for her. She explains that she has, 'been *trained* not to want to see it,' a statement that reveals effort and a combination of work and desire, neither of which are so neatly in her control. Also, the expectation to shave varies — seasonally, socially, in terms of fashion choices, interpersonally. These may have different sensory indicators — the appearance or feel of stubble, the context of encounters with strangers or friends that may elicit touch or visual judgments. But, those indicators are not always separable. I read this blurring of expectation and practice as emblematic of hygienic *dissensus*, but also the inter-subjective tax of moving between the obsessive demands of practice and the ways in which forms of embodiment mediate belonging.

As Marisa put it,

I don't think they're mutually exclusive. Yes, there is pressure to shave. But, I also feel like I put more of that pressure on myself. Because... I notice if I have stubble on my legs and someone else, other people might not notice. But, I see it and it looks awful to me.

Annie, a sophomore, placed the practice in the context of life on campus,

I guess it's like... so... occasionally if you're sitting in a lecture hall and you look down and are like, "I need to shave!" That thought passes through my mind, then I think, "That's stupid. I don't need to shave." But, then I look at the next girl and like, "Oh..."

I find her response particularly poignant because of the quotidian nature of the encounter she describes. Cleanliness practices are centered on bathroom spaces, but

experienced and contextualized in the breadth of everyday life. The morning routine may situate the subject, but it marks only the *start*, one small piece, of a series of encounters that have not yet happened, a set of potential snap judgments that mark the potential of belonging in the context of complex social engagements. With shaving, the importance of those encounters is made material through the aesthetic conditioning of the material body. Again, smoothness and ease conceal the weight and intensity of expectation.

Alex, also a sophomore, noted that because her blond leg hair was easy to conceal, she shaved less frequently. I asked if she felt social pressure to do so, or even guilty at not having to shave as much as other women might:

Alex: A little bit. If I feel like people are looking at my legs, I get kind of mad at them as opposed to feeling... self-conscious about it. I feel like it's something that I shouldn't have to do. But, I also really like the feeling of smooth legs.

MD: What is your anger about? What is your thought process there?

Alex: It doesn't bother me to have hair on my legs so much, unless it's to the point when I can feel it when I walk, like friction-y, which is gross. But, some stubble I really don't care about it. But, I've had people go like, "Oh, your legs are hairy!" Especially small children. I worked as a counselor and kids would come and touch my legs and be like "You're legs are really hairy!" So that comes to mind when I think about that. And I feel like if there's a situation in which I am in close contact with people and they can see my legs, they might be judging me slightly. That kind of offends me. But, at the same time, I shave anyways.

Much like Annie seeing her classmates' unshorn legs – “Oh” – and locating her personal motivation to shave, there is resignation in this response. Alex shaves ‘anyways,’ unable to substantiate her feeling of indifference against the social expectations or potential judgments surrounding the practice. That ‘small children’ have anything at all to say is as amusing as it is alarming. The gendering of embodiment is not delimited by age.

As Dorothy remarked, “It just feels nicer when your legs are smooth.” Yet, when I asked about social pressure to shave, her response revealed the way in which cleanliness operates as a practice of signification that collapses multiple meanings into particular embodied materialities:

I mean... yeah. People see gross hair on your legs, kind of "eww"... but, uh... that sounds so shallow. You just like feel cleaner when you shave, especially when you're used to it and you've been doing it a long time. And then you have stuff on your legs, it just feels weird, especially when you wear pants in the fall and the winter, it kind of hurts almost.

Shaving is emblematic of the combination of utility and desire that grants cleanliness practice their cultural dominance. Unlike washing hair, shaving is not about hygiene, per se, but a gendered representational cleanliness. Leg hair presents zero health risk – quite the contrary – but the appearance of shaved legs is indicative of the presence of other cleanliness habits. It is a habit that signifies other, less visible practice, the cultural inverse of the student who confidently declared her suite-mates did not wash their hands because they were otherwise ‘nasty.’⁴⁹ In the context of an aesthetic hierarchy of practice, the collapsing of utility and desire highlights the intersectional production of sensory experience. Visible leg hair is indicative of the uncomfortable feel of stubble as much as it is a rejection of a gendered norm.

Conclusion

Whether removing hair from one’s leg or deciding which of the sinks in the bathroom is the least “gross,” the shared economy of cleanliness practice uses aesthetic evaluation to condition the terms of everyday embodiment. These evaluations inform systems of social and material separation. In practice, the terms of engagement are reinforced and upset in relation

⁴⁹Janet’s comment above, “And they don’t wash their hands. I know they don’t.”

to a conflicted aesthetic hierarchy, a system of value that specifies the hygienic and social benefit of cleanliness by setting the terms of normative embodiment through visual, olfactory, sensual or tactile cues in specific spaces. Contamination is virulent, failure in any one category can be totalizing. It threatens the individual experience of pleasure or belonging that normative embodiment can provide, as well as revealing the chinks in the armor of an impossible set of demands. Being clean is demanding, but precarious work.

The always-threatened boundaries of these common practices delineate not only the everyday terms of subjectivation, but the ethical and political contingencies that attend the command to successfully embody cleanliness. Neither the threat — dirt — nor the goal — purity — are stable signifiers. They rely on the production of obsession and a cultural script that connects the possibility of belonging to particularly problematic social norms: to whiteness, to arbitrarily gendered embodiments, to the value of certain kinds of labor.

Students shave their legs, collapsing personal desire and cultural norms into a daily or weekly habit. The presence or absence of the hair produced by their bodies sets the terms of an aesthetic evaluation informing their own sense of belonging to the social fabric of campus. Smooth legs *feel* nice, but also help students *fit in* to gendered subject positions. At the same time, they resist this script, noting the different expectations between women and men, or irritation at the guilt they feel at failing to appropriately practice demanding hairlessness. As a ‘conflict between sense and sense’, these practices reveal a casual, but near constant worrying over the specific, and seeping, boundaries constituting the possibility of subjectivity.

These inter-subjective engagements extend into the built environment. Here, thwarted expectations often prompt frustrated responses and the assignment of blame, an

externalization that reveals the precarious dependencies of cleanliness practices and hygienic norms. Blame often fell to roommates, suite-mates, or other students ('And they don't wash their hands. I know they don't'). But, unlike the sensual engagement with shaving, more challenging encounters with threatening sources of abjection were often (re)mediated by actual and implied housekeeping labor. Dirty sinks may provoke disgust from students, but it is the – *nameless* – housekeeper who orients his or her working day to clean up the vegetable detritus. This, too, is part of the cultural script central to cleanliness practice.

Alongside the dirt, germs or rotten noodles in the sink, the *labor* of housekeepers is the constitutive outside term of cleanliness practice. Everyday embodiment is produced not in isolated encounters with the non-human, but through what Rancière describes as *disensus*, by the fact – if not the agreement – that *bodies* are specifically excluded to establish hygienic norms. The germs – the “matter out of place” as per Douglas' (1965) famous Freudian quip – is a non-human proxy establishing a necessary distance between two individuals – a student and a housekeeper – who share space, but occupy antithetical, if interdependent, positions in the social fabric of campus life.

Bodies circulate in and around each other, their own wastes, and in conjunction with the built-environment, combining expectations of practice with a range of controlled and uncontrollable external agents that require collective effort to harness and control. This reality makes transgression almost inevitable, especially when the space-times of student life stand in the way of normative expectations. The food scraps should have been flushed down the toilet, unlike the pads that remained *en plein* air. But, in everyday encounters, the threat of hygienic risk homogenizes a socially produced category like “waste” to include sweat, hair, shit, or urine,

any matter out of its expected place. Dirt *displaces*, regardless of its presence or absence, by disturbing the sensory order of expectations architecting cleanliness practices and hygienic norms. The threat of failure is as totalizing as the potential of hygienic purity is fragile and limited.

In the terms of a modern cleanliness *Zeitgeist* animated by proliferating anxiety and obsessive practice, this “matter” includes not just visible dirt on the rim of the toilet seat or the invisible germs on the door-handle, but the housekeeper charged with eliminating the threat that matter presents to students’ subjective entitlement to university life. In the next chapter, I turn more specifically to the connections between cleanliness, the non-human, and the work practices of housekeepers to explain how UNC collapses the work of housekeeping into the objects – germs, dust mites, norovirus – central to institutional understandings of hygiene and health. In terms of Ranciere’s formulations, in light of the expectations of students to certain aesthetic orderings of their everyday lives, the university’s administration of housekeeping practice functions as a mode of police, a distribution of the sensible that stretches from the world of microbial more-than-human life to campus spaces potentially threatened by the risk those microbes present.

CHAPTER 5: MICRO(BIAL) MANAGEMENT: EVERYDAY CLEANLINESS AND THE DIVISIVE POWER OF MICROBIAL WORRIES

Introduction

I don't expect much of other people. Just be clean for the public health.

-Pavi, 19-year-old sophomore

Clean for health first, then appearance.

-OS1[®] pilot study report

Despite a common – and usually comic – narrative to the contrary, college life is hardly as slovenly as it is held out to be. In terms of everyday habit, quite a bit of work happens in the quasi-private bathroom and bedroom spaces on university campuses to produce the normative contours of the student body. The day can start or close at the sink, or in a bleary-eyed shower, and is peppered with demands that the body, especially its effluence, conform: washing hands, wiping feet, throwing away trash. But, as the quotes above illustrate, the terms of everyday cleanliness practice combine visual cues, social expectations, and shifting ideas about risk. My concern is an intensification of practice that combines an aesthetics of bodily presentation with a social responsibility to health informed by the management of particular forms of *microbial* life. The terms of everyday cleanliness practices and hygienic risk trace important, though often invisible, boundary lines, demarcating not only what is 'clean' or 'healthy' from what is 'dirty' or 'sick', but who belongs and who does not.

In this chapter, I highlight this intensification in terms of a modern cleanliness *Zietgeist* informed by the specter and reality of invisible threats to cleanliness and hygiene. Today, as much as visible forms of dirt, it is invisible forms of risk that inform the social and subjective architecture of cleanliness practices, hygiene norms, and the work practices they necessitate. Despite the relative invisibility of the microbes themselves, ideas about microbial risk are produced through and alongside student cleanliness practices, reflected in the administrative uptake of hygienic norms, and deployed in reference to housekeeping work at UNC. On the one hand, microbial risk equates student and university health, marking the slippage between a student's body and *the* student body. On the other, microbes and scientific understanding of microbial risk help establish the scientism⁵⁰ of the university's claims used to justify the reorganization of housekeeping work practices. This is not to say that their claims are entirely inaccurate. It is to note that to argue that the reorganization of the housekeeping department was about the improvement of the health of the university's student populations is to miss entirely the structural conditions informing the low value of housekeeping labor, despite their fundamental necessity to the daily functionality of campus life.

Divide and conquer: Situating two kinds of campus cleaning

"Cleanliness" describes an idealized, always temporary, condition for an object or space, commonly the body itself. Freshly laundered clothes, a washed face, brushed teeth and hair, a deodorized or perfumed body that is free of visible dirt or invisible bacteria, a clean floor, a finger-print free mirror. These conditions are neither politically or ethically neutral given their

⁵⁰ Like Julie Guthman's "healthism," I add the -ism to science here to highlight the lack of scientific rigor in the reorganization of the housekeeping department, particularly its uptake of ideas about microbial risk.

normative character: a dominating tendency to whiteness, smoothness, and the elimination of any hint of a threatening human or non-human other reveal the racialized and gendered underpinnings of common cleanliness norms.

But, the body and the built environment are forced away from these ideals through use, through living. The day's engagements upset the aesthetic demands placed on the physical body. At the same time, those engagements dirty the spaces through which those demands are achieved. As an economy of practice predicated on notions of inclusion and exclusion, cleanliness practices and hygiene norms work through a range of embodied materialities, revealing the importance of "seemingly apolitical and intimate site(s)" – shower stalls, bathroom mirrors, heads of hair – to the distribution and management of power (Williams, Massaro, 2013). When refracted through the productive dimensions of a university's everyday institutional power, the desirable possibility and socio-cultural demand that the body be clean is revealed to be a hegemonic narrative effecting serious and inequitable division in shared social worlds.

No longer just about grit under the fingernails or mud tracked across the kitchen floor, daily cleanliness practice targeting the body combines molar and molecular worry (pace Braun, 2007; Rose, 2006). A host of invisible threats – *e.coli*, MRSA, *norovirus*, dust mites, allergens, environmental toxins -- combine with the visible detritus of the day, intensifying everyday practices. What are the effects of this shift to microbial worry? If cleanliness has always been about the organization of exclusions – from the body, from the social field, from public and private spaces – how does a shift from molar to molecular practice impact those charged with the waged work of cleaning up for others?

Comparing the everyday cleanliness habits of students and the institutional organization of housekeeping work reveals the way in which microbes serve as subjectifying hygienic actors for students and depersonalizing micro-managers of housekeepers, duplicitous double agents. Microbial life may well be a threat to student health, an institutional hygiene problem borne of the material and structural contingencies of campus life. But, specific kinds of microbes and other invisible intruders common to human habitation provide a non-human yardstick -- a microbial backstop -- for managing the efficacy of housekeeping work in ways that belie an institutional interest in not just student health, but the increased control over the working lives of low-waged workers. At the bathroom sink, students experience the risk of germs in terms that connect their entitlements to university space to the health of their bodies. When institutional powers focus on the threat germs pose, they provide cover for a type of microbiopolitical management targeted to specific, and *very* human, individuals.

The chapter proceeds in two parts. First, I draw connections between the materiality of everyday life that is the focus of analyses of social reproductive labor systems and recent posthumanist feminist and first-world political ecologies interested in complicating anthropocentric narratives of agency. Here, I draw on work that explores the power of small, but often very common, things. My goal is to connect a turn to and concern with networked or relational ontologies – pace (Braun 2007, 2008) – to feminist geographies tracking the ethical and political dimensions of embodied everyday practice. The second section of the paper presents two contrasting and one overlapping mobilization of microbial life: a report published in 2006 detailing the efficacy of (OS1)[™] during pilot study, particularly the language focused on the existence (or absence) of specific microscopic hygienic threats to student and building

health; comments from interviews with students living in campus dormitories that highlight their experience and orientation to the microbial in terms of their everyday cleanliness practices; and, lastly, comments made by housekeepers connecting their responsibility for preventing student illness to changes in work practice in response to flu risk. These experiences are constitutive but often overlooked elements of everyday life on campus, revealing a disconnection between the individual experience of everyday hygiene as a type of modern positive potentiality and the hidden and often inequitable organization of labor on which that individual experience depends.

Rescaling everyday cleanliness: Social reproduction and posthumanist political ecologies

Clean bodies do not emerge in a vacuum. On the one hand, the “fundamental lie” that the body *is* clean demands a series of technology-dependent exclusions (Lahiji and Friedman, 1997, p. 7). Piped freshwater, networked sewers and bathroom technology combine with new ideas about modern subjectivity (Gandy, 2002; Kaika, 2004). These socio-technical demands continue to intensify, connecting domestic spaces and practices to normative ideals of embodiment framing cleanliness with a false sense of ease (Shove, 2003). On the other hand, and critical to my intervention, the supposed simplicity of the demand that the body be clean not only erases the dirt involved, but the work on which cleanliness has always depended. There is more than just incidental disconnect here between the economic value of labor attending to the material body and the cultural systems of value it makes possible. The production of consumer bodies cannot happen without devalued forms of social reproductive

labor – the work of managing the *flesh and mess* of everyday life (Branch, 2011; Duffy, 2007; Federici, 2006, 2012; Glenn, 1992).⁵¹

The turn to invisible hygienic risk is not new, though its popular ubiquity is shaping new kinds of embodied responsibility. Germ theory reoriented hygiene practice in the 19th century, especially in crowded urban space (Hempel, 2007; Newsom, 2006). But, everyday encounters with -- and responsibility for -- particular kinds of microbial life continue to emerge in new forms, shifting the boundaries of the body alongside new constructions of social and political power (Braun, 2007; Pollan, 2013; Rose, 2006). Alongside the disciplinary ubiquity of the hand-sanitizing station, the waged work of cleaning up for others is increasingly measured and controlled in micro-scaled terms.⁵²

Dominant narratives of cleanliness as framed by subjective desire depend on and disguise systems of biopolitical responsabilization that increasingly turn on the force relations emanating from microbial and otherwise microscopic threats (Mansfield, 2012a/b). Despite their social and cultural *disarticulation* from the reproductive labor that makes their everyday lives possible, student cleanliness practices and everyday hygienic responsibilities are produced alongside housekeeping work. Microbial life stands invisible sentry at the border between their disconnected, but overlapping, everyday lives. My study shows that new forms of hygienic biopolitical order architect both social boundaries and institutional power. Produced alongside

⁵¹ I am paraphrasing Cindi Katz's (2001) description of social reproduction as the "fleshy, messy, indeterminate stuff of everyday life" (p. 711).

⁵² More about the emergence and particularly disciplinary aspirations of the makers of Purell™ hand-sanitizer can be found in D. Owen's cheeky *New Yorker* piece, "*Hands across America: the rise of Purell*" (Owens, 2013). Like Robbin's (2007) argument about the crisis of accumulation in the post-war industrial chemical production industry that forced open a market for lawn fertilizers made from the leftover ingredients for weapons, Purell™ was first an industrial solvent – a powerful grease cutter – that had a limited market in its industrial form. But, once thinned with alcohol and repackaged as "hand sanitizer" for general consumption, found what now appears to be a near limitless supply of individual consumers. For more on the Taylorization of housekeeping see Agular (2001), Mendez (1998).

the bodies they seek to control, common cleanliness practices, though viewed as largely apolitical expectations of shared social worlds, both create and depend on divisive relationships between students, housekeepers and institutional understandings of the relationship between them.

Cleaning down the “care chain.”

When housekeeping began to emerge as waged work outside the home in the early 20th century, especially as janitorial work in institutional space, it did not shed the gendered, classed and racialized conceptions of existing domestic labor regimes (Branch, 2011; Mendez, 1998). Today, what was once a necropolitical international division of labor based on forced labor has become more nuanced, though critical characteristics maintain (Federici, 1999; McIntyre, Nash, 2011). Because this work is systematically devalued, both economically *and* socially, the people doing it are precariously positioned even when employed full-time, tainted by the “dirty work” that is the focus of their jobs (Ashforth, Kreiner, 1999; Drew, et al, 2007; Goffman, 1963; Hughes, 1962; Kalleberg, 2012). Despite the necessity of social reproduction, or the high socio-economic value placed on individual cleanliness, the waged work of reproducing the body is as exploitative as it is actively erased from everyday life (Federici, 1999).

Part of this is about the work itself. What makes for effective housekeeping? The appearance that a space has never been used, that a housekeeper was somehow there but leaves no trace, save the empty trash can and fingerprint free mirror. How have the recent shifts in the organization of housekeeping labor responded to broader cultural understandings of the threat to the body presented by microbial life? Institutional focus on microbial risk erases the history of social reproductive labor systems, collapsing a complicated set of structuring

forces within a regime of risk focused on the immediate threat to health presented by perceived microbial threats to bodily health.

At the same time, microbes may present new opportunities for engagement connecting different forms of social reproduction operating within the same institutional systems. Microbes are small but powerful agents central to the organization of social reproductive labor on a college campus. Their relative invisibility animates the terms of a co-dependent relationship to the practices that establish their value. They require some visible proxy or technology to render the threat of their presence in the material world. This intersubjectivity leaves their effects open to interpretation and, critically, manipulation. As cleanliness practice is a distinctly human affair entangled with a mess of non-human interlocutors, a look at the “qualities, activities, and material specificities of non-humans within what are otherwise considered strictly human processes” reveals systems of *mutual conditioning* (Scott, et al, 2012, p. 979). These conditioning effects emerge at uneven sites of biopolitical control where bodies become material and ideological vessels in reference to particular regimes of cleanliness/hygienic knowledge-power.

Two effects are worth noting. First, an ordering of the microbial world is, in practice, an ordering of more *visible* markers of cleanliness: white porcelain, clean tile, smudge-free mirrors, hair-free drains. It involves fixing and manipulating the ‘sensible world’ common to everyday cleanliness practice in reference to a world of risk situated at the border of sensory experience, barely out of reach and known by proxy. At UNC, and in other institutional spaces, it also entails the organization of the work of housekeeping. Together, these help to establish the boundaries

of social belonging that are mediated by cleanliness and hygiene.⁵³ Second, state and institutional power regimes have long sought control over the health of citizen-subjects by enrolling particular individuals in hygiene and cleanliness practices, some more forcefully than others (Anderson, 2006; Scott, 1999). Part of the challenge of state-led investment in “public” health and hygiene is a question of scale. The body-in-practice, particularly in reference to an insurgent microbiology, does not effectively “scale-up” to meet institutional conscription, particularly when the field of risk is produced through and by microbial and otherwise invisible non-human life. The molar body remains, not only as a site of contested aesthetics, or proxy for the insurgent non-human life to which it is host, but a site of resistance to macro-political control. Non-human *things* are, thus, “entangled with other processes constituting political inclusion and exclusion” (Sundberg, 2015, p. 216; see also Bakker, et al, 2005, cited in original), effecting very real divisions in *human* social worlds.

Popular cultural and academic-theoretical focus on the threat, or benefit, of microbiological life to *individual* bodies has reoriented debates about subjectivity alongside concerns about the aesthetics of cleanliness practices, hygienic risk, chronic disease and mental health.⁵⁴ But, these discussions can elide or obscure the structural conditions through which

⁵³ For Rancière (2010), the practice of democratic politics is not a battle over ideology – a discursive terrain – but one over the organization of the sensible world: what is seen, heard, felt, etc. conditions political subjectivity. Picking up a well-established feminist analyses that situates the (re)production of the body itself as a central node of political being, I extend his argument beyond the realm of small “d” democratic politics to the practice of the body in everyday life.

⁵⁴ In terms of popular culture, K. Melville’s “Hygiene Hypothesis linked to depression” (http://www.scienceagogo.com/news/20101107220930data_trunc_sys.shtml) points to a common line of popular science writing focused on the potential neurological impact of modern hygienic subjectivities, presenting arguments for a general readership similar to those of Rose (2007) and Abi-Rached, Rose (2011). The latter work remains indispensable to effectively theorizing biopolitical power in a world informed by technological and medical intervention at microscopic scales. Michael Pollan (2013) brings his signature faux critical liberalism to the debate around the “potential” and/or “benefit” of germs, joining a vein of pop cultural analysis – e.g. Scott, 2014 – that reveals the classed, gendered and racialized normativity connected to the production and management of microbial life, especially the performance of white, liberal subjectivities.

microbial intensification is made possible, often reinscribing deeply normative body politics (Guthman, J , Mansfield, B, 2012, 2015; Mansfield, 2012b). But, the divisions effected by cleanliness habits are not simply between the body and a world of invisible non-human invaders. Cleanliness practices focused on both molar and molecular risk architect social division between human beings as well. The effects of this division are especially evident when looking at the relationship between students, housekeepers, and their differential value to university life and campus communities.

In the example below, the non-human materialities of everyday cleanliness practice are bellwethers of historically-conditioned inequalities. A focus on microbial risk to cleanliness and hygiene combines the physical and symbolic: ideas about germs can animate power as much as their material presence animates practice. A look at the overlapping practices and work of students and housekeepers as focused by the threatening presence of microbial life clarifies the threshold conditions for individual subjectivity just as it marks the boundary between men and women who belong to campus communities and those who are excluded from them.

Implementing Micro(bial) Management Systems

Hidden in plain sight, more than 400 women and men comprising UNC-Chapel Hill's housekeepers, shift and zone managers, and departmental supervisors work to maintain the hygienic standards and everyday cleanliness of UNC's built environment. By number, UNC's housekeeping department is the largest in the entire university system. Yet, housekeepers are seldom seen and even less heard by most of the students, faculty and staff that benefit from

their work.⁵⁵ Accounting for their invisibility despite their size, though, mistakes the structural conditions for their exclusion as merely coincidental. The labor of housekeepers, their bodies, their voices, the struggles they experience on the job, the unique challenges of their lives, must be excluded for them to become housekeepers at all. Alongside broader socio-economic frameworks, institutional productions of housekeeping work practices depend on its invisibility. The subjective presence of a living, breathing, individual housekeeper contravenes institutional frameworks for the job.

Alongside other low-wage workers on campus, particularly dining-hall staff, housekeepers have long lobbied for basic respect, legally entitled workplace accommodations, and harassment-free working environments (Baumann, 1993; Chapman, 1999, 2006; McSurely, 1994). An historic lawsuit in 1996 earned housekeepers unprecedented control and acknowledgment for their work, including more than \$1 million in back wages, the reinstatement of wrongfully terminated co-workers, and a reorganization of work that increased their everyday autonomy (Swanson, 2009; UE150, 1999). Housekeepers had successfully organized, formed a union, and were seeing the results of their collective effort bear fruit.

Ten years later, beginning in 2004, the university – and statehouse -- had chipped away at these gains. An unsuccessful attempt was made to remove housekeepers and other waged-workers from the protections of the State Personnel Act (SAW, 2012). Today, a growing list of grievances and spate of new lawsuits reveal that improvements to the department resulting

⁵⁵ The challenges experienced by housekeepers and their experience of harassment and inequality on the job are well known among student activists, local community service providers, and likely by UNC's administration. However, it is far from common knowledge and none of the student respondents in my study knew of any specific institutional challenges housekeepers might face at their jobs.

from the organizing push in the 1990s have done little to change the personnel challenges facing the department (Courtright, 2013; McNeill, 2012; Niss, 2012; Waxman, 2013). Though shifts in work policy have been framed by management as a combination of budgetary restraints and risks from unaccounted for equipment and chemical cleaning supplies, existing and former staff, labor organizers, and local civil rights lawyers also point to the organized threat presented by housekeepers in an institution notoriously hostile to labor power.

In early 2004, the department began implementing (OS1)[™]. According to pilot study reporting, the policy claimed a focus on the technical management of microbial threats to hygiene and cleanliness, staffing efficiency, and specialization (Berry, 2006, pp. 4-9). For UNC as an institution, it presented an opportunity to improve student health and safety and reduce staffing levels in the department. But, it had never been tested in college dormitories. UNC was to be not only a learning laboratory, but a laboring one as well.

I argue that in addition to any improvement to student and building health, the changes wrought by (OS1)[™] effected an uneven distribution of workplace responsibilities and an effacement of housekeepers' material bodies as the subjects – or objects – of managerial concern. Efficiency and safety set new terms for workplace excellence, overshadowing more subjective measures of job satisfaction: feeling respected, working free of harassment with clear job expectations, having access to the necessary institutional support to change untenable workplace environments. Five years after UNC began implementing OS1, an outside consultant found the department to be performing poorly in *all* of those categories, especially vis-à-vis the scores of non-English speaking housekeepers that made up an increasingly large portion of the department's line housekeeping staff (Brokaw, 2011; PRM, 2011).

In the janitorial science industry, the changes at UNC mark a common shift from “zone” to “team” cleaning systems.⁵⁶ As I discussed in Chapter 3, workplace tasks for zone cleaning are assigned by particular workspaces, not specific workplace activities. Housekeepers clean their zone, doing the range of work necessary to complete the job. This could include cleaning bathrooms, vacuuming carpets, dusting and spot-cleaning surfaces in kitchens and common areas, and removing trash. The order of the working day was scaled to the zone and housekeepers split tasks to complete the cleaning largely under their own aegis and with support of line managers. The spaces that were the target of housekeeping practice – an entire bathroom, the wall of a shower, a sink, the carpet – had familiar materialities, establishing a knowable visual scale of interaction through which housekeepers could position their work.

With the shift to (OS1)[™], the university adopted a new framework based on the effective management of cleanliness in terms of efficiency, safety and microbial – i.e. *invisible* – risks. The objects that were the familiar focus of housekeeping shifted from view. Instead of being assigned an area to clean and being responsible for the range of cleaning tasks in that area, housekeepers became restroom, vacuuming, light-duty and utility specialists. (OS1)[™] specified the amount time allocated to each specialists’ activities, down to the *second*, decreasing the diversity of work tasks in a given day in the name of increasing individual “expertise.”⁵⁷ The built environment remained, but working assignments became focused

⁵⁶ Both Agular (2001) and Mendez (1998) note the tendency, particularly in institutional spaces, to reorganize housekeeping and janitorial work practices with advancements in cleaning technology – i.e. upright vs. backpack vacuum cleaners – and in response to budgetary constraints. The shift from “zone” to “team” cleaning systems is not, that is, unique to UNC’s campus.

⁵⁷ See Footnote 32 regarding cleaning times.

through “technical” specializations targeting the elimination of dust mites, bacteria, and fungal spores.

In 2006, the housekeeping department produced a report on the pilot project for the new system, working with an outside consultant and a committee of managers, housekeepers, and student advocates to facilitate the reorganization of the department’s practices (Berry, 2006). Promises of health and efficiency required not only the specialization of housekeeping labor, but proof that the system was capable of removing the microbial risks purported to threaten human health and safety. The report’s analysis was focused, but not comprehensive. Vacuum cleaner testing measured soil removal, dust containment, carpet appearance, and micro-grams of dust particle emission per cubic meter; sampling protocols were specified to the hundredth of a second; hundreds of fungal spore and *e.coli* samples were collected and cultured.

Despite the seeming intensity of the analysis, the report begs key questions about the focus of (OS1)[™] on health and hygiene, as opposed to the reorganization of housekeeping work practices. For example, baseline samples to test the program’s efficacy were taken in April, when students were living on campus. Samples highlighting the impact of (OS1)[™] were taken in June and July, when far fewer students were on campus and buildings receive less use (Berry, 2006, pp. 21-25). In the measurement of *e.coli*, the study ultimately found no difference between the Zone and (OS1)[™] techniques. A high *e.coli* count in one bathroom was because it was sampled before it had been cleaned, not after – not so much a question of a technical difference in practice between “zone” and (OS1)[™] systems, but one that could only be resolved by the more effective personnel management practices offered by the latter. Similarly, nominal

improvements in dust counts in two lecture halls were blamed on dust from an adjacent building site. The difference between the existing system and the potential of (OS1)TM was therefore not in question, despite what appears to be gaps in data.

Knowing the specific environmental and personal health risks presented by campus buildings, particularly in their diversity of uses, is central to effectively managing UNC's campus communities. However, the change to (OS1)TM is not merely incidental to larger cultural frameworks for cleanliness, particularly the use of technical frameworks for risk that require specific kinds of expertise (pace Mitchell, 2002).⁵⁸ In the logic of (OS1)TM, cleanliness becomes a legible social good because the science of microbial risk establishes its objective basis. But, eliminated in the turn to dust mite or *e.coli* counts are the politics of knowledge production at the lab bench itself (Latour, 1987), the social and historical precedents that made public health and hygiene into scientific practice (Anderson, 2006; Ashenberg, 2007), and the specific history of housekeeping labor organizing on UNC's campus (Baumann, 1993; McSurely, 1994; Chapman, 2006). It is because of this history that the janitorial science undergirding (OS1)TM is non-innocent of a set of power relations that establish objective terms for what are, in fact, structural inequalities with deeply subjective historical precedents.

As the report explains, the efforts of housekeepers, "maintain and sustain a built environment which is healthy for occupants and which promotes, supports, and enhances the purpose of the building and the activities carried out in the building" (Berry, 2006, p. 12). The central irony is that housekeeping, though an activity in all buildings, is not an activity "carried

⁵⁸ Agular (2002) notes that the backpack vacuum is a common technology in the Taylorization of janitorial work, citing the discontent of his study participants as unrelated to their technical efficacy. Rather, "they did not want to be viewed as 'freaks' or 'aliens' with those things harnessed on their backs" (pp. 255).

out” in all buildings as indicated in this definition. It is the hidden baseline for *other* baseline conditions that is, itself, excluded.

By way of contrast, the report describes the value of housekeeping to the university in notably florid terms. Under (OS1)[™], housekeeping creates the conditions for relationships characterized by desire and belonging between students and the institution:

Housekeeping encourages topophilia—attraction to or “love of place”. It accents aesthetics, promotes human dignity, sends caring messages, instills a sense of ownership. It projects a professional image and enhances human productivity (Berry, 2006, p. 11)

For some, housekeeping reduces risk exposure and conditions a positive, attractive relationship between building occupants and the institution. But, who gets to love this place? Whose aesthetics are accented? What does it mean to “send a caring message” when the housekeeper charged with enacting the material conditions that make that message meaningful is a largely invisible, precariously positioned worker with limited recourse to equitable working conditions?

For housekeepers, the risk presented by microbes provided cover for the institutional reorganization of their working lives, eroding their hard-won gains to workplace autonomy, safety and respect. This reading of the pilot study report argues the efficacy of (OS1)[™] has little to do with microbial risk and considerably more to do with the reorganization of the workers in the department. For housekeepers, microbial life effects an orientation to institutional power that mobilizes the *invisibility* of risk in service of labor management practices with articulations to deeply problematic historical regimes of social organization and practice. An institutional focus on the microbial justifies the reorganization of the department just as it works to disguise this history.

This is the trouble at the heart of the matter. The microbial subject-displacement of housekeeping work practices ensures that any *topophilic* affectations that result from their efforts accrue exclusively to students. Students are encouraged to love their place at the university because the built environment through which they move is deserving of that love: a love that depends on the invisibility of the work that makes that love possible. But, neither group is exempt from the disciplinary effects of microbial life.

Below, I highlight ethnographic data from a series of one-on-one interviews with students living in UNC's campus dormitories to situate their understanding of the power of microbial risk. "Germs" are the common *précis* for the microbial worlds informing cleanliness practices. During interviews, they emerged as a common touchstone of meaning for students, helping them organize ideas about cleanliness, influencing practices and setting boundaries in public and private campus community spaces.

Life *en suite*: Personal responsibility and the subject(s) of germs

The dorms are diverse where housekeeping work and everyday cleanliness practices are concerned, making hay of the regulatory guidance provided by (OS1)[™]. Students clean shared "Jack and Jill" bathrooms in two-room suites themselves, but bathrooms in larger four-room suites and more traditional hall bathrooms are cleaned by housekeepers. Second, third or fourth-year respondents grew to expect housekeeping as a standard component of life on campus. But, connecting their own hygiene and cleanliness practices to housekeeping was a challenge, both conceptually and in terms of their lived experience.

Students often described a particular relationship to their cleanliness practices that touched on some notion of germs. Washing hands, sharing space, or the presence of other

bodies in their everyday lives or bathrooms were common sites of microbial worry. Contrary to the managerial subject-displacement made possible by the microbial focus of the housekeeping department's switch to (OS1)TM, germs inhabited more clearly subject-dependent/subjectifying registers of meaning for students. Germs helped students know that their bodies exist and were valuable, often revealing the fragility of bodily boundaries.

At the same time, many described encounters with quite visible *abjected* substances that presented no real hygienic threat – urine on the toilet seat, hair in the shower drain, a menstrual blood stain in the toilet bowl. These demanded attention, disrupting the smooth order of the day. Roommates who refused to clean up after themselves were noted for breaking a common social contract of shared space: visible threats to cleanliness and hygiene are a problem whose management sits securely with their source, even when that source cannot quite accommodate their subject-splitting presence.⁵⁹ These intrusions triggered students to act – removing hair from drains, replacing garbage bags, and sweeping dorm-room floors – or to expect others to act on their behalf, often housekeepers, but roommates as well. Inspiring ambivalence or disgust, willingness to act or stubborn refusal to do so, the visibility of these forms of dirt made them knowable, if in negative terms. For most, the goal was the restoration of some previously existing order that secured an individual sense of belonging: *cleanliness encourages topophilia*.

⁵⁹ Kristeva (1982) is critical here, particularly her analysis of the 'neither here nor there' character of the abject. For her, abjection is a threat to the subject because it pierces the division between the subject and its subject-defining outside terms, a particularly geographical notion. As critical geopolitics and feminist geopolitics has shown, boundaries are not only produced, but depend upon the mobilization of abjected figures to secure their always-threatened ability to divide spaces, people, or political states. Also helpful is Kaika's (2004) interpretation of the role of abjection in what she terms the 'domestic uncanny', particularly threats to domestic space and subjectivity presented by waste and the breakdown of common domestic socio-technical systems.

But, two lines of inquiry presented a different register of response. I asked students whether campus culture informed their own cleanliness or targeted the specific shape, gender, or race/ethnicity of their bodies, and whether or not they used hand-sanitizer. If hygiene and cleanliness were frameworks for embodying the peculiarities of everyday cultural practices with racialized, classed or gendered components in especially microbial terms, these questions were designed to elicit that connection.

I asked Pavi, a 19-year-old sophomore living with one roommate with a hall-style bathroom, what she thought about the value or risk of using hand-sanitizer. She elaborated on what she felt were relatively simple expectations about cleanliness and campus life:

I just like looking clean. I think I expect a lot of other people to look clean just because I know that if you can take care of yourself you probably won't be like dirty or sick or anything like that. That's the only reason I want people to be clean. Because I know that if you have showered and taken care of yourself you can't spread your germs to me. I really don't like when people don't wash their hands. I'm like... that's gross! If you went to the bathroom, you need to wash your hands. And people don't do that, and that really grosses me out. But, other than that, it's usually because of germs. I don't want to get sick, I don't want to be exposed to things that I don't need to be exposed to because you can't take care of yourself. But, other than that, I don't expect much of other people. Just be clean for the public health.

Starting with her own personal desire to *look* clean, the public presentation of perceived-to-be clean bodies helps her understand her subjective risk of personal illness from others. Personal responsibility to one's own health is shared with others through the visual cues common to a clean body, though she is not specific about what those might be. Looking clean indicates a lack of microbial risk. However, her concern over hand-washing shifts tone. What becomes an expectation of good hygiene based on visual cues becomes one sourced to personal responsibility of others to her ('you need to wash your hands'). Raising her voice for emphasis, her concern over the unknown – *invisible* – possibilities is clear. For her, avoiding

illness is as much about her own body as it is her risk from exposure from others. A flu bug, the common cold, or other common illnesses, are known by a behavior with a visual proxy: knowing that people don't wash their hands means *seeing* people not washing their hands. Her defense sets the terms of her personal expectations, and yet requires the responsibility of other students to ('just be clean for the public health').

Ryan, a sophomore living with one roommate and using a hall-style bathroom shared with approximately 25 others, explained the dirtiest part of his bathroom. His response further illustrates the relational character of cleanliness:

...the dirtiest thing in the bathroom anywhere is the handle... the door handle to go to the outside. That is the dirtiest part of anything. And... I say the dirtiest not in the sense that it is not literally the most dirty, but it is most likely to get me like sick. Or like dirty, or get myself dirty. Because anyone whether they've washed their hands or not, whatever they've done in there, they have to touch that thing.

Like most respondents, he separates dirt and germs. But, we still have the visual proxy for invisible risk – the door-handle – and a concern over personal health. He is less inclined to require others to wash their hands in service of shared notions of health, but also notes the inevitability of exposure. Notably, he commented that he uses his elbow to open the door when he can.

As he continued to talk, I asked about hand-sanitizer, which he rejected as “too extreme” in most cases. But, he went on to cite his campus ministry as a place where he used it,

The kind of idea that I've built up about it is that Purell is something that I do for other people in the sense that... I do it because I know everyone has germs on their hands. I know I have germs all over my hands. So, if I'm going to be serving someone else, the last thing I want to do is get someone else sick because of me. So, then I will be much more apt to use it for the sake of others. For my own personal use, I don't really care. But, for others, I do.

Unlike the first example, he situates himself as a potential risk ('I know I have germs all over my hands'). His encounter is informed by the setting – work in the campus ministry – where notions of personal responsibility are articulated to his value for community service. In both cases, microbial risk becomes a mechanism through which he establishes a subject-consolidating relationship to his environment, himself and other people in his social worlds.

Connections between personal and public practices of health and hygiene are critical to student understandings of microbial risk. Beyond door handles, or the public presentation of bodies on campus, the bathroom is both a fixed and active space against which subjective security is established. Steven, a freshman with a shared “Jack and Jill” bathroom that he and three others were required to clean, explained that a personal investment in his own health motivated him to clean the bathroom. Like (OS1)[™], he was concerned with microbial risk, though his motivation was personal, not professional:

I associate dirty bathrooms with vectors of infection, especially when there're other people using it. Like, my suitemate is sick, so I should clean the bathroom this weekend if I don't want to get sick... Because... that's, like, literally the barrier between his room and mine... yeah... I guess preventing sickness rather than creating health.

The overlap between the (OS1)[™] report – “Clean for health first, then appearances” – operates in quiet parallel to his description of the bathroom and its risks. Shared space does present health risk, a common fact of life on college campuses. But, the bathroom here is also explicitly a barrier because of its position in the built environment, situated between two rooms, one of which holds a sick occupant. Maintaining that barrier is key to maintaining health and serves as an apt externalization of the guiding principles of cleanliness practices.

Maintaining boundary markers, establishing the metaphorical and literal mechanisms for safe division between self and other, securing the subject in relationship to the objects and things

that might threaten its integrity: these are the conceptual underpinnings of student practices as they navigate everyday life on campus.

Student life is conditioned by relationships with both people and things that are, in these examples, sorted in microbial terms. Though the barriers clarifying that sorting change, can be internally or externally focused, and emerge and disappear depending on the nature of a given encounter, they help students understand their sense of themselves, of their own belongingness, and their entitlement to a certain type of university life. But, how do housekeepers navigate similar worry? How does the focus of their work practice influence their understanding of microbial risk? Below, two different housekeepers recount a particularly virulent flu season, making connections between student health, the organization of housekeeping work, and the risk presented by microbial vectors of disease.

Bleach

Not all microbial threats to health are ephemeral – germs on a roommate’s hand – or epiphenomenal to largely socio-cultural ideas about cleanliness and hygiene – the pathological omnipresence of hand sanitizer. Conversations with Margie and Linda, two housekeepers hired by UNC during the initial roll-out of (OS1)[™], illustrate a unique relationship between institutional concern over microbial risk, the sensual materiality of hygienic encounters, and the organization of housekeeping work. Their comments reveal an often overlooked bit of connective tissue between housekeeping work and student life.

Margie has worked first shift for nearly a decade. When she was hired, she underwent (OS1)[™] training and worked for a number of years in the dorms using the technique, though her current placement is outside the purview of the (OS1)[™] system. In a discussion about the

efficacy of the chemicals used for cleaning under (OS1)[™] and the aging infrastructure of the dorms, she remarked that some bathrooms could never *look* clean, though she knew that “they were sanitized.” With aging tile, old grout, and worn out plumbing, the visual cues confirming her effort were unavailable. But, during training for (OS1)[™], she was assured that the “chemical was as good as the hospital’s,” a high bar against which to measure housekeeping work.

Both Margie and her former co-worker, Linda, recalled a particularly virulent flu season during our conversations. The university’s health services office, residential life, and housekeeping management took extra precaution as students fell ill. For housekeepers, this meant an uptick in concern over the students living in their buildings and a return to a chemical that was outside the (OS1)[™] rule-book: bleach. Despite assurances from managers vis-à-vis the hospital-grade efficacy of the chemicals used in (OS1)[™], housekeepers were instead instructed to use a classic in the cleaning arsenal. As Margie explained, “Ain’t nothing... like bleach.” For her, this meant donning a mask, a renewed commitment to scrubbing bathroom surfaces, and an awareness of her connection to the students in her dorm – and their concerned parents:

They would notify us immediately. Because housing... part of housing... one of their goals is to make sure every student is healthy so they can go to class. You know? Not spread anything. Because we were part of housing. Over there it's part of housing [in the dorms]. Everything is pretty much... you know... you're our customers, so we have to make sure you are totally satisfied, especially your parents! Satisfied! If there's a problem, we need to get on it. And if we can't get do it, we've got find who can!

Margie recounts the short-term immediacy of the call to sanitize against flu – “they would notify us immediately” – and identifies the strong tie between housekeeping and dormitory life. Housekeeping becomes a key node of institutional practice by managing the connection between student health, risk of flu, and students’ access to coursework – “so they can go to class.”

Seasonal flu is a persistent problem in institutional spaces like schools. But, where calls to get the flu shot dot UNC's public campus spaces during the fall semester, the transition in work practice to using bleach to clean bathroom spaces is known by a proxy-in-absentia – lack of flu. Students' awareness of this microbial disease vector is a *public* health problem. Housekeepers' efforts to prevent that same problem is the *private* labor that limits the risk of exposure.

Linda was also approaching a decade of work in the department. A fastidious adherent to her (OS1)[™] training, she also commented on the crisis-based use of the chemical, offering a more skeptical explanation:

Luckily, for us, in the zone where we were, we didn't have too many that broke out with [flu]. Typically, if – and I'm saying if – people follow the right OS1 process, the way it's supposed to be done, and they use the products the way it's supposed to be done, it's actually cleaned on hospital-grade level. But, we were asked to use – for a little while – we were asked to use some bleach. Honestly, I don't understand the reason for that because we were told, at least when we first started OS1, that the OS1 products are used on military bases, used in hospitals, and as far as I know, that was the only products they used. So, I'm not exactly sure why other than sometimes when people aren't knowledgeable about some things. Sometimes, they'd probably rather play it safe than sorry and use an "oldie but goodie" and sometimes, too, I think it's for peace of mind of somebody... students that aren't familiar with it.

Like Margie – who had first-hand experience housekeeping in a hospital from a previous job – Linda cited the hospital-grade efficacy of the (OS1)[™] materials as a gold-standard of hygienic safety. She notes bleach as unnecessary because of it. Instead, she fixes blame for the lack of hospital-grade hygienic safety on the failings of other housekeepers to adhere to their (OS1)[™] training, rather than the chemicals, the virulence of that season's flu, or the petri dish of microbial exposure that is characteristic of student life in shared dormitory spaces. As she

continued, though, she offered an additional nuance that reflected her understanding of students' needs for familiar forms of *care*, echoing Margie's comments above:

I had a student that complained that I wasn't cleaning her restroom because she didn't smell the bleach stuff because some of the old zone cleaning products had bleach in it... you can smell the bleach. So, she didn't realize her restroom was actually being cleaned because it's fragrance-free.

MD: Interesting how that happens... we remember the smell of cleanliness.

Yes! (laughs) It's something people identify with. We had it happen more than one time where students, because they're used to that... because at home, that's the way their moms clean. And that's the way they're taught. And so they are not necessarily used to a fragrance-free place that's every bit as clean as...sanitary, yeah... as one that's done with bleach.

It is not only microbial risk that is known by proxy – errant hair, mold, dirty door handles – but the care required to prevent exposure from that risk. Here, the smell of bleach was a sensual indicator of this particular student's notions of entitlement to cleanliness in her bathroom space. For Linda, that scent is an “oldie but a goodie” in the cleaning toolkit associated with the domestication of cleanliness practice characteristic of mothering. Linda's own ambivalence about the efficacy of the bleach is mediated by her understanding that, despite bleach not being best practice, students' experience of dormitory life is informed by the need for cleanliness as a form of care. That cleanliness is known through her work managing the microbial risk presented by flu, using (OS1)[™]-prescribed chemicals or bleach, and engenders a necessary comfort for students living away from home.

Conclusion

Students describe the threatening possibility of microbial invasion and develop a sense of their own subjective belonging. “Germs” form produce a kind of mobile, constitutive outside against which their entitlement to university space is produced. Housekeepers are authorized

to control and eliminate this threat. But, the scientific terms used to justify a change in housekeeping management represent more than just a how-to guide to controlling the non-human threats to student bodies. They provided the managerial mechanism necessary to UNC's division and control of housekeeping labor, following a well-established tradition of corralling and devaluing housekeeper autonomy, this time with the authority of "scientific" fact. At the same time, in their everyday working lives, housekeepers understand the importance of microbial vectors of hygienic risk and their role caring for the health of the students living in the dorms they clean. In each case, power and practice merge to establish a complicated set of overlapping, but highly differentiated, social worlds.

Everyday cleanliness practices inform a type of modern subject position – visibly neat, invisibly germ-free – that is articulated to normative expectations for bodies themselves – student, productive citizen, consumer. These expectations embed and animate the embodied underpinnings of institutional power on the college campus in this example. If the cleanliness of individuals producing their everyday bodies is motivated, at least in part, by some actualization of desire, who shapes that desire, to what end, and what are its necessary exclusions?

To individual students, institutional concern over cleanliness and hygiene are additive, not determinant. But, the power of individual cleanliness need not come from any institutional powers-that-be when the micro-politics of social practice do considerable work establishing the normative expectations of bodies in everyday life. Regardless of their being hailed to hygienic norms, students are granted a dominant, positive, if consistently intensifying, campus subjectivity. They are not simply the "reason" that campus exists – a contestable framework, in any event. Their bodies are entitled to university space, so long as their everyday embodiments

are fitted to the terms of engagement. By way of contrast, housekeepers occupy an instrumentalized space where their labor becomes the measure of their institutional value. As this labor was reorganized by (OS1)[™] in deference to the latest janitorial science, the everyday challenges of their jobs were reframed by the scientific objectivity of laboratory-tested hygienic safety.

Cleanliness norms are demanding, establishing social and physical boundaries in everyday life. As waged work or individual practice, the risk these demands potentially remediate are visible by proxy, in relationship to other human and non-human things. The terms of practice and work combine to protect and shield the porous fragility and private shames of the body from public view in service of socially shared norms about how bodies should be: secure, free of germs and disease, pure.

But, the waged work of housekeeping that produces cleanliness in service of students and other institutional needs must additionally shoulder the burden of the stigma associated with the objects of the work itself. Housekeepers are the very real, living, human workers that supplement the social meaning of cleanliness as a category. But, cleanliness practices manage and produce waste, present encounters with abjected objects and things, and are situated within a fractious social history. This history has also figured the waged work targeted to cleanliness as the necessary other-than to the positive benefits that cleanliness practices provides to social bodies at large. To be clean is celebrated, to clean for others is ignored, at best, and more likely framed by racialized, gendered and classed divisions in working worlds. To clean for others is to be rendered invisible alongside the microbial risks delimiting your everyday working life.

I focus on the process through which cleanliness is constructed to decenter its perceived fixity, revealing the personal and institutional mechanics that grant its precarious permanence, the policies and everyday practices that coalesce around always only temporary boundaries. Why does this matter? Boundaries "take diversity and organize it and take homogeneity and differentiate it" (Jones, 2009, p. 180), spatializing systems of belonging through practices of exclusion. In the case of cleanliness, though, there never was internal homogeneity as much as the *expectation* of it. The difference between the material realities of bodily cleanliness and hygiene and the expectation that it always – or already – be clean is, I argue, evidence of a pervasive structural inequality that is central my inquiry. In seeking bodily perfection in terms of cleanliness, institutions and individuals operationalize a system of brutal hierarchies, enacting and spatializing everyday inequality through the management of the body at its most mundane. These acts depend on both an army of invisible threats and a system of hidden labor just as they themselves labor to hide already invisible threats to the subject itself.

CHAPTER 6: WORK, UNFREEDOM, AND HOUSEKEEPING LABOR

In the previous two chapters, I focused on aspects of cleanliness practice that organize the cultural and social signification systems mediating entitlement to everyday hygienic embodiment. In Chapter 4, I argued that the efforts of students – the practices and hierarchical aesthetic regimes organizing cleanliness routines – establish fragile but common hygienic conditions for student life, influencing their sense of belonging *as a body* to the student body. In Chapter 5, I explored connections between microbial life, cleanliness and power. Germs are a focus of risk-averse organizational practice for UNC as an institution charged with maintaining student health. At the same time, *e.coli*, dust mites, and flu virus are invisible non-human agents threatening the porous boundaries of students' bodies. Tracing different mobilizations of microbial life by students, housekeepers and the university reveals a connection between invisibility and an institutional differentiation connecting student health to the precarious working conditions housekeepers experience on the job.

I return now to the institutional organization of housekeeping work, elaborating on the changes to housekeeping work practice discussed in Chapter 3. Again, my focus is the bureaucracy behind the everyday work practices of housekeepers, using the period between 2005 and 2006 as a fulcrum point in housekeeping management practice. Though it was unclear at the time, a shift in institutional attention to housekeepers and their daily work practices marked the end of a wave of strong housekeeping labor organizing that stretched back to at least the early 1990s and peaked with a successful lawsuit brought against the administration in

1996 (Baumann, 1993; Chapman, 2006; Ashton, 2013). In 2005, UNC began using *Operating System (1)*TM ((OS1)TM), a janitorial management system designed by ManageMen, Inc. that specifies a “science” to organizing institutional housekeeping systems. Initially piloted in a specific set of campus buildings, it is used in the majority of housekeeping worksites today.⁶⁰

(OS1)TM reformatted job responsibilities and staffing levels, instituted a new “Crew Leader” staff line situated slightly above line housekeepers in the department’s organizational hierarchy, and introduced a new suite of cleaning technologies and new “green” cleaning chemicals. The changes coincided with a dramatic shift in the demographic make-up of housekeepers themselves. In 2000, there were no Karen, Burmese, Chin, or Ka-Chin housekeepers on staff at UNC. Today, non-English speaking people from Burma and adjacent regions in Southeast Asia account for approximately 40% of the department’s line housekeepers.⁶¹ The workplace organizing that characterized the previous period shifted.

⁶⁰ The program was piloted in both office/classroom buildings and dormitory facilities. ManageMen, Inc.’s founder and president, John Walker, selected the candidate buildings based on a baseline audit of the campus that was completed in May, 2005 (ManageMen, 2005). The Bioinformatics Building was the first test building, selected because it was the easiest to convert to the system with a single (OS1)TM team (see “What is housekeeping?” in Chapter 1 for more information on the day-to-day operations of the program). Subsequent pilots were completed in Carroll Hall, Day Hall, and Carmichael Hall over the course of 2005 and 2006.

⁶¹ An exact date of hire for the “first” refugee employee at UNC is difficult to pinpoint. Discussions during fieldwork indicate that it was not until after 2000 that people from Burma began arriving in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Looking for Burmese, Karen, Chin and Ka-Chin names in the department’s employment records – no doubt, a very rough estimation – reveals that hiring of people from Burma did not begin in earnest until 2006. Despite multiple attempts, I have been unable to connect with Lutheran Family Services to confirm the earliest arrivals to the area. In addition, an accurate tally of the exact number of people fleeing conflict in Burma has been difficult to ascertain. The most comprehensive data of the demographic make-up of the department is from PRM Consulting, Inc., the management consulting firm hired to analyze the department’s troubled working environment in the wake of Bill Burston’s removal and an ongoing set of grievances from housekeepers about their supervisors and managers (PRM, 2011). PRM interviewed 143 non-English speakers as a part of their 6-month analysis of the department’s operations, 83% (n=123) were identified as “Asian,” the remaining 17% (n=20) were “Hispanic” (PRM, 2011, p. 13). From working with SAW and discussions with other community support providers in the local refugee community, the majority of non-English speakers are Latino/a and ethnic Karen, but also include Burmese, Chin, Ka-Chin, Mon and Rohingya men and women. There is no information in the report about which languages were provided to housekeepers identified as non-English speaking and Asian, nor a break-out of other demographic characteristics cross-tabulated with language.

Interviews with current and past employees, local labor organizers and support service providers reflect an ongoing desire for better working conditions, workplace autonomy, and basic respect. But, the university has shifted the means through which housekeeping is organized such that the connection between effective resistance to problematic working experiences and meaningful change is considerably weakened.

This chapter explores the administrative, policy and workplace organizational changes made in the Facilities Services Division and Housekeeping Department in 2005/2006 alongside revisions to the North Carolina State Policy Act's Employee Grievance Policy between 1990 and today. I read the shift to (OS1)[™] in the context of changes to the university's employee grievance policy and a report produced in 2011 analyzing ongoing personnel management problems in the department. I argue that (OS1)[™] created and necessitated an especially precarious class of waged workers with limited recourse to the institutional resources designed to ameliorate work-related exploitation, inequality and harm. As a result, and in keeping with broader labor market trends informing the intersection of the international division of labor and social reproductive care work (pace Barker and Feiner, 2004; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2007; Parrenas, 2012), housekeepers shoulder two burdens: social, cultural and economic stigma that attends low-wage, physically demanding, and socially devalued work like housekeeping *and* the problems the new workplace management system itself created.

There is no direct, causal connection between shifting management tactics, changes to the grievance policy, and the day-to-day challenges faced by housekeepers. However, to argue for causal connection as proof of systemic exploitation is to miss the structural production of gendered, racialized and ethnicized working identities. This is not about a smoking gun, but a

wall of bureaucratic mechanisms through which UNC as an institution produces its authority by limiting the ability of its non-academic workers to make meaningful and necessary changes to their working worlds. This is partially about control over work practice and partially about control over the resources designed to support university employees, and protect them from work-related harm, inequality, and exploitation.

A major finding of this section of my research has been a dismaying similarity in the micro-management of housekeeping work practice at a departmental level and revisions to the grievance policy making it exceptionally difficult to use official institutional channels to grieve working conditions, particularly for employees who do not speak English. The terms of the grievance policy and the materials central to the function of (OS1)[™] share focus on controlling *time* in relationship to the spatial specifications of housekeeping work practice. In the first case, the university has consistently reduced or micro-specified the amount of time allowed by employees to navigate different provisions of the grievance process. In the second, (OS1)[™] has Taylorized work practice by specifying the everyday demands of the job to fractions of a minute. These shifts displace the subjective specificity of housekeepers themselves, substituting a blank category – housekeeper/worker – for what has long been very much a living, breathing human being central to the fabric of campus life – the actual individuals working as housekeepers.

Below, I contextualize my empirical data in terms of connections made by Kathi Weeks (2011) and Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2006) between race, gender, citizenship and work in the US context. I argue that UNC's bureaucratic systems are a central and overlooked component of the production and division of the interpersonal relationships informing the working lives of

housekeepers. I examine training materials for managers and line housekeepers developed by ManageMen, Inc. and introduced during the roll-out of (OS1)TM, placing them alongside a series of revisions made to two components of the North Carolina State Employee Grievance Policy since 1990. I focus on the narrowing of the time constraints allotted to employees to file a formal grievance and the policy's definition of a "support person" to assist employees navigating the process. Finally, I turn to a report produced by PRM Consulting, Inc., a Washington D.C.-based management consulting firm hired to analyze problems in the department under the leadership of Bill Burston, the former housekeeping director who was fired for his direct involvement in a far-reaching sexual harassment scandal.⁶²

Necessary, But Invisible: Producing Workplace "Unfreedom"

As I argued in Chapter 4, the waged work of housekeeping is a central, but obscure, component of students' sense of hygienic embodiment. This obscurity – a combination of social, economic and material invisibility – is central to the uneven distribution of access to campus spaces and fair treatment that reinforces the low value of housekeeping work and housekeepers themselves. On the one hand, housekeepers produce the conditions through which students inhabit their entitlement to dominant forms of campus embodiment. On the other, their work remains out of sight, reinforcing the ideological terms of a status quo that

⁶² I was lucky enough to obtain a trove of documents from a member of the housekeeping advisory committee convened during the initial piloting and implementation of (OS1)TM, including meeting minutes, employee surveys, training manuals, and reports produced by ManageMen, Inc. I also interviewed two current UNC staff members with longstanding ties to campus organizing, both of whom shared their own memories of the period under discussion and additionally guided me to archival information from the Employee Forum and other administrative offices that have been essential to reconstructing this story. The iterations of the official grievance policy were obtained through a public records request submitted by a former undergraduate student and member of Student Action with Workers (see Appendix IV). Those documents include each official iteration of the policy since 1990, including mark-up versions showing line-edits to the document before modifications were approved by the North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings.

devalues housekeeping labor relative to student life. For students, the invisibility of housekeeping work is incidental. In 28 semi-structured interviews with undergraduates, not one knew of any specific problems in the department, nor did any of my interviewees know the name of the housekeepers who cleaned the spaces where they lived. This is not to cast aspersions on their lack of knowledge, but to mark the substantive boundaries separating what are, in fact, overlapping, interdependent worlds.

Without housekeepers' efforts, students might experience subjective discomfort, or a nominal increase in exposure to disease. For housekeepers, the stakes are considerably higher. As waged work, housekeeping functions as "a social convention and disciplinary apparatus" (Weeks, 2011, p. 9) with pernicious attachment to long-standing systems of gendered, racialized – particularly ethnicized in this example – systems of exploitation (Duffy; 2007; Glymph, 2008; Nakano Glenn, 2006). The administrative production of that disciplinarity is the focus of this analysis.

Institutionalizing Social Reproductive Labor

An historically-entrenched disconnection between waged/productive and unwaged/reproductive labor ensures that the beneficial effects of social reproductive work like housekeeping do not accrue to the person doing the work, but the person *relying* on that labor (Dalla Costa & James, 1972; Federici, 2010). In the US context, this uneven distribution of benefit emerges as a key mechanism for the production of racialized and gendered divisions in labor markets at a range of scales (Branch, 2011; Duffy, 2007), including the intra-institutional divisions between students and housekeepers that are central to my analysis, but also broader regional differentiations that connect local labor markets to the production of racialized

laboring bodies in distant and disparate spaces (Nakano Glenn, 1992, 2006). Starting from this framework, my interest is in the administrative and bureaucratic mechanisms that reify – or disrupt – those divisions. How does housekeeping labor practice become an object of institutional concern for UNC?

From the founding moments of settler colonial economic development in the US South, social reproductive labor necessary to domestic life was especially gendered and racialized, shouldered by unfree black women during centuries of enslavement (Boydston, 1994; Glymph, 2008). When chattel slavery became unconstitutional, labor regimes articulated to domestic reproduction retained their previously gendered and racialized character (Branch, 2008; Duffy, 2007). As this care work was institutionalized as janitorial and housekeeping work, these long-standing racialized and gendered divisions were maintained (Aguilar, 1998; Branch, 2011; Duffy, 2007). By the end of the 20th century, the unfixing of labor markets characteristic of the neoliberal turn has meant an increase in the number of women from South and Southeast Asia doing social reproductive care work previously done by African American women, particularly marketized variants of social reproductive care work that are newly articulated to institutional space (Cranford, 2005; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Parreñas, 2001).⁶³

In the US, global labor migration streams reinforce and redefine the gendered, classed and racialized divisions in local contexts, responding to the specific contours of local historical precedent (Nakano Glenn, 2006), producing and contributing to worker precarity that stretches back at least to the 1970s (Kalleberg, 2011). At UNC, what was historically a department

⁶³ Of course, this is not unique to US contexts. The Philippines, for example, has incentivized visa programs to encourage women to enter global care work markets, leaving home to work for foreign domestic and institutional employers with limited oversight to ensure fair treatment or protection from exploitation (Parreñas, 2008; Silvey, 2004).

comprised of African American women and men (McSurely, 1993) has been transformed to include dozens of non-English speaking Karen, Burmese, Chin, Ka-Chin and Rohingya men and women who are a part of the growing community of people from Burma in Chapel Hill, Carrboro and surrounding towns (Cathcart, et al, 2007; Immigrant & Refugee Community Partnership, 2005).

The conditions in the housekeeping department are an example of the “unequal freedom” that has long connected work, gender and the construction of citizenship (Nakano Glenn, 2006). Work, especially in the US, is a primary site through which bodies are gendered, marking “the tremendous plasticity of gender [as it] reinforces rather than undermines its naturalization” on the job (Weeks, 2011, p. 11). At the same time, macro- and micro-economic trends have reformulated ideas connecting labor and citizenship as mutually subjectifying identity categories with distinct social and political articulations, extending what were once locally racialized and gendered labor regimes to distant and disparate geographies, particularly Latin America, and East and Southeast Asia (Nakano Glenn, 2006, p. 19).

In the US, connections between the production of racial differentiation and waged work are especially potent. In historical context, the value of citizenship to whiteness was defined in opposition to blackness *and* womanhood. In the shift away from economic systems dependent on chattel slavery, “new and more derogatory definitions of dependence as moral and psychological in nature drew tighter and more explicit race-gender boundaries around citizenship” (Nakano Glenn, 2006, p. 29). These boundaries produced ideas about *white* citizenship in relationship to gendered and racialized labor regimes. Alongside Nakano Glenn, I am following Omi and Winant’s (1994) construction of race as a “central organizing principle of

social institutions, focusing especially on the ‘racial state’ as an arena for creating, maintaining and contesting social boundaries and meanings” (Nakano Glenn, 2006, p. 12). As Duffy (2007) explains, these boundaries continue to be re-drawn in the present moment, informing not only the value of certain kinds of work – social reproductive care work, especially – but racialized and gendered ideas about *who* is best suited to that work. The US South was central to the most divisive examples of these connections, particularly systems of value that tethered women of color to the devaluation of domestic care work (Glymph, 2008). It is against this history that UNC’s janitors, maids, housekeepers and food service workers have long fought for recognition, fair treatment, and equity (Baumann, 1993; Chapman, 2006; McSurely, 1993).

For Nakano Glenn, the *interstitial* production of gendered and racialized difference lends these categories of social identity such lasting cultural and economic valence. Just as ideas of cleanliness are only ever partially legible, racialized and gendered distributions of power are “lodged in taken-for-granted assumptions and practices, [take] forms that do not involve force of threat of force, and [occur] in dispersed locations” (Nakano Glenn, 2006, p. 16). Cleanliness practices and the waged work of housekeeping echo and recreate the importance of these interstices, connecting the micro-practices of individual bodies, the waged work of housekeepers, and the institutional regimes in which they are differentially situated.

As housekeeping was transformed through its institutionalization, ideas about domesticity, particularly its necessary separation from the “productive” economy, persisted (pace Federici, 2006, 2011). This effaces the bodies of housekeepers themselves. Previously hidden by the four walls of a private home, housekeeping and janitorial work is expected to remain out of sight, a cultural conceit reinforced by the scientific management regime currently

in place in the department at UNC. Today, for example, housekeeping work practice is produced in reference to student entitlement to hygiene and cleanliness *as well as* the department's policy designed to manage their work practices. Far from unique to UNC, the changes to work practice instituted by (OS1)[™] reflect broader trends in the janitorial science and building management industry, where a combination of shrinking budgets, new technology, and demographic shifts have re-animated institutional use of scientific management schema to organize work practices (Cranford, 2005; Hood, 1988; Mendez, 1998).

Even at the time of implementation in 2005-2006, objections to key components of (OS1)[™] were well known, discussed by concerned staff at UNC's Employee Forum and in the meetings of (OS1)[™] Evaluation Committee analyzing the piloting and roll-out of the program (e.g. Denzler, 2006). Five years later, the findings of a management consulting report analyzing problems in the housekeeping department offer comprehensive data that the workplace equity challenges that have long animated workplace organizing efforts remained (PRM, 2011). Reorganizing work practice did little to redress long-standing structural and personnel challenges in the department. I argue that changes to the grievance policy have worked alongside the shifting management of the department under (OS1)[™] to shift the burden of remediating day-to-day workplace challenges away from management, refocusing them in terms of disagreements between housekeepers themselves and in terms that require housekeepers to put themselves at considerable personal risk to ameliorate very real workplace harm. My concern is the contiguities between what were historically domesticated systems of labor exploitation that remain when that work is transformed through its

marketized institutionalization.⁶⁴ Though it may seem a stretch to claim housekeeping work as “care work” in the context of campus life at UNC, to ignore the connection between the devaluation of domestic reproductive labor and its waged and marketized form is to miss two things: the historically-embedded structural issues that produce current systems of exploitation *and* a critical point of conjuncture between the efforts of students and the efforts of housekeepers.

The division between reproductive and productive labor produces and reflects capitalism’s structural dependence on gendered and racialized exclusion. But, it has also created a sphere of daily activity that posits the material practices of the everyday body as a permanent sticking point and locus of resistance to the systemic exploitation created by that division (Federici, 2011; Katz, 2001b). If housekeeping work – and housekeepers’ themselves – function as a constitutive outside to the dominant and valorized subject positions central to university life – predominantly students and faculty – how do the painstakingly detailed bureaucratic mechanisms work to ensure housekeepers’ forced inhabitation of this contradiction? Their work is indispensable *and* devalued. A close reading of the university’s management policies, training manuals and consultant reports reveals the system of statements – the discursive forms and managerial infrastructure – that create, extend and normalize – *invisibilize* – the gap between institutional norms for student bodies/the student

⁶⁴ For example, Brien (2015) explains that the renaming of the University Laundry Building as the Cheek Clark Building in 1998 was the result of an explicit stipulation in the University Housekeepers Agreement that followed from the Housekeepers Association’s successful five-year lawsuit against the university. When the suit was filed in 1991, housekeepers made \$1,500 *below* the federal poverty line, an annual salary of \$11,600 (Daily Tar Heel, 1996).

body and the waged non-academic work those norms require. The *system* that makes that possible is my focus here.⁶⁵

A New Way: (OS1)[™] and Workplace Atomization

In 2005, the specter of Taylor and his scientific management regime-making transformed the everyday work practices of housekeepers employed by the university. As I explained in Chapter Three, *Operating System 1 (OS1)[™]* marked a return to an older form. Though touted as an opportunity for increasing housekeeper expertise through specialized training, the terms of (OS1)[™] bear strong resemblance to the former “gang cleaning” system against which housekeepers successfully organized in the 1990s (Brannigan, 2015; Prear, 2015). It took nearly ten years for the gains from that effort to slip away, but the institution of (OS1)[™] is a distinct turning point.

Because training was and remains central to the implementation of (OS1)[™], the mode through which the department enacts that training functions as a microcosm of broader institutional understandings of the value of housekeeping work, and housekeepers. Training is not only about the production of expertise, but functions as a site for re-establishing managerial authority over housekeepers as they navigated – and resisted – new working environments. For campus labor organizers and student activists, (OS1)[™] is emblematic of the

⁶⁵ Interviews with housekeepers and current and former employers revealed a great deal by way of naming specific individuals and work-sites that are a consistent source of problems – some minor, others quite clearly egregious and in contravention of both university policy as well as state and federal employment law. However, I avoid a narrow focus on a specific set of specific personnel issues. As PRM (2011) details, the department has had limited success addressing serious problems between supervisors, management and line-staff. But, as interpersonal disputes, these problems are relatively well-known, bubbling up in local media coverage and as sites of organized resistance at periodic intervals (Courtright, 2013; McNeill, 2012; Niss, 2012; Waxman, 2013; Willard, 2013). In part, my hope is to decouple an institutional dependence on the connection between the identification of culpable parties and the possibility of systemic change. This is not to say that specific individuals can avoid responsibility for their role in creating problematic workplaces. It is to better identify the mechanisms through which the university is (re)producing a class of precarious workers using the language of equity and access.

university's mistreatment of a large cadre of historically powerful and restive non-academic employees (Brannigan, 2015; Brien, 2014; Bur, 2014). According to ManageMen, Inc's "official" word on (OS1)TM, the terms of the system atomize working conditions by design, using the language of team work to institute an aggressive reorganization of housekeepers' working days (Brannigan, 2005).

Documents provided to the (OS1)TM Evaluation Committee during project implementation have two distinct sets of instructions, one for managers and another for housekeepers, regarding the system. The production of multiple messages distributed unevenly among stake-holders reveals a power gap. On the one hand, a lack of clarity about (OS1)TM provides a means for housekeepers to resist the devolution of hard-won workplace equity gains. On the other, the specificity of the program provides multiple pathways to corral that resistance, setting the terms of a system informed by ideological understandings of the low value of housekeeping work and housekeepers themselves.⁶⁶ In the case of ManageMen, Inc., the slippage between the terms of engagement provided to managers and the materials provided to line-staff produce the dominance of one – management – as a product of the systemic devaluation of the other – line housekeepers. The new system reformulated the relationship between housekeepers, the spaces they were expected to clean, and the institutional metrics used to measure work practice and success. The difference in messaging reveal connections between new expertise and the tightly-scaled control of workers themselves.

⁶⁶ For Dikeç (2012), ideology and political subjectivities are always-already conditional elements brought into being through contestations over the meaning of space.

Regardless of outcome, reorganizing such a large department was difficult for reasons that exceeded any inconvenience presented by the development and roll-out of new training systems and the institution of new work practices. In the first case, (OS1)TM had never been successfully implemented in university dormitories.⁶⁷ In the second, many long-term staff had spent the previous 15 years working to redress unfair treatment by the university (Ashton, 2013; Baumann, 1993; Chapman, 2006; McSurely, 1993).

Below, I specify the slippage between the terms of engagement provided to managers and the materials provided to line-staff, revealing an institutional dependence on the effacement of housekeepers in service of the labor they produce for the university.

Studying at “Janitor University”

The materials produced by ManageMen, Inc. for line-staff and managers overlap.⁶⁸ But, like the difference between a student and teacher’s edition of a textbook, the *managerial*

⁶⁷ Though I was able to obtain second-hand information about previous challenges to (OS1)TM at other universities (SAW, 2005), a critical difficulty in implementing the system in dormitories was the number and style of bathrooms that would fall under the system’s purview. For example, one housekeeper explained to me that (OS1)TM does not provide a specific set of chemicals or instructions for cleaning showers. As a work-around, UNC uses non-(OS1)TM chemicals to get the job done, but it is a notable gap in programmatic efficacy for a workplace management system overtly concerned with consistent and comprehensive application of (OS1)TM-specific practices.

⁶⁸ As I explained in my methods section, I was able to obtain some of the materials produced by ManageMen, Inc. used in the training of both line housekeepers as well as their managers. However, I am unable to reproduce them directly here. Though I contacted ManageMen, Inc. about reprinting, they have yet to respond vis-à-vis their inclusion and I am disinclined to expose myself to potential copyright infringement claims for doing so. Those that I did procure came from study informants who are no longer associated with the university. All references to a ManageMen, Inc. training manual in this discussion refer to their booklet, “Janitor University training booklet for (OS1)TM managers” (ManageMen, Inc., 1997-2000) or “(OS1)TM Bootcamp for cleaning workers, simplified” (Walker, 2005). In the case of the training booklet for managers, there are extensive notes in the margins that were identified by SAW as belonging to former Facilities Services Director Jim Alty. I have no way of verifying the truth of their claims, though would argue the sentiment they contain represents a troubling framework for the relationship between management and staff regardless of their origin. The packet of papers is itself a curious assembly of materials from other presentations designed by ManageMen, Inc (Janitor University, 1997-2000). The pages do not follow in sequential order; some are numbered, some are not. Though each page is marked with a Janitor University seal – two globes on top of each other depicting the earth divided into eastern and western hemispheres – the copyright dates vary from 1997 through 2000.

marginalia reveal an institutional dependence on control and a focus on eliminating the sticky interpersonal human resource challenges that have been the focus of worker organizing in the past. The science of hygienic risk prevention is front-and-center in party-line discussions of the new program's efficacy with line housekeeping staff. But, that risk is only one of a series of concerns to managers, arguably secondary to the consolidation of control over housekeepers themselves. The materials provided by ManageMen, Inc. focus managerial effort on controlling – *policing* – potential detractors and ensuring the (OS1)[™] system's wide and consistent application.

Training materials are produced for use at “Janitor University,” ManageMen, Inc's training facility at their corporate headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. The company is explicit in its adulation of scientific management. On page one of one of the management training manual is an image of a Big Mac (ManageMen, Inc., 1997-2000). Its neatly illustrated component parts are centered on the page. Text explains the Kroc brother's search for a consistent hamburger for their growing franchise. That success, according to the manual, stemmed from focus on a “process...not a recipe” to ensure profit. By breaking down component parts, the risk of unsuccessful implementation that might result from subjective interpretation of work practice is eliminated.

On the following page, labeled “Standardization,” a series of sequenced photographs illustrates the inspirational origins of the (OS1)[™] system. With connecting arrows, an image of Frederick Taylor points to an image of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, an image of Henry Ford, an assembly line, Ray Kroc and, finally, the logo for ManageMen and (OS1)[™]. The managerial architecture of the program is explicit: a combination of Taylor's compartmentalization of

process and the Gilbreth's time-motion studies would be filtered through the effacement of workers produced by the logic of the assembly line and the standardization of work practice. As I explained earlier, the marketization of care work retrenches unequal access to life and livelihood on the basis of social identity (Duffy, 2007). These documents reveal that it does so by eliminating any possible connection between work practice and an actual living, breathing, working subject.

On a page labelled "Resistance to Implementation" the *first* bullet-point explains that resistance "must be overcome," requiring a knowledge gap between managers and line-staff. The list details potential challenges, explaining that managers should "expect resistance" and "out-run resistors" (ManageMen, Inc., 1997-2000, p. 5). According to ManageMen, institutions should expect 30% of staff to convert early, 50% be ambivalent, and 20% to actively resist change to (OS1)[™], warning that managers must "watch your beginnings" as a means of "taking care of 'me' issues early" (ManageMen, Inc., 1997-2000, p. 6). As a "process...not a recipe," there is no "me" in (OS1)[™], there is only the successful application of work practice designed by the experts at ManageMen, Inc. (Ibid). The connection between the success of (OS1)[™] and the subjective displacement of housekeepers themselves is explicit; the "me" issues are addressed early on and, ideally, eliminated.

A page titled "How to get more with less" features hand-written marginalia that explains, "skilled, motivated employees fail in a chaotic organization, mediocre employees excel in an orderly, disciplined system w/ fair measures for all" (sic) (ManageMen, Inc., 1997-2000, p. 7). There are at least two possibilities here. Even good workers fail in poor working environments; (OS1)[™] provides the necessary tools to help them succeed. Or, the comments

are an admission that the power of (OS1)[™] depends on the ability to control unskilled – “mediocre” – workers. A connection is made to potential antimony between “skilled, motivated” and “mediocre” employees. If (OS1)[™] demands mediocre employees by design, the condition for dismissive treatment by *employers* is foundational to the (OS1)[™] program. There is no Orwellian double-speak here. This is not the language of elision, but the language of institutional bureaucracies “incapable of real empathy” (Salaita, 2015), brutal in its clarity and intent.⁶⁹ Workers celebrated for their *mediocrity* better serve an institutional desire for workplace efficiency.

SAW’s (2005) pamphlet protesting the project’s terms highlights these written notes, in particular the page explaining the operating logic behind the distribution of wages best suited to a successful (OS1)[™] program. Though the distribution of wages is idealized to a now decade-old “metro market,” it is the comments that concern SAW. There are several annotations on a bell curve describing a normal distribution of wages. Below the upper end of the bell curve, the notations indicate that “Tony Tiger” (sic) makes \$27.00/hr., but can clean 45,000 square feet per 8-hour shift (there are 57,600 square feet in a regulation football field). By contrast, “Joe Avg” (sic) makes \$7.50/hr. – at the time the national average, excluding benefits – for 23,000

⁶⁹ Writing in *The Nation*, Stephen Salaita makes an impassioned case for speaking truth to corrupt institutional administrations. Though the valence of his argument is articulated to different axes of power, his sentiment is worth noting here. He writes, “Of special interest is the profound contempt of university managers toward employees and certain students (i.e., those who can’t, or won’t, function as passive emissaries of administrative interests). The administrative and donor classes are incapable of real empathy; they instead treat money as an anthropomorphic symbol and view humankind as a volatile commodity. Once we are cognizant of this reality, their seemingly inane and inhumane decisions make perfect sense. We are not, in other words, dealing with irrationality, but with people who rationally pursue coldhearted pragmatism. Dehumanization is a corollary of that pursuit. Changing the behavior of individual managers isn’t a useful goal. If the job relies at least to some degree on preserving structural power, then even decent individuals performing the work have no real latitude. We are thus responsible for ending the systematic problems of academe. We do that by upending the systems that require racism and repression in order to function” (Salaita, 2015).

square feet of work. At far left, “Sam Slug” works for \$3.00/hr., but does little cleaning; “Sam Slug” is additionally labeled “undocumented aliens (sub-contracting)” (sic), with an arrow pointing to the hourly wage.

Like the previous page with its comparison of mediocre and skilled work, there are multiple possible readings here. On a positive note, pay your employees well and they will work hard. “Tony Tiger” may cost, but is worth the investment. Investing in “undocumented aliens” will not provide you the return you may be seeking by cutting wages. But, the connection between “undocumented aliens” and a derogatory short-hand like “Sam Slug” again belies the slippage between the institutionalization of disregard for employees and the demands of the (OS1)[™] system. As SAW (2005) explains, regardless of the intent of the document, the “use of the term ‘slug’ to describe employees is totally inappropriate and offensive” and “speaks volumes of the attitudes of upper management towards the housekeepers working under them” (p. 5).

You’re in the Army Now

Underscoring an institutional and administrative concern with control and workplace efficiency, the training manual targeted to housekeepers – *(OS1)[™] Boot Camp for Cleaning Workers Simplified* – makes direct connection between military-style control and scientific management (Walker, 2005). The booklet is “hosted” by a cartoon staff sergeant with prominent spectacles, smile and clipboard at the ready – unfit for combat on the front-lines, but ready to instruct others in the science of fighting germs. The manual describes the program’s origins and explains the four “specialist” positions that comprise the teams at the heart of what is generally known by housekeepers as “team” cleaning.

The manual opens with a one-page bio of John Walker who, in his capacity as the founder of ManageMen, “started the cleaning industry in 1972” (Walker, 2005, p. 5).⁷⁰ Walker’s “Philosophy of Cleaning” follows, featuring a list of (OS1)[™] buzzwords: clean for health first, then appearance; treat cleaning workers as first class citizens; simplify, simplify; utilize the clean syndrome; go beyond compliance and safety regulations; minimize environmental harm; exceed expectations (Walker, 2005, p. 7). Some are terms unique to the program – *cleaning for health first, then appearance* and *utilizing the clean syndrome*. Others rely on language common to workplace management – *going beyond compliance* or *exceeding expectations*. The reminder that cleaning workers should be treated “as first-class citizens” is particularly ironic given the conditions through which (OS1)[™] was instituted – contentious – and the resulting impact of the program as discovered by PRM’s (2011) independent analysis of the housekeeping department.

Before turning to pages of technical specifications for the required (OS1)[™] specializations, the manual offers an adage on a page labeled, simply, “SIMPLIFIED – Simplify” (Walker, 2005, p. 9). Set over a background of images of early 20th century industrial looms, a quote attributed to Walker claims, “It’s simple to make things complicated. But it’s complicated to make things simple” (Walker, 2005, p. 9). The first phrase reads easily enough as a call to order against the existing status quo: it takes very little effort to upset the efficient operation of a workplace cleaning system that lacks the guidance of ManageMen, Inc. I read the second,

⁷⁰ By other historical accounts (Anderson, 2006; Boydston, 1994; Shove, 2003), the institutionalization of cleaning work has roots that stretch back to the advent of piped water, to say nothing of the longstanding systems of cultural value about hygiene, purity and risk that predate the formal hygienic science and cleanliness practice that attended Western industrialization (pace Douglas, 1966). The bravado is indicative of a confident hand, a leader to be followed, and, by his own admission, a scientist with data.

however, as a warning of what is to come. (OS1)[™] is comprehensive, efficient, and effective.

But, it is demanding and complicated. The solutions to UNC's housekeeping problems are, that is, *technical* as opposed to structural, interpersonal, or macro-institutional. So long as housekeepers follow the rules of the new system, their reformulated workplaces will better address the job at hand. ManageMen, Inc. is there to help.

The question remains: what is being made simple here? Not the job itself, according to ManageMen, Inc. New specialization requires re-training existing employees and a new training system for new hires. As an outside observer, the specifications of (OS1)[™] seem arbitrarily complicated and dizzyingly specific, a case of the management consultant tail wagging the contracting institution's dog. Vacuuming, cleaning bathrooms, dusting, taking out the trash, and cleaning toilets are transformed from the building blocks of social reproductive labor regimes into a technical, specialized science necessitating the logic of scientific management.⁷¹ Their reformulation as specialization creates a market for ManageMen, Inc. and its materials, serves as a justification for the reorganization of work practices, and enables the department's leadership to communicate the changes as a *benefit* to workers.⁷²

⁷¹ Schwartz-Cowan (1983) offers a key contrasting case that highlights the difference between waged/institutionalized and unwaged/domestic social reproductive labor. In her survey of the 20th century, she finds that domestic consumer technology – washing machines, vacuums, all manner of kitchen appliances – served to further capture the gendered labor required to maintain domestic spaces. Whatever gains in efficiency were quickly replaced by new routines and the maintenance demanded by new technology.

⁷² Tracking through the department's list of employees, the implementation of (OS1)[™] was quickly followed by the hiring of scores of people from Burma as housekeepers, the majority of whom do not speak English, a transition confirmed by the housekeepers with whom I spoke and other campus employees with ties to the organizing efforts in the department in the early part of the 2000s. Though explicit connection between these changes is difficult to pinpoint, it is worth noting that PRM's (2011) independent analysis reveals systemic interpersonal disputes between groups of housekeepers organized in racialized and ethnicized groups, including a *de facto* division of staff by ethnicity and English language ability. As of 2011, the overwhelming majority of third shift employees are non-English speaking women and men with direct or familial ties to Burma and adjacent regions in Southeast Asia. It is as difficult to pin-point the first person from Burma hired by the department as it is to identify the first refugees who moved to the area. Multiple calls to local refugee placement services have gone as-yet unanswered. By way of temporary work-around, my estimation involved the department's list of current employees, a document I managed

The changes presented to housekeepers in the manuals reoriented everyday work practice in terms of specialization. But, the specialization provided by (OS1)[™] became a central means of controlling new class of *worker* as much as reassigning work tasks. This worker was a specialist, their everyday work practices were tuned to the second, specified by a department-mandated training; a series of manuals, handbooks, and pocket-guide; and a color-coding system connecting new cleaning chemicals and specific cleaning technologies. Gone, that is, was the sense of autonomy, pride, and attachment to place that was common in the previous “zone” cleaning system. The efficacy of the (OS1)[™] system as a program targeted to institutional health and hygiene was, in part, irrelevant. First, it had never been successfully implemented in dormitories. Second, as I discussed in Chapter 3, reports of the difference between the previous system and (OS1)[™] from the pilot study indicated that changes to the *hygienic* condition of university buildings were nominal at best (Berry, 2006). However, 2005 was a time of institutional belt-tightening, a fiscal reality that would continue well into the

to obtain by public records request. It contains the names of everyone in the department, their date of hire, age, gender, the zone in which they work, and salary band. Organized by date of hire, I looked through the list for names common to naming traditions in the region, following the explanation provide by my Burmese/Karen interpreter. Inevitably, it is an inexact count, but even by this rough estimate, scores of individuals with names common to the naming traditions of the region begin to work as housekeepers in 2005-6 and after. Though I have as yet been unable to identify the individuals in the local area who are facilitating the connection between housekeeping work and the refugee community, there are myriad “push factors” that coalesce during this period in Burma itself. Beyond the now decades-long conflict in the region, the “Saffron Revolution” of 2007 involved the national military’s violent suppression of demonstrations against an abrupt increase in fuel prices (South, 2011). This was quickly followed by Cyclone Nargis in 2008, a storm that displaced hundreds of thousands of individuals across the region (South, 2012). These factors work alongside decades-long ethnic-conflict in the country that has long positioned internally-displaced Karen people against an autocratic ruling elite (Scott, 2009; Smith, 1999; South, 2011). In conversation with housekeepers from the region and non-profit service providers with strong connections to the local refugee community, some of these inter-ethnic tensions have been recreated in local contexts. For example, a perception shared by the ethnic Burmese with whom I spoke is that local service providers focus on Karen people, ignoring or excluding local Burmese populations. Two different panel discussions organized by the UNC Southeast Asia Interest Association – in Spring, 2014 and Fall, 2015 – confirmed these tensions, with panelists discussing connections between recent political changes in the country, particularly the election of Nobel Prize winning resistance leader Aung San Suu Kyi after decades of house arrest; the ongoing conflict between the ruling military elite and its citizenry; and the experience of mistreatment by the university.

following decade. As some of the lowest-valued and arguably most expendable labor force on campus, UNC needed housekeepers to work more and (OS1)[™] was explicitly designed to make that happen.

The work practice atomization made possible by (OS1)[™] is not independent of other institutional mechanisms designed to remediate experiences in challenging workplace environments. One strong line of contiguity between them is a lack of language-specific materials. ManageMen, Inc's materials are only available in English, for example. This is known to be a problem, particularly for housekeepers identified by the department as Burmese (PRM, 2011).⁷³ Addressing language gaps in training materials is a small, but essential piece of a range of challenges UNC's nonacademic employees face when adjudicating workplace challenges through official institutional channels. Today, neither the EEOC office nor the Ombudsman's office at UNC have materials available in languages other than English. Electronically available documents and resources evidence a similar lack. Email conversations with employees working in both offices reveal that they recognize this gap, covering the cost of live interpretation for non-English speaking staff or producing materials on an "as-needed" basis.

In many ways, producing materials in the range of languages spoken by UNC employees is relatively simple. Documents are printed and could be hired out for translation, updated at regular intervals. This is a question of administrative cost, not a contention with practice or policy that would involve a more extensive organizational overhaul. Language-specific materials would do double-duty here: redressing the clear communication challenges identified by PRM

⁷³ Though I am focused here on the administrative and organizational mechanisms for addressing language-related exclusion as employees of the university, research focused on the experience of refugees during the settlement process reveals the importance of language to both integration into new communities, as well as maintaining connection to countries and communities of origin.

(2011) in their assessment of the department (I turn to this more fully later in this chapter), and sending a message to the scores of non-English speaking employees who work on campus. Despite these potential benefits, English remains the *lingua franca* of employment.

Unfortunately, bridging a language gap is only one piece of adjusting institutional systems that produce the disenfranchisement of specific employees. For example, even if the existing grievance policy were available in the languages spoken by university employees, they would not necessarily have any success navigating the process of filing a grievance. Not only has the definition of harm consistently tacked *away* from the concerns of nonacademic employees, but I argue that the structure of the policy does better work indemnifying the university from responsibility than ameliorating legally grievable workplace harm on behalf of employees. Below, I explore 11 revisions to the existing grievance policy to explain why that is the case.

Bureaucracies of Indemnity: Grieving Workplace Exploitation

The North Carolina State Personnel Act's official grievance policy specifies the process whereby employees are able to address workplace wrongdoing in accordance with state employment law. The policy outlines the operating conditions for using the grievance process, clarifying the legal limitations on employee/employer relations in adjudicating legal wrongdoing, providing a specific list of grievances covered and not covered by the policy, and specific guidance for employees seeking other options should their grievances fall outside the policy's purview (UNC OHR, 2014, Section IV.A-B). There are strict timelines for filing the appropriate paperwork at each step of the process. As currently written, missing deadlines is

sufficient cause for terminating the process (UNC OHR, 2014, Section V-VI).⁷⁴ However, using the policy to navigate an “internal” grievance does not necessarily preclude an employee from taking their grievance to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission office (UNC OHR, 2014, Section VI.C, Section X.A-B).

A public records request (see Appendix IV) has revealed that the policy has been revised at least 11 different times since 1990. UNC’s Office of Human Resources (UNC OHR) and the state’s Office of Human Resources (NC OHR) suggest policy and editorial changes to various provisions in the document, reflecting changes to federal and state employment law and the changing conditions of employee relations.⁷⁵ They become official policy after review by the State Personnel Commission during their quarterly meetings.⁷⁶

In the early 2000s and again in 2014, the policy was significantly reformatted, though small changes happen more frequently. For example, the constitution of legally grievable offenses may be revised to include new forms of discrimination.⁷⁷ The wording of particular

⁷⁴ During fieldwork, three different housekeepers mentioned passing deadlines as the reason their grievances were terminated. In each case, the time it takes to translate documents between written English and the language’s of these housekeepers’ native language was cited as contributing to the problem.

⁷⁵ A conversation with a local civil rights lawyer with long-ties to the labor conditions at the university explained that though this is a state policy, UNC is the largest state employer and, in fact, the working conditions of UNC employees are the *de facto* focus of the provisions in the document. As he explained, revisions to the policy reflect an interest in changing working conditions in the UNC system, and at UNC-Chapel Hill in particular.

⁷⁶ The NC State Personnel Commission is composed of 9 individuals appointed by the Governor and General Assembly for four-year terms: two lawyers, two human resource professionals, a member described as a “nonexempt, nonsupervisory position” at the recommendation of the State Employee Association of North Carolina, two state employees working in supervisory roles and protected by the State Personnel Act, and a member of the general public (NCHSR, 2015).

⁷⁷ In keeping with scholarship noting the scaling *down* of biopolitical control and intervention by state and institutional power (Braun, 2007, 2008; Rose, 2006), Title II of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prevents employment discrimination on the basis of genetic testing, genetic test results of an employee or family member of that employee, or genetic information about the potential or development of a disease related to genetic information. The 2012 revision to UNC’s grievance policy reflects this and adds “genetic information” as a type of “protected status” (UNC OHR, 2012, Section, II.J). Marginalia on the edited copy of the same policy revision has a note that reads “Should genetic information be included here too?” in provisions for *Unlawful Workplace Harassment* in Section V.F.1.e (UNC OHR, 2012). It is eventually included in Section V.F.1.a as an identifiable source of workplace discrimination, along with age, sex, race, color, creed, political affiliation, religion, national origin, and disability (UNC OHR, 2012).

sub-sections may be revised to increase specificity or clarify terminology. These often enhance the ability of workers to protect themselves in response to new forms of legally-grievable harm.

Submitting a grievance is a complicated, tiered process. Each policy-specific “step” brings additional resources and wider administrative intervention. From 1990 until 2002, Step 1 asked employees to adjudicate their grievances with direct supervisors in a one-on-one meeting. To mitigate the challenge employees might feel in approaching their supervisors, various provisions for support people and legal representation were included, changes to which I will discuss in detail below. Step 2 was the “School or Unit-Based Resolution” for employees who find the Step 1 resolution unsatisfactory, a move up the management chain, though not yet involving the relevant dean or unit director. Step 3 moved away from the management chain in which the employee worked and convened a Staff Grievance Committee made up of university employees. Step 4 removed the process from the institution entirely and transferred authority to the Office of Administrative Hearings/State Personnel Commission directly. The “step” provisions have since changed, though they remain similarly tiered. My point is that the decision to use the official grievance policy – the university-sanctioned mechanisms for redressing wrong-doing in the workplace – marks the start of a lengthy process that disfavors employees with limited time, particularly those who work outside of traditional business hours.

Below, I track changes to two specific components of the policy: the provision of work time allowed to employees to submit the required grievance paperwork and the allowance for legal representation or other support persons to assist in the process. Starting in 1990, the

state specified the time period allowed to employees for the filing of an official grievance and the role of legal representation and support persons in the process. By reading these changes in historical progression, it is possible to see how the provisions have consistently curtailed the ability of employees to obtain the time and legal support they might need to successfully navigate the process. The result is a maintenance of state and institutional control over its employees. As written, I argue that the policy mediates against macro-institutional changes for nonacademic workers on campus, especially housekeepers.

I focus on changes to the time to file and access to support people to illustrate how the policy produces a type of legal isolation for grieving employees, forcing them to identify themselves to supervisors and also limiting their access to support during an already difficult process. This isolation places a significant burden on employees, particularly when the university encourages staff to meet with a supervisor who may be the source of the problem as a first step. Furthermore, the policy specifically prevents workers from grieving endemic mistreatment as a *collective*. As currently figured, the policy is designed to identify a single source of mistreatment targeted to a single employee, providing the university with relatively easy recourse. This limits need for systemic evaluation to identify root *institutional* causes that push past a “one bad apple” framework for understanding and changing sources of workplace harm.

Time to Grieve and Support to Help

As of 1991, the policy provides specific allowance for SPA employees to utilize an open-ended amount of work time to file official grievance paperwork with the university.⁷⁸ However, employees must obtain permission from their supervisor to file the necessary paperwork for grievances. In 1995, an additional sentence about what constituted “reasonable” time off was added, though it was not until 1997 that the wording was re-worked.⁷⁹ The closing remains the same, but the introductory explanation is newly specific about the work-time allotment. Employees were allowed “up to a maximum of 12 hours off from regular duties,” marking the beginning of a decades-long process that would limit grievance-related working hours in increasingly specific ways (UNC OHR, 1997, Section XII, Appendix 1, Page 3, Subsection B.4). The section remains the same in the revisions to the policy dated January 6, 2000 and November 1, 2002 (UNC OHR, 2000, 2002), though Counseling Services had become the Employee Services Department in that time. In 2005, policy revisions did not change this section significantly. But, in 2011, work time allowances were shortened again from 12 to 8 hours, identifying this time as “Paid Administrative Leave” (UNC OHR, 2011, Section II.D, p. 1). It further specifies that employees who no longer work for the university may not apply for paid leave. Though this may seem illogical, employees who feel they were unjustly removed from their jobs may attempt to contest their termination through the official channels set out by the policy.

⁷⁸ The section reads in full: “An employee is granted such time off from regular duties as is necessary and reasonable for processing the employee’s grievance under this Procedure, without any loss of pay or leave time. However, nothing in this Procedure shall be deemed to permit any employee from being absent from duties without advanced permission within two work days of the request from the employee for time off pursuant to this Section” (Section XIII, Appendix I, Page 3, Subsection B.4).

⁷⁹ The 1995 revision reads: “Advice concerning what “reasonable” means is available from the Counseling Service and will depend on particular circumstances” (UNC OHR, 1995, Section XIII, Appendix 1, Page 3, Subsection B.4). The process of clarification itself was a bureaucratic hurdle, requiring a visit to an administrative office in addition to the legwork and time needed to fill out the grievance paperwork.

Identifying/Indemnifying Support Systems

In 1990, the policy allowed legal counsel to provide direct assistance to employees, including directly representing them during Step 3 hearings of the Staff Employee Grievance Committee, though not before.⁸⁰ Alternately, employees could identify a support person to assist them. Supervisors – the policy’s presumed respondents – were able to do so as well. In either case, the university did not characterize who that support person might be, though they did not cover expenses related to legal costs.⁸¹ Despite the assistance this would provide to workers seeking to navigate a complicated bureaucracy that is based on federal and state employment *law*, the state rolled back employee access to legal representation two years later. In 1992, the definition of the legal representation did not exclude working with a lawyer, but prevented outside legal counsel from being present during the grievance process *at all*, including during Step 3 hearings.⁸²

⁸⁰ If an employee is unsatisfied with the result of the decision made at the 1st or 2nd step of the grievance process by the university administrator identified to adjudicate their claims, they may move to a Step 3 claim, provided they meet all of the deadlines for filing at each step of the process. As of 1992, this was the point in a grievance process where the grievance goes to the Staff Employee Grievance Committee, a group recommended by the Chancellor and appointed by the Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources. The definition of the steps involved changed in the ensuing decade, but the composition of the Staff Employee Grievance Committee and the identification of University-trained support persons has long been a consistent challenge for the university. Discussions with a current employee and former head of the Employee Forum revealed longstanding difficulty finding staff willing to sit on the committee or take the time to do the training to become a support person (Brannigan, 2015). One result of this is that time limits for moving a grievance through the system are at risk of passing, leaving the university and the employee in a type of policy limbo created by the bureaucratic necessities of the process.

⁸¹ The section reads in full: “An employee may secure legal advice at any step of a grievance and may be represented at the Step 3 hearing appeal panel. If they employee chooses not to be represented by legal counsel at Step 3, the employee may choose, at his or her option, to be assisted by a hearing support person who is not an attorney. If the employee elects to be represented by legal counsel, the supervisor or other person in charge may also elect to be represented by legal counsel. The University does not provide legal representation for the supervisor, the employee, or any other party to a grievance at any step of the Formal Grievance Procedure” (UNC OHR, 1990, Subsection B.6, p. 5).

⁸² The section reads in full: “An employee may secure legal advice at any step of a grievance, however, attorneys may not participate in or be present at any grievance meeting or hearing. The employee and respondent may choose, at their option, to be assisted at Step 3 by a hearing support person who is not an attorney (See Section G.12)” (UNC OHR, 1992, Subsection B.6). Section G.12 clarifies the support person provision, removing the Associate Vice Chancellor’s role: “The employee may choose to be accompanied by a support person chosen by the employer or, at the employee’s option, appointed by the Office of Human Resources. If the employee elects to be accompanied by a

The specific role of the support person reveals particular focus by the state that employees understand they are not considered legal counsel by the university. Both the policy and the housekeepers with whom I spoke reveal a departmental desire for the quickest internal resolution possible. Four of the housekeepers I spoke with mentioned instruction from department administrators that they approach supervisors directly when problems arise. The current policy backs up this point on page 1, explaining that the best recourse is to directly address problems with supervisors before filing an official grievance (UNC OHR, 2014, p.1). For some, this meant asking the future respondent to as-yet-unfiled grievances to remediate a problem they had a part in creating.

The 1997 revision shows confidence on the part of the state as a purveyor of workplace protections for its employees. The language reads,

An employee may secure legal advice at any step of a grievance; however, attorneys may not participate in or be present at any internal grievance meeting or hearing. It is the University's position that legal assistance is not needed by either party in this process since effective and confidential assistance is available without charge. The University will oppose any request for attorney's fees incurred during this internal process (UNC OHR, 1997, Subsection B.6, pg. 3, emphasis my own).

It is not that employees did not potentially need legal assistance. It is that the University provides similar assistance without charge. Notably, these revisions are the first to follow the resolution of two employment discrimination lawsuits, one brought by a public safety officer and another brought by housekeepers against the university that resulted in the landmark University Housekeepers Agreement that included more than \$1million in back wages and the

support person, whether or not the support person is one appointed by the Office of Human Resources, the supervisor or other person in charge may also be accompanied by a support person chosen by the supervisor or, at the supervisor's option, appointed by the Office of Human Resources. A support person may assist the employee or supervisor in preparing for the hearing, interpreting the events of the hearing, etcetera but in no way will legally "represent" the employee or supervisor" (UNC OHR, 1992, Subsection G.12, p. 10).

reinstatement of unjustly fired co-workers in the department (see UE 150, 1998). Regardless of that coincidence, a strict reading of the section as a helpful cost-saving measure precludes the notion that employees would trust or feel comfortable obtaining legal advice for problems with their employers *from* their employers.

The language describing the support person became significantly more specific at this time as well. Previously available at any step, they were now only available during the Step 3 hearing and explicitly prevented from answering questions, talking directly to the panel, questioning witnesses or presenting any materials. Furthermore, the support person had to be a university employee specifically trained to provide that support by the university's Department of Counseling Services.⁸³ In five years, the provisions changed from an open-ended inclusion of any person, including an attorney, to a specifically-trained university employee who was explicitly *not* an attorney and was not allowed to speak.

In 2000, 2002, and 2005, the language regarding support persons and legal representation remained the same. But, the 2005 revision included significant reformatting and a major adjustment of the definition of the "Step" provisions. Step 1 action was addressed to the employee's unit of employment; no longer were employees forced to contend with direct supervisors as the first step of a formal grievance. At this phase, the support person may

⁸³ The section reads in full: "At Step 3 only, a support person may assist the employee or respondent in preparing for hearings, keeping track of documents, etc., but in no way will represent the employee or respondent. The role of the support person is to provide assistance to the grievant (or the respondent, if the grievant also has a support person) in preparing for the hearing and in making a presentation to the grievance panel. In assisting either the grievant or respondent during the hearing, *a support person may not ask or answer any questions, may not address the panel, may not question any witnesses or make any presentation to the panel.* The respondent may use a support person only if the grievant elects to be assisted by a support person. A support person may be selected from the Counseling Service's list of trained support persons or may be *any University employee who is not an attorney.* Only a University employee may serve as a support person. No employee of the Office of Human Resources may serve as a support person. The Counseling Service will provide training for employees interested in serving as support persons" (UNC OHR, 1997, Subsection G.13, p. 9-10, *emphasis mine*).

“provide assistance,” though is still prevented from speaking (UNC OHR, 2005, p. 7). Step 2 action is addressed to the Grievance Hearing Committee. The support person provisions are the same as for Step 1, with an additional provision that the support person is not be a member of the Ombudsman’s office (UNC OHR, 2005, p. 11). After Step 2, grievances go the Office of Administrative Hearings/State Personnel Commission, streamlining the process. The language in the 2007 revision is the same (UNC OHR, 2007). In 2008, the state identified the Employment and Management Relations Department as responsible for the necessary training for support persons (UNC OHR, 2008). In 2011, the policy still prevented legal representatives from participating in “any internal grievance meeting, process, or hearing” according to State regulation.⁸⁴ However, it did explain, “this prohibition does not prevent a Grievant from consulting with an attorney *at their own expense*” (UNC OHR, 2011, Section II.C, p. 1, emphasis mine). Though University-trained support persons are allowable at any step in the process – accounting for the restrictions on them speaking, asking questions, or intervening in any direct way – this revision specifies that they may be dismissed at the will of the Grievant or Respondent (UNC OHR, 2011, V.B.5, p. 5).

⁸⁴ In addition to the changes that are the focus of my primary analysis, the 2011 revision includes a list of “Issues that are not grievable” according to institutional policy. These include objections to the use of particular technology (IV.E.1.b), assignment or reassignment of staff, work responsibilities, or work shifts (IV.E.1.c), employee review or “other documentation of performance or conduct” (IV.E.1.d), or being placed on “investigatory status with pay” (IV.E.1.g). In both fieldwork and my participation with SAW, *all* of these issues were identified by housekeepers as a source of workplace exploitation, harm, or the inequitable distribution of workplace responsibilities. In particular, six of the housekeepers with whom I spoke at length identified problems with the backpack vacuum cleaner, floor waxing machines, mops or mop buckets. Though their use of this technology has caused physical harm, that fact is not grievable in the terms of official policy.

Grieving in the Present-Tense

It is worth noting a few changes in the current iteration of the policy (UNC OHR, 2015a).⁸⁵ First, the provision about the amount of work time allowed to file is no longer specified by the policy. Instead, it joins a suite of fact sheets and instructional material that has greatly simplified and explained the process of filing a grievance that is available – in English – through the University’s Office of Human Resources Employment and Management Relations division (UNC OHR, 2015b). This includes a new guide that explains the various routes that an employee grievance may travel through UNC’s administrative bureaucracy.⁸⁶ The guide defines “protected” status according to state law, maintaining categories including “Race/Color”, “National Origin”, “Religion”, and “Political Affiliation”, but not ethnicity. Though it is likely that “Race/Color” is a category with a great degree of slippage, accounting for the difference between, for example, housekeepers who identify as ethnic Burmese or ethnic Karen are uniquely important at UNC.

In the current policy, employees now have *fifteen* calendar days to file the initial grievance paperwork, a change from the thirty calendar days allowed in the previous iteration (UNC OHR, 2015, Section V, p. 6). The same section also specifies that any grievances “must first be discussed with the immediate or other appropriate supervisor in the employee’s chain of command” (UNC OHR, 2015, Section V, p.6). This initial discussion is a part of a policy-

⁸⁵ Multiple calls and emails to the Office of Human Resources to discuss the policy’s current provisions have not been answered as of today’s date.

⁸⁶ The grievance policy is focused, generally, on issues related to the distribution and adjudication of specific work tasks, issues of work assignments, and questions regarding the administration of infractions for employees failing to meet the declared demands of their official job descriptions, i.e. “being written up” by managers or supervisors. Alternately, issues of workplace harassment and discrimination are adjudicated by the university’s EEOC division. Harassment and discrimination were the most consistent concerns of the housekeepers who were willing to share with me about the challenges of their working lives. But, grievable harm according to the grievance policy remains a common point of recourse.

mandated “informal grievance” process that is required before employees may begin the formal internal grievance process, a return to form that had been eliminated in the 2005 revision. Though the policy requires that the informal grievance process take no longer than 15 days, it also requires that employees identify themselves, speak with direct supervisors who may or may not be the source of the problem, and then also submit paperwork for the formal internal grievance without knowing the outcome of an informal discussion in that same period of time or risk a lapse of the filing deadline – all within the same two-week period.

In the current policy, the first step of the formal internal grievance process involves mediation between a grievant and respondent, expectations for which are clarified in the guide explaining the process. Legal representation is explicitly forbidden during mediation (UNC OHR, 2015, Section VIII.E, p. 9), though both parties are allowed to take breaks to consult with legal representation. Step 2 involves a panel hearing. The respondent is no longer present, though the grievant may bring witnesses with the hearing officer’s and/or panel’s approval, and in accordance with HR policy (UNC OHR, 2015, Section IX.C, p.12). The grievant is also allowed to protest the appointment of a Hearing Officer and up to two (2) members of the hearing panel, “if the Grievant believes they cannot render an unbiased recommendation due to a real or perceived conflict of interest” (UNC OHR, 2015, Section IX.B, p. 12). As a final step, should the process remain unsatisfying to the grievant, the grievance can be brought to the state level and heard by the Office of Administrative Hearings.

What do these changes reveal about housekeeping? Why is it important to note more that the current policy when trying to understand how employees might ameliorate

problematic working conditions? Furthermore, why look at the training manuals and the grievance policies alongside each other?

The intersection between department-specific policy focusing on everyday work practice – the materials produced by ManageMen, Inc. – and the institutional policies and support mechanisms designed to protect housekeepers from workplace related harm and discrimination – the state’s official grievance policy – produce the kinds of interstitial spaces central to the production of working worlds characterized by racial, ethnic and gendered division at UNC. The institution’s troubled history with housekeeping staff demands that consideration of what it might mean to work as a housekeeper account for what it might mean to experience work-place discrimination. Since at least the 1930s, housekeepers have made concerted effort to ameliorate unfair treatment from supervisors, managers and the university itself (Chapman, 2006; McSurely, 1993). The grievance process marks the formalization of the *institutional* mechanism to ameliorate that unfair treatment. I argue that its micro-specific terms operate in concert with the changes brought to the department with the implementation of (OS1)[™].

Both (OS1)[™] and the ongoing revisions to the grievance policy limit the autonomy of housekeepers to address problematic working conditions, the realities of which I will turn to below. (OS1)[™] produced an explicit power differential between management and line housekeeping staff. At the same time, it re-tuned the work practice in micro-specific terms, denuding housekeepers of control over their working days in service of efficiency and institutional understandings of health and safety. As I explained in Chapter 5, ManageMen’s own analysis of the benefits of its intervention during pilot study showed only limited

difference between the previous system and (OS1)[™]. The shift also eliminates historically-entrenched lay skill from previous years of service, replacing the potential for different *interpretations* of working tasks with an insistence on the merits of a counter-intuitive “complicated” simplicity (pace Walker, 2005).

Changes to the grievance policy produce a similar disenfranchisement. Since 1990, the university has revised the policy provisions regarding the filing of grievances and the availability of support persons in ways that appear to disfavor the ability of employees, especially employees with limited resources who may also not speak English, to negotiate a complicated legal bureaucracy. Over time, these changes have eroded the power of individual workers, and explicitly prevent worker *collectives* from being able to challenge their working conditions through official channels. It strains credulity to think that preventing employees from having a lawyer present during a mediation session or shortening the time to file from 30 to 15 days provides benefit those employees.

Of course, one need not trust my analysis as proof of the negative effects of (OS1)[™] or evidence of the structural inability of housekeepers to access university support systems to ameliorate working conditions through the grievance process. There remain obvious, public, and egregious personnel problems in the department. To address these challenges, the administration hired an outside consultant to provide an independent assessment of the department. In 2011, PRM Consulting Group, Inc. (PRM) analyzed the department, specifically addressing concerns from housekeeping employees about “work climate, including whether all department employees were treated fairly with civility and respect and free from threats,

intimidation, and harassment” (PRM, 2011, p. 1); according to PRM, the answer was decidedly no.

Management Consulting, Management’s Consultant

Over a period of six months starting in March 2011, PRM surveyed staff and completed confidential, one-on-one interviews with over 400 employees. This included 355 housekeepers with the remaining comprised of support staff, supervisors and management, administrative leadership, the UNC ombudsman, Chair of the Employee Forum, ADA/EEO officer, and the Chancellor.⁸⁷ PRM used interpreters for 143 of 400 interviews, which they grouped together as “non-English speaking employees” (PRM, 2011, p. 4). Most staff (n=169) *and* most non-English speaking staff work third-shift (n=72), a fact I note to mark the connection between shift-time and race/ethnicity in the distribution of problems uncovered by their analysis. As a general rule, first-shift housekeepers have worked for the university for longer and are more likely to be African-American and women. Third-shift employees have worked for shorter tenures, are more likely to be people from Burma, and are more gender diverse.

In surveys, employees were asked to respond to a series of 12 statements on a five-point scale. PRM highlighted responses where more than one-third of staff strongly disagreed, designating these as issues that required immediate response. According to their report, the findings indicate widespread “employee morale issues, lack of trust, and overall frustration” (p. 4). Points of contention included the fair distribution of work assignments, a lack of dignity and respect, a lack of concern for employee welfare, poor communication, uneven application of administrative policy, and commonplace harassment, discrimination and intimidation (p. 5). By

⁸⁷ All data and page numbers in this section are from PRM (2011).

PRM's measure, the most "significant groupings" for survey responses included "all English speaking staff and shift times," "Non-English speaking staff and shift results," and a "comparison of English and non-English" (PRM, 2011, p. 16). PRM analyzed the findings and produced a set of 45 recommendations for the department. Their suggestions range in focus and time-sensitivity. But, it is the divergence of their findings that reveal significant challenges in the department.

Understanding Workplace Divisions

In discussions with undergraduate students in SAW, local community service providers, and housekeepers, I knew that Karen, Burmese, Chin and Ka-Chin employees working third shift struggled with harassment, disrespect and workplace retaliation. I had less success connecting with first-shift housekeepers; of 12 interviews, only two worked as first-shift housekeepers, two others worked as day porters. According to the report, to take one example, 47% of English-speaking, and 49.2% of *first*-shift housekeepers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that employees were treated with dignity and respect; only 11% of non-English speakers felt the same (PRM, 2011, p. 5-6). When broken down by race, PRM found similar discontinuities, with African-American housekeepers expressing greater discontent than Latino/a or Burmese staff.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ There is considerable slippage in the report regarding the ethnicity of respondents. The report only ever explicitly divides staff by language ability – English, non-English speaking – and race – African American, Asian, Hispanic, White. But, the discussion specifies responses from Burmese, Latino, and African-American staff in ways that hew closer to definitions of ethnicity. There is no explanation in the report itself for this aggregation, though it is particularly troubling in the case of the Burmese, Karen, Chin and Ka-Chin people where ethnic divisions in the local community mark long-standing and historically-entrenched conflict that are common points of contention extending from the fractured Burmese state to Chapel Hill and Carrboro. The lack of subtlety here is not unexpected, but another example of the inability of UNC to accurately assess a potential and difficult to resolve source of workplace conflict for upwards of 40% of its existing housekeeping staff.

PRM found the wide gap in response notable, confirming that a “large number” of employees discussed fear of retaliation for what they might share in interviews. Entire groups of housekeepers had decided to “not say anything negative” during one-on-one interviews (PRM, 2011, p. 20). Later in the report, PRM specifies that it is “Burmese” housekeepers who have agreed to not speak ill of management. The concern was that they would be fired for speaking out, leaving housekeepers with limited recourse as the department had issued a memo explaining that the one-on-one interviews were mandatory (PRM, 2011, Appendix A). PRM knew this skewed their data, explaining that “this fear may have translated into a more positive assessment of their work environment during the interview than how they actually felt” (PRM, 2011, p. 20).

Throughout one-on-one interviews, problems in the department, especially those between housekeepers and managers and across linguistic difference, are framed in racialized and ethnicized terms. This includes the assignment and distribution of work tasks (PRM, 2011, p. 24) and fear of speaking out for fear of losing one’s job (PRM, 2011, p. 31). English speaking housekeepers – predominantly African American women – felt not only mistreated, but that their problems were systematically ignored by managers (PRM, 2011, p. 33). PRM highlights the especially low morale among English speaking housekeepers (PRM, 2011, p. 35), a problem further exacerbated by findings that employees across the board are either unaware of or feel uncomfortable using existing “problem resolution resources” (PRM, 2011, p. 37), i.e. the official grievance policy, Ombudsman, or EEOC office.

Throughout, it is English speaking and first-shift housekeepers who are most likely to speak against management, disagree with survey statements, or cite problems in the

department. But, according to PRM “the dominant theme throughout many comments was that employees believe that race is a strong factor” in both assigning work tasks, treatment by managers, and pay disparities (PRM, 2011, pp. 24, 31, 44).⁸⁹ Because shift times are *de facto* divided by language ability and race/ethnicity, problems that are organized by shift or language ability are produced through racialized and ethnicized understanding of the distribution of power and fair treatment. In general, this positions first-shift African-American housekeepers in conflict with third-shift housekeepers from Burma. For example, “Burmese” housekeepers were perceived to receive preferential treatment, including during hiring. “Several employees” commented on a lack of “scrutiny in their background checks” that coincided with their “disproportionate number” (PRM, 2011, p. 38). In one-on-one interviews, Zone Managers concurred, admitting that “a lot” of housekeepers from Burma had been hired “without appropriate background checks” (PRM, 2011, p. 47), additionally citing the challenge of working with non-English speaking employees, and a lack of printed materials and limited use of interpreters (47).

These same housekeepers agreed to *not* speak up about the problems they were experiencing, leaving PRM with limited recourse but to guess that their experience was more challenging than they were willing to reveal. My concern is that this information gap not only disguises the mistreatment of this group of housekeepers, but reinforces a tension in the department between two racialized/ethnicized groups of staff. This contributes to a deeply entrenched “he said/she said” atmosphere, echoing Nakano Glenn’s (2006) argument that

⁸⁹ In addition to uneven pay, the report notes that “*generally*, employees did not feel they were paid a decent wage” (PRM, 2011, 44, emphasis mine).

racialized and ethnicized difference is central to the production of precarious labor markets, especially as they are remade to accommodate new sources of labor with different demographic characteristics, regional backgrounds, races, or ethnicities.

Though the problems in the report reveal much by way of the racialization of benefit and harm, some of the most damning comments made by housekeepers are not organized by other demographic characteristics. For example, many discussed inappropriate sexual relationships between housekeepers and Zone Managers. Others discussed widespread sexual harassment and “employees consistently made comments about Zone Managers taking advantage of single parents” (PRM, 2011, p. 42). The report confirms a widespread rumor that housekeepers paid “substantial sums of money” to get jobs and that Day Porter positions are not posted and unfairly filled (PRM, 2011, p. 42).

But, what about (OS1)[™]? Is the source of my concern absent from their analysis? Echoing concerns in fieldwork interviews with current housekeepers, employees cited the ineffectiveness of the chemicals mandated by the program, concern over the rigors of certain specialist tasks for employees with injuries, and a “general feeling that there are not enough employees to do the work” (PRM, 2011, p. 45). Zone Managers agreed, noting that consistent funding restrictions left them short-staffed and that the (OS1)[™] backpack vacuum cleaners are “too heavy for some employees” (PRM, 2011, p. 47). I would offer that in light of the more egregious legal and personnel challenges detailed by PRM, (OS1)[™] seems a less serious issue. But, in the context of this analysis, the training materials used in (OS1)[™] and the development of the specialty positions central to the program’s operation (as detailed in Chapter 3) reveal a

similar tendency: housekeepers themselves are increasingly denuded of previous workplace autonomy in terms that eliminate any subjective control over their working lives.

PRM concludes with 15 pages of recommendations. They call for a re-training and reorganization of management. They note special concern that the “Crew Leader” position is clarified, particular their informal mediation of communication between line housekeepers and Zone Managers. They call for improved communication at all levels, directly addressing problems with language ability and access to resources and policies for non-English employees, including re-starting English classes for those who need them. They also recommend the establishment of a “safe to say” program to address retaliation.

It is difficult to confirm if any of these recommendations have been specifically implemented by the department in response to PRM’s findings. During fieldwork, I spoke with housekeepers who insisted that none of the findings had been addressed. I have been, as yet, unable to speak directly with department management. For the non-English speaking housekeepers with whom I spoke, opportunities to take English classes were limited or not offered by the department. Translated materials of departmental communications and training materials were not available and interpretation services were only used during official department meetings, not as a component of regular communication between line housekeepers and their direct supervisors. Both were mentioned by PRM as widespread challenges, though neither translated materials nor interpretation constituted problems requiring immediate remediation. An email to the SAW listserv from a concerned housekeeper with involvement in the Employee Forum and past organizing efforts in the department explained that nothing had changed in the department since the report’s publication.

A New Biopolitics of Social Reproduction

There are two connections I want to reiterate here. First, in the American context, connections between work, local places, and the production of citizenship have long relied on the racialization of specific populations of workers. That is, citizenship is a lived experience mediated by the racialized production of labor systems at local scales. In this example, the construction of the grievance policy, the training program instituted with (OS1)[™] and the ensuing and ongoing challenges spelled out by PRM reveal how “localized, often face-to-face practices ... determine whether people have or don’t have substantive as opposed to purely formal rights *as citizens*” (Nakano Glenn, 2006, 2).

In the housekeeping department, the demographic changes that began in the mid-2000s and continue to the present have reformulated workplace tension in racialized and ethnicized terms. I argue that this has had the effect of placing longer-term African American, predominantly female housekeepers and more recently hired people from Burma in conflict. The fact that PRM (2011) was able to recognize patterns of racial and ethnic segregation by *shift-time* and style of complaint with supervisors reflects the university’s de facto production of systems of racial and ethnic segregation alongside (OS1)[™] of what was an historically organized population of employees. The awareness of these connections is particularly acute for the people from Burma who spoke with me about the process of becoming citizens, often drawing connections to their treatment at work. As Gam Jar explained,

Everywhere, in every country, what I understand... even in America and Myanmar also... if we have problems... suppose I have a problem with [a person at work], I make a report to the boss, say you are the boss... so I will tell whatever I want to tell to you first and then, you will listen. And later, you will call me and tell whatever I need to [hear]. In between, there would be missing links. Only if there is something wrong with me, the three of us could meet together and solve the problems. But now, what happens here,

since we are from Myanmar, coming as refugees, we don't speak the language, we don't understand the laws and policies – that's what they think. And they just do whatever they want.

For him, the process of being hailed as a housekeeper involves not only understanding his right to a better workplace, but a connection between a problematic process for improving working conditions and his sense of belonging to a larger set of individuals – naturalized citizens – that attend his rights as a worker. Though his access to citizenship is not delimited by his position as a housekeeper, his comments reflect the collapse of powerful categories of social identity: citizen, worker, refugee. In reference to Weber, Weeks' contextualizes the cost of this power,

The work ethic... possesses not just an epistemological force but an affectiveness that is properly ontological. Indeed, what is essential about the work ethic, as Weber originally described it, was what it could do: deliver workers to their exploitation, not just by manufacturing subjects' consent to capitalist exploitation, but by constituting both the exploiting and exploitable subjects (2011, p. 53).

When read in relationship to each other, the training materials provided by ManageMen, Inc., the changes to the grievance policy, and the PRM report reveal the mechanisms through which the relationship between exploiting and exploitable subjects is normalized by UNC. The epistemological force draws strength through the re-organization created by (OS1)[™]. But, the relationship between “exploiting and exploitable subjects” is additionally produced through the grievance policy, a document that I argue disenfranchises specific populations of university employees. As the PRM report reveals, this disenfranchisement is produced through racialized, ethnicized and linguistic divides organizing housekeeping work sites and work practices.

Just as the terms of the grievance policy mediate against changing the structural conditions of non-academic work on campus, (OS1)[™] did two things that have nothing to do with the “expertise” it purports to bring to housekeepers. First, it required that housekeepers be re-assigned to new buildings, leaving behind spaces over which they had considerable autonomy and requiring them to move to new buildings and adopt a new system of work (see Chapter 3). Second, the construction of the specialist teams central to (OS1)[™] broke apart work practice in micro-specific terms. This “profitable atomization” (Spillers, 1986) eroded control over everyday work practice and placed the efficient – monetary and hygienic -- operation of housekeeping first, trumping any need housekeepers might have for different kinds of workplace relationships that feature mutual support, collegiality, trust, respect or safety.

For Weeks, these latter potentialities are essential to reformulating a politics of work, one that leverages modes of social reproduction to counter the deleterious terms of the wage relation under existing forms of capital accumulation. As she asks,

What happens when social reproduction is understood as the production of the forms of social cooperation on which accumulation depends, or, alternatively, as the rest of life beyond work that capital seeks continually to harness to its times, spaces rhythms, purposes, and values? What I am in search of is a conception of social reproduction -- of what it is we might organize around – that can pose the full measure of its antagonism with the exigencies of capital accumulation, a biopolitical model of social reproduction less readily transformed into new forms of work and thus less easily recuperated within the present terms of the work society (2011, p. 29).

What happens when the social reproductive labor regime necessary to local life collapses distant and disparate geographies in ways that reify the erasure of those central to the function of those regimes? Is it hopelessly naïve to wonder whether UNC as an employer might recognize that it is connections between social reproduction, the international division of labor, and biopolitical control that could create both productive *and* ethical working

conditions? Probably. But, work practice is central to the production of social – and state-sanctioned – identity in powerful ways. To ignore the conditions through which these practices produce uneven distributions of power is to misunderstand the hierarchy of value organizing campus life as a beneficial given for all of the “stake-holders” involved. For some, questions of belonging mediated through work stretch well beyond the boundaries of the local community.

For Weeks (2006), a “politics of work could be conceived as a way to link the everyday and sometimes every-night experiences of work... to the political problematic of their present modes and codes of organization and relations of rule” (p. 18). At UNC, these *modes and codes* disfavor the possibility of that linkage. But, a close look at their intersection and quiet co-production reveal sites of structural antagonism – the borrow from Lauren Berlant (2007) -- that could focus efforts to reorganize the contours of organizational inequality on campus.

This analysis reveals a connection between the organization of housekeeping work and the administrative exclusion of housekeepers from the university systems designed to help them remediate workplace challenges. The organizational intensity of (OS1)[™] effaces the subjective specificity of housekeepers. The value they produce for the university depends not only on their invisibility, but their occupation of the specialist roles laid out by (OS1)[™] that establish their work as a function of a micro-specific set of time-delimited tasks. This is an effect of the institutionalized marketization of what is, in the context of everyday university life, essential social reproductive care work. Their administrative exclusion from reasonable ability to remediate grievable workplace harm reinforces a university focus on productive value, an institutional inability to recognize their work for the less tangible benefits it provides to students, faculty and other non-academic staff.

Housekeeping work practice is necessary to student life, but administrative oversight and employee policy governing that work practice understands that value as a function of its productive invisibility to the everyday experiences of students. This creates conditions for the exploitation of housekeepers by administrative means, but also prevents students from developing meaningful lines of connection that might, in fact, recognize the work of housekeepers as a component of the *care* central to their orientation to university life and campus communities. Of course, any call to action has to account for connections between the demographic changes in the department and the concomitant devolution of workplace autonomy and respect that attended those changes. This is not simply about working free of harassment, but about reorienting connections between labor, *citizenship* and identity that would ensure that the privilege of working for the university – *caring* for university communities as a function of daily work practice -- is an opportunity for all that do.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION: ON THE COMBINATION OF PRACTICE AND WORK



Figure 3. Unofficial toilet signage in the first-floor restroom of Coates Hall. © Mike Dimpfl

Let's return to a familiar institutional scene. Ceramic tile, shining stainless steel flush handle, predictably out-of-reach steel bar designed to enable a wheelchair user access to the toilet, which itself remains politely out of view. The post-it adage is also familiar, though maybe you've heard the variant imploring you to "be neat" when wiping the seat: *If you sprinkle when you tinkle, please be sweet and wipe the seat (or else...)*. The disciplinary call to metabolic order is reinforced by the parenthetical (...or else).

Or else what, exactly? In this case, the location of the sign in a gender-neutral bathroom on the first floor of a building of graduate student offices implies a social contract among peers. Or else... shame. Or else... your peers will be annoyed. Or else... your body will become someone else's problem.

The *becoming someone else's problem* marks a process whereby a range of different actors collide under the only partially protective umbrella of the cleanliness *Zietgeist*. That cleanliness is disciplinary is unremarkable; the body's mess makes it an easy target therein. That cleanliness is productive of risk-averse social identity is clear; you *are* what you touch, after all. But, these both depend on the persistent invisibility of the organized work practices – both waged and unwaged, domestic and institutional – that make cleanliness possible. If anything, the focus of my effort has sought to bring some clarity to the myriad less obvious means through which cleanliness functions as an arbiter of specific forms of power central to the production of university life. This power is divisive, extractive, and quotidian. Understanding its contours, then, is a necessary step to adjusting its uneven effects.

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 6, I frame housekeeping work practices, and the changes to UNC's organization of those practices, within feminist Marxist critiques of the "problem" of social reproduction. As an institutional ethnography of cleanliness at UNC, the intellectual and political engagements of my scholarship are tied. This is not just a call to awareness, but to change. For Dalla Costa and James (1972), Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1992, 2006), Rahcael Parrenas (2012), Mignon Duffy (2007), and Sylvia Federici (2011), the reproduction of the body and the social relations central to that necessity are contested spaces of exploitation and resistance to the globalized extensions of late liberal capitalisms. Understanding the how, where, and why of

that exploitation and resistance requires situating the materiality of the body within the macro-economic systems producing the uneven distribution of benefit and harm at global scales *alongside* the varied, physical and affective engagements of the women – most usually – doing care work at local scales.

To return to Cindi Katz, social reproduction is “the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life” (2001a, p. 711). But, she is quick to explain that it “is also a set of structured practices that unfold in dialectical relation with production, with which it is mutually constituted and in tension” (2001a, p. 711).⁹⁰ That second turn of phrase is often left out, though it is critical to the logic of reading the efforts of students alongside the waged work of housekeeping. As currently structured, their mutual focus on cleanliness positions them in dialectical tension by institutional systems: students rely on, but are encouraged to ignore, the productive labor of university employees central to their social reproductive needs.

The invisibilization of housekeeping work is a direct result of specific organizational shifts that frame the benefit of housekeeping work to student health at the expense of the people producing that benefit. Furthermore, the university has taken explicit steps to ensure that the subjective experience of housekeepers is all but eliminated by a Taylorized work management system and a grievance policy that is its own hurdle to remediating workplace harm. The persistence of the problems in the department – which stretch at least back to the 1930s, by Chapman’s (2006) accounting – reveals the centrality of this tension to the production of economic and social value.

⁹⁰ I am indebted to Paul Jackson and the members of an AAG panel on social reproduction and health for highlighting not just the “flesh” and “mess” but the *second* sentence in Katz’s (2001a) oft-cited (by me?) quote.

At the same time, the invisibility of social reproductive labor emerges from particular understandings of shared cultural worlds and a socio-technical arrangement of space necessary to that labor. At UNC, this labor is uniquely tied to *student life*, offering an opportunity for better understanding the dialectical tension that Katz highlights. Ideas about the benefit of embodied purity, hygiene and health sit uneasily with the social exclusions they create. Understanding their co-dependence in the context of university life specifies the the cost of those exclusions as the burden of some of the university's most precariously positioned workers.

In my discussion in Chapter 4, the antagonism between ideologies of cleanliness and the body's consistent failure to be clean is a contestation over the aesthetic contingencies that make the (social re)production of space especially political. If "everything in politics turns on the distribution of spaces" (Rancière, 2003, p. 201, cited by Dikeç, 2012, p. 674), how might we think the spaces of cleanliness differently to effect a more equitable distribution? To start, it is essential to understand how the hierarchical ordering of sensory experience is constitutive of students' orientation to campus spaces and communities. As unmarked norms, though, cleanliness practice and hygiene norms hide contingent and inequitable distributions of political and social power that emerge through cleanliness practice. Hygiene norms rely on "a certain way of dividing up the sensible" (Rancière, 2010, 36) that is usually framed as a beneficial status quo. This benefit depends on the exclusion of the housekeeping work making cleanliness at all practicable.

Cleanliness divides sensible worlds in service of collective consensus — and individual consent — about the embodied shape of power. But, the body always resists these normative

constraints, “supplementing it with a part of those without part” (Rancière, 2010, 36). This part is occupied by those disenfranchised from the exercise of political will or power, emblematically UNC’s housekeeping staff in this accounting. But, the body is also “without part” in relation to the modern “lie” that it is preternaturally clean. The aesthetics of cleanliness practice depend on the body *being dirty*. The value of that practice is measured against that dirtiness alongside the positive potential of being temporarily clean.

Cleanliness practice as a form of everyday politics bubbles to life in aesthetic terms, “displacing the borders of what is acknowledged as the political” (Rancière, 2010, p. 149). It is not about the relative positions of opposites; this is dirty, that is clean. Instead, cleanliness marks a contested relationship between similar terms, between homonyms, “a conflict between one who says white and another who says white” (Rancière, 2010, p. 218). For my purposes, putting Rancière’s formulations to work is a means of organizing the sensory experiences of students and their relationships to each other, to housekeepers, and the social worlds of UNC’s campus. It is about the possibility of becoming or unbecoming a specific type of political subject in the forgotten, shared minutae of everyday practice. If all bodies “effectuate a change in the distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2010, p. 141), it is essential to better understand the means through which those changes are made, the embodiments they normalize or displace, and the assumptions about entitlement and power that reinforce their normalization.

As a ‘conflict between sense and sense’, cleanliness is pulled into focus, made material, contested and lived as a near constant worrying over the specific, and seeping, boundaries constituting the possibility of subjectivity. At the same time, thwarted expectations often

prompt frustrated responses and the assignment of blame. This blame often fell to roommates, suite-mates, or other students. But, it was often (re)mediated by actual and implied housekeeping labor. Dirty sinks may provoke disgust from students, but it is the housekeeper who must orient his or her working day to clean the vegetable detritus out of a bathroom sink. This is the constitutive outside term of cleanliness practice that marks everyday embodiment as produced through what Rancière describes as *disensus*, by the fact – if not the agreement – that certain bodies are specifically *excluded* to establish norms.

Cleanliness practices and hygienic norms police expectations of the built environment which then mediate access to the work those practices entail, individual effort and housekeeping labor. These socio-technical mediations inform individual entitlement to belonging just as often as they occlude the essential role housekeepers' play in creating the conditions for that same entitlement. Furthermore, they are specified in sensory terms, connecting everyday practices of cleanliness and hygiene to a spatialized hierarchy of sensory value.

Often discussed in terms of foregone conclusions, the quiet habits of the morning hours or closing acts of a sweaty day establish a hierarchy of performance and meaning that is, if anything, foundational to everyday social life. Being clean is quintessentially modern just as the terms of cleanliness practice push against the boundaries of modern ontological systems. That is, cleanliness is an act of division, a boundary marking, a geo-graphing, a socio-spatial practice: body from mind, but also body from others, from threats, skin from surface, interior from exterior, inclusion from exclusion. These are subjectifying divisions, but they also architect

social identity, producing and produced by gender, class, race, ethnicity, upbringing, and the demand that bodies embody, or imitate, positive forms of each.

A student uninterested in taking the time to move between floors of his or her dorm to access the kitchen sink better suited to the purpose of food disposal appropriates the less visible and valuable time of the housekeeper assigned the task of managing their dormitory spaces. Students sensory expectations mediate not only their own subject positions, but those of housekeepers, guiding their working day: cleaning rotten noodles out of the sink is certainly expected of housekeepers, in the end, but it is not within the specific guidance focusing their actual work. This is what makes housekeeping “dirty” work. But, shifts in analytical frameworks that more directly acknowledge the inevitability of the body’s own dirtiness could also force a reevaluation of the paid labor targeting its mitigation.

In the Chapter 5, my interest was in the function of microbial life as an arbiter of student social obligation and institutional managerial control. Microbes are popular and important non-human agents in the crowded everyday world. They have become touchstones of practice as the cleanliness *Zeitgeist* intensifies the terms of engagement in terms of personal responsibility to invisible types of hygienic risk. Over the course of the 20th century, and more particularly within the meshwork of neoliberal modes of governance characterizing college life in 2016, questions of health and hygiene are framed by narratives of disciplinary personal responsibility – a micro-biopolitics of hygienic normativity. This shift is indicative of a decades-long transition from a focus on very visible dirt to one that includes the potential threat presented by largely invisible microbial life – bacteria, dust mites, *e coli*, *norovirus*. To start, this transition moves alongside the production of new kinds of subjectivity and the turn to governmental regimes of

power. For my purpose, I would note key changes in early 20th century American culture and socio-economic regimes that saw a reorganization of everyday cleanliness practice framed by macro-economic transitions away from agricultural production (Forty, 1986; Ashenberg, 2007), the marketization and racialization of domestic labor regimes (Branch 2010; Duffy, 2007; Nakano Glenn, 1992, 2006), and the shifting socio-technical systems populating the modern bathroom (Shove, 2003; Kaika, 2004).

At UNC, student ideas about germs and the janitorial “science” of microbial risk have dovetailed with the globalized reorganization of social reproductive labor regimes. The intensifying tone of microbial responsibility reinforces the invisibility of the underlying work it requires. Despite the scale at which they operate – invisible to the naked eye –microbes reveal new kinds of local and global connections central to the possibility of being a clean body. Being clean and the work it requires is always local. At the same time, the specter of microbial risk has shifted the terms of responsibility over the body, making its excess a matter of new kinds of institutional concern. The different mobilizations of microbial life by students, housekeepers and the administrators of reformulated housekeeping work practices reveal the way that invisible risk has created a means to further invisibilize housekeeping labor.

Microbes lurk and linger, marking the *potential* for harm. But, they rarely reveal their presence in definitive ways. It is this potential that makes institutional concern over student health an especially effective cover for controlling housekeeping labor. No one wants the flu virus to blow through crowded campus dormitory spaces. But, do the net positive effects on student health justify the endemic mistreatment of housekeepers? This is an impossible calculus, certainly. But, if the structuring forces of institutional power – the housekeeping

department's roll-out of OS1 – use the language of microbial risk to specialize and compartmentalize housekeeping work, why not incorporate a broader stake-holder analysis to assess the value of that change? Is it naïve to wonder how housekeepers and students might benefit from a clearer articulation of their overlapping productions of campus communities?

A major contribution of this work has been an attempt to combine the cleanliness practices of students and the waged work of the housekeepers cleaning up after them as a mechanism of understanding not only institutional power, but the potential of their relationship to each other. Whatever partial success is evident in the preceding analysis is tempered by an acknowledgment that to reframe what are actively disarticulated lives and livelihoods would involve the wholesale disruption of the current architecture of campus life at UNC. Despite this, my contention is that the potential for this disruption is incredibly close-at-hand. The ubiquity of cleanliness practices, the predominance of hygiene norms, and the necessity of housekeeping work are animated by common and shared concern over the demanding production of the body in everyday life. Their separation from each other is neither an economic nor an institutional necessity. It is evidence of the historically-entrenched persistence of systems of value that connect bodies to the work they do as a measure of their worth. A better understanding of the mutual articulation of students and housekeepers to the pernicious effects of these connections is an opportunity for remaking the porous social, political, economic and ethical contours of everyday life and practice.

Future Work

This project asked more questions than it could answer. It is difficult to reframe the gaps, elisions, and mistakes I made during fieldwork as a necessary learning experience,

especially given the serious and endemic problems faced by housekeepers at UNC. I have spoken relatively little about my interviews with the dozen members of the department who spent time with me, but our discussions remain at the forefront of my concern. In part, the difficulty of putting pen to paper emerges from my realization that this document will do nothing to change their working lives just as it widens the scope of my own intellectual and professional opportunities. I am at pains to better address and account for this reality as I move forward with my research.

There are three dominant strands of inquiry that guide my next steps.

First, I have active inquiries related to this project that remain unanswered. I have yet to speak at length with UNC's human resource department regarding the changes to the grievance policy. I have had only limited contact with local lawyers with long-term involvement in the organizing efforts of current and past housekeepers. I have outstanding calls to members of the housekeeping department's management team as well as service providers central to the connection of refugees to employment at UNC. Attempts to make these connections have borne limited results. Though, I plan on continuing these efforts in the coming months as the inclusion of these voices is a critical and missing element of the project as it is currently framed.

Second, for the Burmese, Karen, Chin and Ka-Chin refugees in my study, coming to the US opened the possibility of *life* just as it marked a reorientation of expectations about their *life course*. But, just as the benefit of work has provided newfound stability, their relatively sudden appearance has exacerbated the contentious gender and racial politics that have plagued UNC's housekeeping department for decades. The refugees with whom I spoke expressed gratitude for their work, especially in reference to their families. Growing up in the US marks a

fundamental shift from previously truncated opportunities for children, especially. But, workplace stability does little to protect them from the structural conditions framing housekeeping work on UNC's campus and the American South more broadly. This research reveals an uneven distribution of benefit and harm that relies on the unique precarity of the local refugee community to silence workplace organizing efforts among longer-term housekeepers. Refugees who work in the department are acutely cognizant of their isolation as campus employees and have a notably complicated relationship to workplace organizing because of it.

This strand of research would extend my focus on administrative bureaucracies and institutional policy to look at the bureaucracy of refugee job placement, with a particular focus on the challenge of finding work for non-English speakers, and the subsequent exposure to workplace harm that can result. I am interested in intra-market labor segmentation based on language, ethnicity, and citizenship status, especially connections between major employers – universities, hospital systems, municipal services systems – and refugee job placement systems. Building on feminist geopolitics and critical analyses of the gendered division of labor, this project would connect my current ethnographic work to new archival material and data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the US Census.

A final thread of exploration would start with a closer look at spaces of social reproduction that are nested inside the workplace: break rooms, supply closets, employee bathrooms, childcare facilities, breastfeeding rooms, and other spaces that are either officially or unofficially used by employees during working hours to take care of themselves and the needs of their bodies, children, and health. These spaces are considered ancillary to work

activities, but remain central to workers' abilities to maintain their bodies, physically, mentally and emotionally. In the mid-2000s, the North Carolina state legislature sought to remove housekeepers and other non-academic workers from the protections of the State Personnel Act, further diluting what had been a decade of workplace organizing gains. Local workers and activists organized in protest against what was termed the "No Sit-Down Policy," a short-hand for the effect the change would have on workers as they sought the bare minimum of fair treatment on the job: the ability to sit down without penalization from managers.

At the same time, students find themselves on a campus increasingly tuned to their every social reproductive need. 24-hour gyms and dining options tuned to every dietary need accompany state-of-the-art research centers and "smart" classrooms. Subject-specific libraries and well-equipped spaces designed for socialization at all hours of the day and night account not only for their need to maintain health and intellectual rigor, but rest and relax as they see fit. But, despite the autonomy and unfettered access these trappings *appear* to create, the work of being a student has never been isolated by their individual efforts to learn, eat well, or be healthy. In fact, the experience of being a student on a campus designed around the celebration of their embodiments clarifies and hardens the differential valorization of particular kinds of not just *work*, but forms of *rest* and *relaxation*. This project would build on my existing archive of materials on housekeeping in university space to compare and contrast the production and use of *resting spaces* central the function of campus life and value.

APPENDIX I. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of Study: Clean U: Cleanliness, Social Difference and the Dirty Work of Everyday Hygiene at UNC Chapel Hill

Student Demographic Survey

What is your age (check one)

18

19

20

21

22+

Refuse

What is your relationship status (check one)?

Single

Partnered (Monogamous)

Partnered (Open)

Other

(Please describe: _____)

Refuse

Do you share living space with other students?

Yes (How many students? _____)

No

If yes, what type of space is shared?

Bedroom

Bathroom

Common area

Work

Are you currently employed for wages (check all that apply)?

Full-time

Part-time

Self-employed

Full-time student

Unable to work

Don't know

Refuse

Race/Ethnicity

Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina? Yes No

Do you consider yourself (check all that apply):

White

Black/African American

Asian

Pacific Islander

Native American or Alaskan Native

Black and another category:

Don't know

Refuse

APPENDIX II. STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Clean U: Clean U: Cleanliness, Social Difference and the Dirty Work of Everyday Hygiene at UNC Chapel Hill
IRB #: 13-2158

Basic Practices

Can you describe to me your basic morning routine, for both cleaning and personal grooming?
Where does it happen? Do you share this space? With whom?
If not the morning, what part of the day do you use for your bodily cleaning or grooming routines? Do you do certain aspects at certain times and other aspects at other times? What influences the times of day that you might choose?

Tools

What types of personal cleaning products do you use regularly?
What are your favorites? What do they do? Why do you prefer them?
Where did you first encounter them?
Which are your least favorite? Why?

Do you use different types of cleaning products for different parts of your body?
What types and why do you differentiate between them?

Differentiating Cleaning Practices

Can you describe the difference between the work that you do to clean your body and the work that is done to clean your bathroom?
What do you think are the most relevant differences?
What different types of products or tools are involved?
Do you do this work yourself (or any part of it, i.e. cleaning the sink)?
If not, who does it?

Have your grooming or hygiene routines changed since you came to UNC? If so, in what way? What is different? What is the same?

Purell

Do you use Purell? If yes, how regularly? If no, why not? When did you first start using purell? Do you bring a personal supply of it with you when you aren't at home? Why? What is different about purell vs. washing your hands with soap and water? Can you describe the different way it feels on your hands?

APPENDIX III. HOUSEKEEPER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Clean U: Clean U: Cleanliness, Social Difference and the Dirty Work of Everyday Hygiene at UNC Chapel Hill
IRB #: 13-2158

Basic Practices

Can you describe a typical day at work for me.

Where do you work? Can you describe the building? What types of spaces do you clean? What are the basic tasks involved? Have your job tasks changed since you began working at UNC?

What is the hardest part of your job? Why is it difficult?

What is the easiest part of your job? Why is it easy?

What are your favorite/least favorite aspects of your job? Why?

Tools

Describe the tools you use to do your job.

Where are they stored? Who supplies your supplies? Do you prefer certain tools? Why?

Can you describe how and when you use them?

Did you receive any training to use any of the tools you use in your everyday job?

Who trained you? What did that training involve?

Describe the cleaning products you use to do your job.

Where are they stored? Do you prefer certain cleaning products?

Can you describe how and when you use them?

Did you receive any training to use cleaning products in a specific way?

Who trained you? What did that training involve?

Time

What time of day do you work? Have you always worked during this shift?

Do you see other people while working? Who?

Do you see students during your working day? Do you interact with them?

Differentiating Cleaning Practices

Can you describe the difference between the work that you do at UNC and your own personal hygiene or grooming routines?

What different types of products or tools are involved?

Have your personal grooming or hygiene routines changed since becoming a housekeeper at UNC? In what way?

Purell

Do you use Purell? If yes, how regularly? If no, why not? When did you first start using purell? Do you bring a personal supply of it with you when you aren't at home? Why? What is different about purell vs. washing your hands with soap and water? Can you describe the different way it feels on your hands?

APPENDIX IV. PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST, SUBMITTED BY DIMPFL

July 28, 2014

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Office of Human Resources
Attention: HR Records and Information
Campus Box 1045
104 Airport Drive
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to make a public records request regarding employees in UNC-Chapel Hill's Department of Facilities Services. As per the provisions in the North Carolina State Personnel Act § 126-23, I am seeking records related to both Grounds Services and Housekeeping Services. In specific:

1. Name, age and date of employment of all current employees, including management and line-staff in both departments.
2. Current positions, titles, and salaries of all current employees for management and line-staff in both Grounds Services and Housekeeping Services.
3. All records between 2000 and the June 30, 2014 of promotions, demotions, transfers, suspensions or separations for employees in both departments.
4. All records between 2000 and June 30, 2014 of dismissals, suspensions or demotions for disciplinary reasons taken by either department.
5. Job descriptions for all positions in both departments as utilized on June 30, 1990, June 30, 2000, June 30, 2010, and June 30, 2014.
6. If available, organizational charts for both departments as utilized on June 30, 1990, June 30, 2000, June 30, 2010 and June 30, 2014.

If available, I would prefer electronic versions of the above, though I am available to pick up or inspect hard-copy records if need be.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I can be reached at Dimpfl@email.unc.edu or 718-288-3509 if there are any additional clarifications related to the above.

My address is as follows:

Mike Dimpfl
209 Bim Street
Carrboro, NC 27510

Sincerely,

Mike Dimpfl
PhD Candidate
UNC Department of Geography

APPENDIX V. PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST, SUBMITTED BY LAUREL ASHTON



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COUNSEL

110 BYNUM HALL
CAMPUS BOX 9105
222 EAST CAMERON AVENUE
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-9105
T 919.962.1219
F 919.843.1617

May 30, 2014

Laurel Ashton
5801 Macomb Street
Washington, D.C. 20016
(919) 829-4559
uncsaw@gmail.com

LETTER SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
ENCLOSURE SENT VIA FIRST CLASS U.S. MAIL

Dear Ms. Ashton:

I write in response to your correspondence dated January 1, 2013, in which you wrote seeking copies or access to University records. Specifically, you wrote:

"We request that you provide us with a copy of each of the following:

1. Documents regarding revisions to the UNC-CH grievance procedures and policies since 1990. This includes all former grievance policies that are no longer in use, all electronic and paper correspondence regarding policy revisions, and notes from any meetings held to discuss such changes. Please ensure that dates are provided when each revision was made. We also respectfully request all electronic and paper correspondence regarding reasons for each revision and any documents of approval from the Office of State Personnel.
2. Documents regarding the creation and dissolution of the Sexual Harassment Office. This includes all electronic and paper correspondence regarding reasons for opening and closing the Office. We request the budget for the span of its operation, its jurisdiction and duties, and the qualifications for the Sexual Harassment Officer.
3. All annual EO/ADA Office reports since 1990 provided to federal funding agencies that report the number and type of discrimination and harassment grievances broken down by students, staff, and faculty. Please specify which department staff grievances were filed from. We also request all EO/ADA Office annual reports given to the Chancellor regarding incidents reported under the Policy on Prohibited harassment, Including Sexual Misconduct, and Discrimination."

The enclosed records are being provided to you in accordance with the North Carolina Public Records Act. In all, there are just under 3,000 pages. Please note: per the email we received from you on May 23, 2014 – in response to our request for a mail address to which we could send electronic copies of the public records saved to disk via First Class U.S. Mail – the enclosed records are being sent to the address you provided (listed above).

We regret the delay in processing your request and appreciate your patience. This request has been fully processed and is now closed-out. The University's Public Records Policy is available on-line at <http://policies.unc.edu/policies/public-records/>.

Sincerely,

Regina J. Stabile, J.D.
Director, Institutional Records and Reporting Compliance

RJS/dqp

Enclosure

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