

UP THE RIVER (FROM HOME): WHERE DOES THE PRISONER COUNT?

by

MATTHEW L. MITCHELSON

(Under the Direction of Steven Holloway)

ABSTRACT

This study presents a geographic analysis of imprisonment in the United States following the geographically and historically unprecedented expansion of the nation's prison systems (1973-present). This expansion is commonly known as mass imprisonment. The social and spatial effects of mass imprisonment extend well beyond prison walls, in often unexpected or understudied ways. This work is designed to investigate these effects in three ways. First, an economic geography of prison privatization explores the relationships between capital and the state through which mass imprisonment took shape. Second, an urban geography of Georgia's Department of Corrections explores the dynamic population geography through which mass imprisonment is produced and sustained. Third, a political geography of the ways prisoners are numbered, counted, and accounted for explores the controversial practice of counting the prison population during the decennial census. This multi-method research draws primarily from a statistical analysis of a unique geodatabase of Georgia prison admissions and interviews with former prisoners. The study is situated at the intersection of imprisonment, urbanization, and political representation.

INDEX WORDS: Mass imprisonment, Private Prison, Urban Geography, Flow, Census, Calculable Territory, Statistical Citizenship

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DEDICATION

Dr. Greg Goldey (1955-2007) changed my life. Assignments included things like Chambers Brothers records, at least a dozen rock concerts, and overthrowing the patriarchy and capitalism (he was flexible on due dates). Seminars were on the writings of Howard Zinn, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Steve Earle. You were evaluated on critical thinking, your (cheap, preferably domestic, no-union-busting) beer's label, fealty to Kentucky basketball, and loving kindness. A better poet than me once said of their friend: he was like the North Star; you could guide your ship by him. Greg, thanks for the lessons and love. Every gift is still in motion.

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Last night before bed I was reading one of Michael Chabon's short stories about a guy named Levine, who is struggling to finish his doctoral dissertation. Chabon writes, "Levine had been irritable, paranoiac, and unwashed for the past several months, and in general, I confess, I tried to avoid him." I was instantly aware, though not for the first time, of how lucky this irritable, paranoiac, and unwashed lummo is to be surrounded and supported by such wonderful people. This was a five year dissertation. It's been a great run.

None of this was possible without Erin, my partner and wife through thick and thin. When this is all said and done we're going to pack up the dogs and stomp around the snowy woods of New Hampshire. I can't wait to see what happens next. I am also part of an amazing extended family of folks nationwide that keeps growing in wonderful ways. My Mom and Dad are Yule Logs, as ever. They make 'family first' so easy. And, according to my world view, our family grew a great deal while we were here in Athens. Our family crest is (or at least includes) a forty-foot sign that reads "CONGRATULATIONS BABY!" Thank you for everything.

I was exceptionally well advised here. Dr. Holloway's patience, grace, and excellent leadership left imprints throughout this document and on my life in a much broader sense. I learned so much during my time with him here. Drs. Barkan, Heynen, Kurtz, and Ross served as excellent (and equally patient) advisory committee members, and they all directly shaped my time here in more ways than I can count. They invested time, energy, and passionate support in me, above and beyond what the job required. As Emeritus Professor Dr. Don Hoy loves to tell me, and as is true, he is My Mentor. Drs. Pandit, Herod, and Trauger, though not formally on the

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I was part of a great professional community during this time. Georgia's Geography Department has been a great place for a very long time, and I'm humbled to have been here at all. I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Audrey Hawkins for making me feel so very welcome as we moved back to Athens and her excellent work overseeing so many graduate students. I'd also like to say thank you to the crucial members of this Department's staff who keep it all glued together. To my fellow graduate students here in Athens: well, there aren't words to describe how important you are to me. Let's meet up at 283 and I'll tell you all about it. Matt Miller will send out the flier. Lori and Rachel will hook it up at a buck a boot.

Friends and colleagues from East Carolina University, where I did my master's work, remain a constant source of strength and encouragement from a distance. The Professors from Morehead State have always been important role models. Newer colleagues Jenna Loyd, Andrew Burridge, and Lauren Martin shaped my thinking and have been a delight to collaborate with on specific writing projects; Kate Driscoll Derickson and Anne Bonds have been great mentors and friends. Other folks from the 2007 Summer Institute for the Geographies of Justice—Charlene Smith and Jen Giesecking in particular—remain close friends and colleagues.

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National Science Foundation and their anonymous reviewers provided advice and financial support. Forty-eight people who had been to prison sat down and shared some of the most painful experiences of their lives with me. And the Athens Justice Project continues to impress upon me how important their work is, and how profoundly their love and dedication shapes people's lives.

Some folks won't be formally cited, yet they show up on every page that follows. All are dear friends. The Botelho and Cook family adopted us on more than one occasion, including Christmas of 2009, and taught us some invaluable lessons during some of their own tough times. Vic and Janie Savage kept a fine roof over our heads and took remarkably good care of us during our time at 1531 Lane Creek Road. They were a lot like parents during our time here. Allison Nealy and Rachel Chance helped me swallow some pride and try spin classes in which I was often the only twenty-something (at least when I started), had a big ol' beer belly, and was sporting the only Y chromosome in the room. Rachel and I still ride and train with our friend Mary Stephens. The Kentucky Contingent celebrated a great run of 30th birthdays and parties during these years, and they continue to remind me that friendships don't end when we relocate.

To that point, a number of friends and loved ones passed away during the last five years. Gary George (1959-2007), Judy DeRitter (1927-2007), Greg Goldey (1955-2007), Katie Ball (1984-2007), Jane Mitchelson (1921-2007), and Sue Hoy (1934-2008) are remembered fondly and often. Tina Tinsley has helped me to make sense of their passing and just about everything else for that matter. She would be the first to remind me of how deeply connected the spirit and energies of these good folks are to who I am and what I do. It is impossible to understand my shifts in thinking and behavior over the past five years without these deaths in mind, but also the

births and adoptions that keep me so passionately committed to my work and excited about our collective future.

Lastly, thank you so much for reading this document. That same Chabon short story about the struggling dissertator Levine describes “the row of bookshelves in the graduate library where the bound dissertations were kept—a thousand white surnames inscribed on a thousand uncracked blue spines, like the grim face of a monument.” I believe I have something to say. An audience of one will suit me just fine. As Springsteen has said: it’s you and I now, friend.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Summary of the Dissertation

This study presents a geographic analysis of imprisonment in the United States during the geographically and historically unprecedented expansion of the nation's prison systems. Beginning in 1973, U.S. prison systems (i.e., jails, state and federal prisons) started nearly four decades of expansion; during this time, the total US prison population grew by an order of magnitude (Wacquant 2005). This expansion is commonly known as the rise of mass imprisonment (Garland 2001; Wacquant 2001a). This dissertation argues that the geography of imprisonment extends far beyond a prison's walls and that mass imprisonment currently impacts the entire United States. Three core chapters address specific impacts. First, an economic geography of prison privatization explores the shifting relationship between prisons, capital, and the state within the historical-geographic context of mass imprisonment. Second, an urban geography of Georgia's Department of Corrections explores mass imprisonment as a spatial process that produces and sustains a dynamic, distinctly urban population geography of bodily displacement and relocation. Third, a political geography of the prison population explores the impact of mass imprisonment upon census-taking and explores the ways in which prisoners are numbered, counted, and accounted for during their imprisonment. The overarching research project is multi-method and draws primarily on statistical analyses of a unique geodatabase of Georgia prison admissions and interviews with former prisoners. The study is situated at the intersection of imprisonment, urbanization, and political representation.

Document Structure

This dissertation proceeds in five parts. This introduction describes my approach to the subject matter, presents the document's structure, and contextualizes the plan of the work ahead in terms of theory and methods. The next three chapters (i.e., Chapters Two, Three, and Four) are core manuscripts, which are designed to stand alone as academic publications but interact meaningfully with one another. These chapters have not yet been submitted for publication, save for an almost unrecognizable version of Chapter Two, which was submitted to *Antipode* in 2007.¹ Chapter Five serves as this dissertation's closing point. There I articulate connections between the dissertation's empirical findings and their philosophical implications, I offer some conclusions about these findings, and suggest some openings that this work makes possible.

Private Prisons and Mass Imprisonment

Chapter Two sets the stage and establishes the historical-geographic context in which this dissertation is situated. In this chapter, I explore the geography of mass imprisonment through an analysis of prison privatization. Firms such as Corrections Corporation of America and the Geo Group, Inc. emerged after a remarkable decade of prison expansion (1973-1983), and they have grown considerably since that time. Private prison companies such as these energize heated debate by treating imprisonment as a market, an industry, and an investment opportunity. Heated debates over prison privatization are taking shape in the popular press, in publications from scholars and think tanks, and in Congress (see GAO-GGD 1991, 1996; GAO 2007). Debaters generally frame their concerns by pitting idealized versions of the public and private sectors against one another. However, it remains unclear from these debates how this specific form of privatization operates. In other words, what work do private prisons do?

Gilmore has argued that the profit motive is an insufficient explanation for the rise of mass imprisonment in the United States, generally, and in California, specifically (Gilmore 2007, 21-2). Elsewhere, she and Craig Gilmore have warned analysts against letting “the specter of immoral gain” occlude the state’s role in *all* prisons, whether public or private:

...private prison firms and other corporations are opportunists slurping at the public trough rather than the prime movers behind this extraordinary period in U.S. history...Each element in the [prison industrial complex, which includes, but is not limited to private prison companies] is either an aspect of the state (a rule or a government agent or agency) or derives its power (or powerlessness) in relation to the state and its capacities (Gilmore and Gilmore 2008, 150).

But this powerful argument, which stands in direct contrast to *both* sides of the popular debates surrounding prison privatization, has yet to be empirically probed. As such, Chapter Two makes two contributions to the prison privatization literature by presenting a critical empirical and analytical engagement with Gilmore’s argument.

Chapter Two draws on a close reading of two private prison companies’ financial documents; I analyze annual reports to shareholders for Corrections Corporation of America (i.e., CCA) and Geo Group, Inc. in order to make this argument (CCA 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; Geo Group 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008). In these reports firms are self-representing their economic behavior to both investors (i.e., the public) and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (i.e., the state). Interpreting these firms’ annual reports alongside the prison privatization literature and other popular debates is an innovative approach. In reviewing this literature I continue the work Dolovich (2005) has taken up in characterizing prison privatization debates as missing the point: mass imprisonment. In sum, these data challenge popular understandings of prison privatization and very clear, precise statements of the firms’ practices.

Analytically, I work through the commodification process through which these firms operate. I identify the production of occupancy—and not human bodies themselves—as the primary commodity produced by these firms. I argue that private prisons do not signal the enclosure of public space by capital. I argue instead that: first, private prisons signal a qualitative change in the production of modern prison space; second, this qualitative change traces to the quantitative proliferation of prison spaces during mass imprisonment; and, third, this shift in the quantity/quality relation produces prison space as an exchangeable unit, fit for a marketplace, signified by the term *bedspace*. This analysis identifies the production of modern prison space itself, whether by public or private actors, as the problem at the root of prison privatization. I propose that concerns over prison privatization should focus energy and attention towards overreliance on the prison itself, and away from debates over who nominally owns or operates the prison.

The Urban Geography of Prisons

Chapter Three documents the spatial process that plays out upon the stage set in Chapter Two. I argue that urban form must be reconceptualized to include (often distant) prisons themselves. Mass imprisonment is produced and sustained through a dynamic form of urban population geography, and that prisons and cities are threaded together by the sprawling nature of contemporary urbanization. More specifically, I explore the spatial interdependence between cities and prisons, which are predominately located in rural areas. Urban geographers generally think of prisons as beyond their purview because most prisons are located in rural settings. For example, a cursory search for the word ‘prison’ in the journal *Urban Geography* produces twenty-three results; however, these are almost exclusively passing references or citations of

Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, save for a recent review symposium on Loïc Wacquant's *Urban Outcasts* (e.g., Agnew 2010; Gilbert 2010). In this chapter, I argue that prisons are central urban institutions—a component of urban form—however distant they may be from the city.

Here I am taking up an argument famously advanced by Wacquant's theory of the *Deadly Symbiosis* between prisons and ghettos (2001b). In this work Wacquant argues that analysts must “break out of the ‘crime-and-punishment’ paradigm to reckon the extra-penological function of the criminal justice system as an instrument for the management of dispossessed and dishonored groups” (2001b, 95). Wacquant (2008) signals the social linkage of the ghetto and the prison as “reserved spaces” for past, present, and future prisoners. My work makes explicit the spatial linkages between these reserved spaces, empirically. It does so by mapping the flows between (most often) urban origins and (most often) rural destinations via Georgia Department of Corrections prison admissions. These flows contour the spatial structure of imprisonment as a spatial process. I examine the spatial structure of imprisonment in terms of distances and population flows between prisons and cities. I draw on roughly 250,000 Georgia Department of Corrections prison admission records (1990-2006) to make my argument throughout, and I analyze these records statistically using gravity model and principal components analysis approaches.

Chapter Three also works through the interdependencies that produce and sustain these reserved spaces. In so doing, my empirical analysis complicates the spatiality of Wacquant's narrative by presenting imprisonment as a relational spatiality, as opposed to emphasizing the prison itself (i.e., a spatial fact). Wacquant's spatial approach to the (ostensibly bounded) ghetto and prison has been interpreted as closed off, fixed, and essentialized (cf. Gilbert 2010). As such, this work may (albeit unwittingly) reify spatially fixed images of ‘the’ urban prisoner and

rural prison. I argue that prisons are remarkably city-like sites of displacement in their own right, but that these places are not cities unto themselves. This chapter strives to actively begin reconceptualizing the processes of urbanization in which both the prison and urban space are interwoven by mapping population flows from urban origins to prisons in rural areas. The spatial structures that shape and direct these population flows map the shape and direction that other flows are taking to and from the prison. For example, the private prison firms addressed in Chapter Two are headquartered, and have corporate board members residing in major cities, yet they direct capital flows from these spaces to prisons in rural settings.

The theoretical implications of the chapter thus extend beyond its immediate subject matter. Steve Herbert has produced an important body of scholarship, often focused on policing urban space, that is directly relevant to this chapter (e.g., Herbert 1997, 2001, 2006). However, Herbert's work tends to proceed from vantage points confined to a given city (e.g., Los Angeles or Seattle), and it thus runs the risk of discursively severing the ties between those spaces related to these cities. For example, a recent book (co-authored with Katherine Beckett) explains the *banishment* of bodies undesirable in the view of urban elites from public spaces within the city (Beckett and Herbert 2009). For another example, a recent series of progress reports on geographies of *exclusion* (Herbert 2008, 2009, 2010). Each of these projects makes mention of imprisonment and signals the punitive nature of the criminal justice systems in which policing is clearly situated. But imprisonment is not treated explicitly, and Herbert's work thus runs the risk of discursively erasing prisoners themselves from the very processes he is trying to illustrate. If a prisoner has been banished and excluded from some place (e.g., Los Angeles or Seattle), they have not simply disappeared. They have been displaced. My work in Chapter Three makes this process of displacement explicit by mapping *both* banishment and

imprisonment. If prisoners have not disappeared, but been displaced, then where should they count? Chapter Four takes up this question.

Calculable Territory and the Prison

In Chapter Four I take up the subject matter from which this dissertation gets its name. While Chapter Two sets the historical-geographic stage for all of this work, and Chapter Three demonstrates the spatial process that structures mass imprisonment's population geography (i.e., prisoners being sent 'up the river'), Chapter Four demonstrates one specific political impact of this spatial process during these times. Prisoners in the United States are included in decennial census counts as residents of the prisons in which they are held captive. In turn the political power of nearly two million prisoners effectively flows 'up the river' or 'down the road' with them, from their pre-arrest homes to the places where they are incarcerated. The practice is unsurprisingly controversial (see Lotke and Wagner 2005). Geographers have studied a number of census controversies; for example, the German census boycotts of the 1980s or controversies centered on the counting of Americans living abroad (Hannah 2009; Starkweather 2009). These studies primarily rely on secondary data sources (e.g., the Congressional record or historical archives) and work from a Foucauldian, governmentality approach. While Chapter Four overlaps with these geographic studies of controversial census-taking practices, it is motivated by a desire to understand such controversies from the vantage point of those being counted: prisoners, in this case.

This study draws on fifty semi-structured interviews with (former) prisoners, conducted in 2008 and 2009. In this paper I argue that the question of placement is inextricably linked to the ways prisoners are numbered, counted, and accounted for using identification numbers, roll

calls, and population counts during imprisonment. I argue that these inscriptions mark bodies, buildings, and populations as “calculable territory” (Hannah, 2009); and that the census controversy arises as the U.S. nation state attempts to integrate its geographically fragmented territory. I propose a politically inclusive spatial politics of representation and conclude that the Census Bureau is uniquely positioned to facilitate such a practice. I ultimately argue that the inherently political practice of representing prisoners spatially manifests several overlapping sets of power relations.

This chapter thus also provides an important theoretical contribution to Foucauldian studies by working through a specific case study (i.e., the practice of numbering and counting prisoners) that demonstrates the articulation of multiple modalities of power. Chapter Four is a study of governmentality, but also of disciplinary power and biopolitics. As such, it is an important complement to Hannah’s work, which has typically isolated particular moments of Foucauldian power (see Hannah 2006 in particular). For example, Hannah’s remarkable study of census-taking, written from a governmentality approach, notes the difficulties census takers had (and continue to have) because they are not “empowered to line families up in the front yard” (Hannah 2000, 121) when accounting for them. In prisons, of course, correctional officers have precisely this power, yet prisoners—the iconic subjects of disciplinary power (Foucault 1982; [1975] 1995; [1976] 1982)—remain at the center of a hotly debated controversy regarding the census.

How the Core Manuscripts Relate to One Another

This project actually started where the core manuscripts end: the political controversy surrounding where prisoners count during the decennial census in the United States. I wanted to

understand two things.² First, I wanted to understand the extent to which imprisonment reconfigures quantifiable socio-spatial relationships, as they are measured during the decennial census. Second, I wanted to find out where prisoners conceive of and locate “the right place” for them to be counted. I had the unfortunate problem of answering these questions relatively early in the research process.

The extent to which imprisonment reconfigures quantifiable socio-spatial relationships is as exhaustive as the census geography in which it resides. *Every* political jurisdiction that either has a prison, or, is home to someone who is sent to a prison outside of that political jurisdiction will have its population reconfigured by imprisonment. This is true of all, or very nearly all, of the country’s political jurisdictions. This is not a very interesting question in terms of extent; *imprisonment is directly affecting Census-based political representations everywhere*. This is an interesting question in terms of the problem’s intensity in particular places, but the Prison Policy Initiative already dedicates an incredible level of thoughtful attention to these cases across the country (Prison Policy Initiative 2010).

Luckily, as Ruthie Gilmore notes, “in scholarly research, the answers are only as good as the further questions they provoke” (Gilmore 2007, 27). I was very fortunate in this sense. Finding my initial answer forced me to ask questions about *how* prisoners are counted in a much different way. As Foucault (1982, 217 [emphasis in original]) explains: “*How,*” *not in the sense of “How does it manifest itself?” but “By what means is it exercised?” and “What happens when individuals exert (as they say) power over others?”* This had significant implications for the way that I could understand and interpret former prisoners’ responses to the second research question, which is concerned with where they might want to be counted.

Participants explained to me that the census controversy is like the tip of an iceberg. The census count looks like (and is) an important political problem from the vantage point of folks “above water” (i.e., living in the ‘free world’). But from the vantage point of those “below water” (i.e., in prison) the census controversy emerges from a series of inscriptions that number, count, and account for prisoners. The spatial politics of representing prisoners neither start nor end with the census count. Chapter Four, *Calculable Territory and the Prison*, thus makes a significant theoretical contribution to the broader census debates and serves as an important complement to extant empirical work. It also contributes to a growing body of geographic scholarship concerned with the census and other social surveys and the broader field of social theory concerned with Foucauldian power (Webster 1997; Hannah 2000; 2001; Webster 2004; Legg 2005; 2006; Hannah 2009; Starkweather 2009).

Chapters Two and Three can be thought of as the steps necessary to both make and contextualize these contributions. Lotke and Wagner argue that the way the Census Bureau counts the prison population “would be an item of statistical trivia, but the new numbers give it new meaning” (2005, 588). The Census Bureau’s practice is very old; it probably dates to the first decennial census, but enumerator instructions weren’t formally codified until the 1850 census:

The resident inmates of a hotel, jail, garrison, hospital, an asylum, or other similar institution, should be reckoned as one family....All landlords, jailors, superintendents of poorhouses, garrisons, hospitals, asylums, and other similar institutions, are to be considered as heads of their respective families, and the inmates under their care to be registered as members thereof, and the details concerning each designated in their proper columns (Gauthier 2002, 9-10).

The number of prisoners would have numbered in the tens of thousands then; today they number in the millions. Chapter Two, *Private Prisons and Mass Imprisonment*, thus contributes to a

broad body of literature concerned with mass imprisonment—the “new numbers” alluded to by Lotke and Wagner above. It works through the geography of mass imprisonment that underlies the census controversy, then, but also the controversial practice of prison privatization. While prison privatization serves as the analytic point of entry, Chapters Two and Four share the crucial common ground of mass imprisonment. Chapter Two presents the historical-geographic context in which Chapter Four must be understood; the preconditions for Chapter Four’s emergence in the present (Ollman 2002). But in what specific ways are the geography of mass imprisonment and the political geography of census-taking related?

Chapter Three, *the Urban Geography of Prisons*, makes these connections explicit. This chapter examines the distinctly urban population geography through which mass imprisonment is produced and sustained, and, the spatial process through which the census controversy takes shape. This population geography links cities to prisons that are predominately located in distant rural settings. Prisoners are going, as the sayings go, ‘up the river’ or ‘down the road’ to prison, and they are going away from both their homes and their homes’ political districts. This process of urban displacement is the process by which prisoners almost inevitably cross political boundaries, from the urban districts where they live to the largely rural districts where they are imprisoned.⁶ The census controversy cannot be understood or fully appreciated without this urban-rural interdependence in mind.

Spatial Interdependence

A theoretical commitment to spatial interdependence undergirds this dissertation. On the first page of the first chapter of a widely-adopted textbook, the authors tell us that “Human geography is about recognizing and understanding the interdependence among places and

regions without losing sight of the uniqueness of specific places” (Knox and Marston 2007, 3).

In the textbook, handsome definitions of the terms place and region follow. However, interdependence is left tantalizingly undefined. The entry for interdependence actually disappears from the Dictionary of Human Geography between its Fourth and Fifth editions (Johnston et al. 2000; Gregory et al. 2009).³ Perhaps the term’s meaning is so straightforward as to be obvious.

But what does it mean to take interdependence seriously in the context of mass imprisonment? Imprisonment is an inherently social and spatial process, as opposed to the prison itself (i.e., a spatial fact, a building). No one goes to prison alone; there is necessarily a captor imprisoning the captive. No one’s life is exhausted by imprisonment; people generally aren’t born in prison, a relatively small percentage of people die in prison; the prison is necessarily populated by people who have come from somewhere else. Foucault ([1976] 1980, 68) implies these interdependencies with the “carceral archipelago,” which reflects “the way in which a form of punitive system is physically dispersed yet at the same time covers the entirety of a society.” Foucault is drawing on Solzhenitsyn here, who it is worth quoting at length:

...that amazing country of *Gulag* which, though scattered in an Archipelago geographically, was, in the psychological sense, fused into a continent—an almost invisible, almost imperceptible country inhabited by the zek people [prisoners]. And this Archipelago crisscrossed and patterned that other country within which it was located, like a gigantic patchwork, cutting into its cities, hovering over its streets (Solzhenitsyn [1973] 2002, x).

These authors are calling our attention to the spatial limits of social and political exclusion.

Imprisonment does not take place somewhere outside of society or politics, but very close to their heart. As Ruthie Gilmore has argued, a prison is not only “a building ‘over there’ but a set of relationships” that have very real impacts on “everyday lives everywhere” (Gilmore 2007,

242). Instead of explaining how someone got into prison, or how best to manage them once there, I argue that it's important to question the prison's very existence. *Why*, of all the possible positions—literally, in the entire universe of possible places—*are there more than two million people in jail and prison on any given day?*

There is no simple answer to this question, and in making my responses I draw heavily on the methods for the analysis of economic relations advanced by Marx (particularly in Chapter Two) and the analysis of power relations advanced by Foucault (particularly Chapter Four). Foucauldian approaches are often understood as antagonistic to Marxism, if not anti-Marxist (Poster 1984; Jessop 2007). However, I join a small but growing number of geographers who are working to understand the productive tensions that result when thinking about spatial relations (e.g., spatial interdependence) while taking a relational approach to social power (cf. Ekers and Loftus 2008; Hannah 2001; Rose-Redwood 2006; Smith 2007).

As Rose-Redwood has argued, one method for linking Foucauldian and Marxian studies is to “examine governmental knowledge production in relation to the circuit of capital and the production of abstract spaces” (Rose-Redwood 2006, 481). My work does this in two ways: first, it contributes a Foucauldian perspective to extant, Marx-inspired political economy approaches to the geography of mass imprisonment (e.g., Gilmore 2007; Peck 2003; Peck and Theodore 2008); second, it approaches the process of prisoner's subject formation within this political economic context and takes a specifically humanist sensibility (i.e., the prisoner's vantage point) seriously (cf. Ollman 2002; Foucault 1982). I view this dissertation work as taking place where relational power and spatial relations converge. The thousands of jails and prisons across this country could have been built for educational purposes, for example, and the

facilities could be used for much different purposes (Martin and Mitchelson 2009). The economic production of prison space is a question of social power.

Rethinking the Geography of Prisons

I end this introduction by signaling a common ground that exists somewhere between the ‘high theory’ of Marx and Foucault and the very specific, grounded empirical findings presented here. The broader social and political relevance of this dissertation research can be found here, on this common ground. Prisons and the free world to which they are routinely contrasted occupy this common ground. This common ground is at the heart of the following statement from late Supreme Court Justice William Brennan:

Prisoners are persons whom most of us would rather not think about. Banished from everyday sight, they exist in a shadow world that only dimly enters our awareness. They are members of a “total institution” that controls their daily existence in a way that few of us can imagine...It is thus easy to think of prisoners as members of a separate netherworld, driven by its own demands, ordered by its own customs, ruled by those whose claim to power rests on raw necessity. Nothing can change the fact, however, that the society that these prisoners inhabit is our own. Prisons may exist on the margins of that society, but no act of will can sever them from the body politic (quoted in Elsner 2004, 16).

The view from this common, shared terrain suggests a rethinking of the prison itself as a geographic entity. This shared space reopens the prison, at least conceptually, instead of reifying prison walls as impermeable boundaries. It repositions the geography of the prisons (i.e., a spatial fact) within a much broader geography of imprisonment (i.e., a spatial process).

Reopening the prison through a philosophy of spatial interdependence challenges our understanding of other places, too. For example, as Ruthie Gilmore has argued, “households stretch from neighborhood to [prison] visiting room to courtroom, with a consequent thinning of

financial and emotional resources” (Gilmore 2007, 16). I invite you to read this dissertation as a geography that makes room for all of these places. Time is of the essence, as I will argue in the concluding chapter, because mass imprisonment is showing up in—and making room for—all kinds of unexpected places.

The need for conceptually repositioning the prison—from ‘the margins’ of society and space, to somewhere much closer, through a recognition of spatial interdependence—is echoing across the carceral landscape. Flu-like symptoms shut down visitation for more than 10,000 prisoners in Texas state prisoners last year from fear of contagion. Cell phones now rival drugs and weaponry as contraband of the highest priority. The Georgia Department of Corrections fleet drove 19,171,419 miles, with fuel costs of \$2,342,420.85, in 2006 alone (Georgia Department of Corrections 2006, 19).

This common ground has very important social implications. For one thing, I want to suggest that you and I are both on it. For another, I want to suggest that we are currently sharing this space with the more than two million people who are experiencing the effects of disciplinary powers beyond most of our worst imaginings. But that figure of two million people represents a stock, which is measured at a given time. This stock is produced and sustained through almost incomprehensible flows. Nearly everyone—95% of prisoners—comes home; roughly two thousand individuals go into jails and prisons each day, and slightly fewer individuals return home (Petersilia 2003). I invite those who are uninterested in my philosophical or empirical efforts to meet me in recognizing that prisoners are not members of an alternate universe—a separate netherworld—but are in fact our past, present, and future neighbors.

Endnotes

- ¹ It remains to be seen whether or not my submission of Chapter Two, as it exists now, will be treated as a totally new submission or a revised resubmission. This decision will be made at the editor's discretion, but the submission case was technically closed in 2008.
- ² My original dissertation proposal actually had three research questions. The first, which I address fully in this dissertation's conclusion, was rendered moot when my request to conduct an on-site institutional ethnography of the Georgia Department of Corrections Inmate Classification Unit was denied.
- ³ I actually emailed the (five) editors of the 5th Edition, and asked how (and why) the entry was discontinued. I was clear to indicate that my question was being asked in earnest; it was not a criticism. Derek Gregory kindly emailed me back to say "For my part, it didn't seem a key term, and much of what was said in the existing entry reappeared elsewhere in the Dictionary."

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CHAPTER 2

PRIVATE PRISONS AND MASS IMPRISONMENT: CARCERAL ENCLOSURE OR THE PRODUCTION OF BEDSPACE¹

¹ Mitchelson, M.L. To be submitted to Antipode.

Firms such as Corrections Corporation of America and the Geo Group, Inc. emerged during the historically and geographically unprecedented rise of mass imprisonment in the United States. Private prison companies energize heated debate by treating imprisonment as a market, an industry, and an investment opportunity. Debaters generally frame their concerns by pitting idealized versions of the public and private sectors against one another, but private prisons are misunderstood in these terms. In this chapter I argue that: 1) private prisons signal a qualitative change in the production of modern prison space; 2) this qualitative change traces to the quantitative proliferation of prison spaces during mass imprisonment and not the enclosure of prison space by capital; and, 3) this shift in the quantity/quality relation produces prison space to an exchangeable unit, fit for a marketplace, signified by the term *bedspace*. I work through various prison privatization literatures and a close reading of private prison companies' annual reports to shareholders in order to make my argument. I propose that concerns over prison privatization should focus energy and attention towards overreliance on the prison itself, and away from debates over who nominally owns or operates the prison.

Introduction

We remain optimistic about our company's growth prospects and the fundamentals of our industry (from CEO George Zoley's Letter to Shareholders, quoted in Geo Group (2009, 3)).

We believe our inventory of beds provides CCA with a competitive advantage for winning new contract awards, as this just-in-time availability offers our customers immediate solutions to overcrowding conditions as well as inmate population

growth (CEO John Ferguson and COO Damon Hininger, quoted in CCA (2009, 5)).

Firms like Corrections Corporation of America and the Geo Group, Inc. (CCA and Geo Group) have been called “the new face of imprisonment in America” (Barry 2009, 8).¹ You could almost forget that they are talking about prisons in the quotations above. But this business sector—the private prison industry—has grown remarkably since its emergence in the 1980s (King 1984). There were 128,524 state and federal prisoners in private facilities in 2008; a population forty-seven percent larger than it had been in 2000 (Sabol, West and Cooper 2010, 38). No doubt, the quotes above sound like something new where prisons are concerned. These firms talk about core market segments and just-in-time availability instead of crime and punishment. These anchors of the private prison industry trade on the New York Stock Exchange, unlike the local, state, and federal governments who typically own and operate prisons. These firms anticipate continued growth and expansion at a time when public prison budgets are being called into question (cf. Teegardin and Rankin 2010). Yet, at its core, imprisonment remains a process of spatial segregation and bodily incapacitation regardless of who owns or operates the facility. Feats of architecture and engineering notwithstanding, cages have changed very little over time. Profit and imprisonment also have a long, entangled history that predates these firms by centuries (Hallet 2006, 39-59; Bentham [1787] 1995, 51-54). It thus remains unclear what is new about the functions at work behind this new face of imprisonment. How has the painful geography of imprisonment—with its gun towers, its concrete and concertina wire, and the constant displacement of human beings—come to be represented as a market, an industry, and an investment opportunity?

Unsurprisingly, the for-profit facilitation of punishment already energizes a great deal of criticism and resistance (Dyer 2000; Yeoman 2000; Hallinan 2003, 163-185; Elsner 2004, 201-218; Hallet 2006). Heated debates over prison privatization are taking shape in the popular press (Belkin 1989; Xiong 1997), in publications from scholars (Gentry 1986; Logan 1990) and think tanks (Hatry et al. 1989; Segal 2005), and in Congress (GAO-GGD 1991; 1996; GAO 2007). Despite the remarkable range of participants, however, the ensuing debates generally come down to “one basic question”: should prisons be owned and operated by *private* contractors, *or*, should prisons be exclusively *public* institutions (Dolovich 2005, 440-441)?² These debates underscore many of the economic processes analyzed by geographic scholarship on neoliberalism, and privatization in particular (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Mansfield 2004; Heynen and Robbins 2005). But the way public and private are defined and practiced—as spaces, social entities, and ideals (Mitchell 2003, 141)—is terribly important in prisons, as elsewhere (Blomely and Bakan 1993; Low and Smith 2006). Prison privatization debates are too often limited to the realm of ideals and social entities. Prisons themselves, and the material spatial contexts in which they are situated, are woefully neglected.

I argue that concerns over prison privatization should not direct additional energy and attention to the normative question of who owns or operates the prison, but, instead, to question the prison itself (Davis 2003; The CR10 Publications Collective 2008; Loyd, Burrige and Mitchelson 2010). I do not pretend that the question of ownership is unimportant, particularly for those working within prisons (Taylor and Cooper 2008). Rather, I wish to signal the question’s frustratingly narrow political horizon and to suggest a new set of questions that are capable of speaking to the ideal, social, and spatial contexts at hand. My interest is in neither a public prison nor a private prison, but the expansion of public space. And the ideal of the public

prison is only debatably autonomous from its private counterparts. What the private prison does, from a prisoner's vantage point, or from the vantage point of their loved and loving ones, is generally no different than what a public prison does. There is no commons to be reclaimed here. The prison was enclosed long ago when capital helped to mortar every brick in the country's very first prison walls. In turn, the private prison may be less important for what it does than what it signals.

My argument is that the private prison—the new face of imprisonment in America—signals a change in the production of prisons as a particular type of space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991). This change in the nature of prison space has come about through the unprecedented and unrivaled U.S. prison buildup known as “mass imprisonment” (Garland 2001). In Marxian terms, as interpreted by Ollman (2002), mass imprisonment signals a shift in the quantity/quality relation. The root process in question is confinement, which, again, remains little changed over time; prisons today are sites of spatial segregation and bodily incapacitation, just as they would have been hundreds of years ago. Following Ollman (2002, 17), the “main constituting relationships remain unchanged” in this very specific sense. The frequency of imprisonment, however, has changed tremendously with various prison systems growing by an order of magnitude over the past forty years; these quantitative changes have been well documented elsewhere (Garland 2001; Mauer and Chesney-Lind 2002; Pettit and Western 2004; Pew Center on the States 2008). I want to suggest that the quantitative intensification of imprisonment resulted (or was perhaps only beginning to result) in a qualitative transformation in imprisonment at the moment when private prison firms reappeared in the 1980s. As Ollman argues, “this qualitative change is often, though not always, marked by the introduction of a new concept to designate what the process has become” (Ollman 2002, 17). In the context of U.S.

mass imprisonment, that concept is *bedspace*, a term that pervades penal discourse and which I will treat at length below.

The chapter works through my argument in three main sections. In the first, I address the popular prison privatization debate. I focus in particular on what I view as one of the most important criticisms in the privatization debate: prison privatization transforms prisoners into *commodities*. Unlike other approaches, this criticism begins to humanize geographic knowledge of the private prison. But this approach falls short of its analytical and political potential when it fails to account for the spatial context at hand. Thus, the second section starts with space, as it is produced by private prison firms. Recent 10-K filings to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (i.e., annual reports) from CCA and Geo Group are used to illustrate that imprisonment itself is produced as a commodity. When produced in this way, space is reducible to *bedspace*: an exchangeable unit, fit for a marketplace. So my analysis of *bedspace* restates the question of bodily commodities as a question of *occupancy* (i.e., confined bodies, or, imprisonment). This raises immediate questions about *occupants*. Unlike other spatial contexts in which there is a demand for occupancy, no one is voluntarily checking in to private prisons. Thus, in the third and final section, I analyze the broader carceral context in which millions of imprisoned human bodies are interpreted as growth prospects for private prison firms.

The Popular Prison Privatization Debate

Advocates and critics of prison privatization generally take one of two approaches to the same question: should prisons be owned and operated by *private* contractors, *or*, should prisons be exclusively *public* institutions? Dolovich (2005) describes the two approaches as the

“comparative efficiency” and the “inherent-public-function” approach; the former is an empirical question, the latter is a normative claim.

The comparative efficiency approach frames cost as the central issue of concern (GAO-GGD 1991, 3; Shichor 1998, 82; Clear and Frost 2002, 425).³ Advocates argue that privatization reduces the costs of building and operating prisons, relative to the public sector (Austin and Coventry 1999; Segal 2005). Critics either argue that the evidence of cost savings is inconclusive (cf. GAO 2007), or, that private prisons reduce the quality of imprisonment for both prisoners and employees (Greene 2001; Taylor and Cooper 2008). The inaccessibility of prisons, a dearth of data, and methodological problems confound comparative efficiency studies, and the argument over which sector is more efficient proceeds without a conclusion in sight (Greene 1999; Pratt and Maahs 1999; Clear and Frost 2002; GAO 2007).

The inherent-public-function approach shifts the terms from cost and quality to question the legitimacy of the private prison as a social institution (Dolovich 2005; Gilmore and Gilmore 2008). The comparison implicit in this approach pits the public good against private interests. Critics pose arguments in terms of morality, accountability, and legality (Walzer 1985; DiIulio 1988; Freiberg 1999; White 2001). *Wardens from Wall Street: Prison Privatization*, a widely disseminated pastoral statement from (the 43) Catholic Bishops of the South, is exemplary of one such moral approach. In my copy, the sentence “we are concerned about the rise in for-profit prisons because previous attempts to introduce the profit motive into prisons have failed to respect the fundamental human dignity of every prisoner,” appears in bold (Catholic Bishops of the South 2003). Advocates of prison privatization often brush inherent-public-function approaches aside as “theological, or rather, theocratic” (Logan 1990, 57), or, “ideological positions” (Harding 1999, 109). Framed in these terms, the positions are more or less

irreconcilable; barring constitutional intervention, these arguments seem unlikely to impact the pattern of private prison expansion (cf. Izenberg 2009).

Both approaches have limitations that stem from the “comparativist’s impulse” to pit the market against the state (Dolovich 2005, 446). These limitations circumscribe the impact of potential reforms that either advocates or critics might hope to achieve. Whether it is publicly or privately owned or operated, the end result for either camp is a prison. A political victory for either camp is unlikely to shorten “the life or breadth of deadly forces such as prisons” (Gilmore and Gilmore 2008, 145). My critique of the comparative efficiency approach is straightforward: cost frames the terms of the comparative efficiency approach yet the least costly prison is neither public nor private; it is simply empty, or, it was never built. Similarly, the distinction between public and private sectors prefigures the terms of the inherent-public-function approach. This question constructs a false dichotomy between public and private interests where, instead, prisons are built in the interests of capital *and* the state (Greenberg 1981; Peck 2003; Bonds 2008; Gilmore and Gilmore 2008; Wacquant [2004] 2009). A growing body of literature argues that private prisons should be analyzed as expansions of state capacity, or, public-private partnerships (Schneider 1999; White 2001; Dolovich 2005; Gilmore and Gilmore 2008). Perhaps more importantly, this question wrongly conflates the often nominal question of prison ownership with meaningful questions of space and social justice.

The most important problem with the prison privatization debate is that it assumes mass imprisonment as an unproblematic baseline from which to make comparisons and draw conclusions (Garland 2001; Dolovich 2005, 442). This happens because the debate fails to engage the people directly involved with imprisonment, whether correctional officers or prisoners (Richards and Ross 2001; McElligott 2007). The debate reifies the “popular

imagination” of the prison as “permanent and fixed features of Western societies” (Morris and Rothman 1998, vii), or, “an inevitable and permanent feature of our social lives” (Davis 2003, 9). Mass imprisonment is assumed as the natural geography of the prison. This geographic knowledge of the prison thus fixes both mass imprisonment (i.e., the current carceral landscape) and the prison itself (i.e., the social institution) as necessary features of the landscape. In this way, the popular prison privatization debate forecloses the question of producing a much different geography of penalty, in which far fewer people are imprisoned and far less harm is done in the name of justice. Thus, the resolution of either approach to the prison privatization debate has something to offer in terms of prison reform, but little to offer in producing a more humanly workable geography of the prison (McKittrick 2006).

Like others (Dolovich 2005; Gilmore and Gilmore 2008), I want to broaden the terms of this debate in order to move beyond these terms and account for the broader carceral context in which it is situated. This is not to say that questions of efficiency are unimportant (Harvey 1973, 96-99). Nor is it to say that questions of morality, accountability, or legality are unimportant. They are. Instead, this is to say that resolving the prison privatization debate in terms of comparative cost or the legitimacy of a prison’s ownership or operation is unlikely to do anything to redress the harms currently taking place in real prisons or as a result of imprisonment. The root question of prison privatization debates—public or private?—offers little in the way of meaningful change. I ask a basic human-geographic question now in hopes of beginning to broaden the terms of this debate: who is where, and why?

‘One of the Most Valuable Commodities to Trade Hands’

One group of critics argue that private prisons treat human bodies themselves as “raw materials” (Welch and Turner 2007, 56), or, “assets” (Hallinan 2003, 177) to be accumulated. These critics argue that prisoners’ bodies play a material role in the process of privatization and profit-making, and that this is morally reprehensible. Their perspective overlaps meaningfully with inherent-public-function approaches to the debate in its attention to profit. They call attention to what they see as a shift in the role of prisoners’ bodies through a frightening innovation of capitalism. In private prisons, we are told, the relation between capital accumulation and bodies shifts, such that the exploitation of prisoners’ labor-power is not even (necessarily) of concern. In private prisons, a prisoner’s body need not sell its capability to labor—or move at all—in order to generate profits. Instead, she or he need only the “bodily ability to generate per diem payments for their private keepers” (Hallet 2006, 4).

Some of the most provocative critics insist that privatization transforms prisoners into *commodities*, specifically. In an article from *The Nation*, for example, we are introduced to a prisoner who has undergone this transformation after his transfer from a public District of Columbia prison to a Corrections Corporation of America facility. “James Neal is...one of the most valuable commodities to trade hands in Youngstown, Ohio, since the steel industry abandoned the city more than a decade ago” (Bates 1999, 22). Similarly, Dyer (2000, 10) warns that private prisons produce “a world where crime is good; recidivism, a business plan; prisoners, a valuable commodity.” It appears to be the private property relation that does the transformative work. For criminologists Schwartz and Nurge (2004, 133), privatization shifts prisoners from “serious liabilities” to “commodities.” Similarly, Hallet (2006, 18) notes “for shareholders in private prison companies, inmates have quite literally become commodities

rather than liabilities.” But, what is the analytical or political utility of deploying ‘commodity’ here?⁴ What are these critics telling us they see?

To be certain, these critics are telling us that they see a lot of money in a place they didn’t expect to find it. Private prisons seem unlike other privatized institutions, because the transfer of ownership (from public to private) involves punishment. Punishment *is* counter-productive. And, yet, private prison firms often profit remarkably. Net incomes for CCA and Geo Group have been positive and substantial every year, with only two exceptions, since 1999 (CCA 2004; Geo Group 2004; CCA 2005, 11-12; 2007; Geo Group 2007; CCA 2008a; Geo Group 2008; CCA 2009; Geo Group 2009). Geo Group reported an aggregate net income of nearly \$200 million between 2003 and 2008 (Geo Group 2008). CCA’s aggregate net income during that same time was more than \$600 million (CCA 2008a, 43). No doubt, the size and financial success of these firms attracts attention. But these critics aren’t just signaling the bottom line. They are suggesting that these profits amount to immoral gain. “Not since slavery,” Yeoman argues, “has an entire American industry derived its profits exclusively from depriving human beings of their freedom” (2000, 39). But is this only true in private prisons?⁵

I interviewed former prisoners as part of a larger research project that is generally beyond the scope of this chapter.⁶ I only heard one former prisoner describe himself as a commodity during the interviews. However, time and again I heard terms that were just as deeply unsettling. The quotations below represent two of the dominant themes that emerged, in participants’ own words.

Tony	When you go [to prison]—when you become state property —you definitely get a number. ⁷ A lot of it is by design. I hate to say ‘they’ like it’s a big conspiracy. But, this is not all by chance. I remember one time. I was at [a public, state prison]. I had just got there. The correctional officer said, “Alright maggots, every time I
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see y'all in green [prison uniforms], I see green in my pockets." I looked at him like 'oh my God'. He's right. They don't want to stop that, so why would they want people to rehabilitate? Why not profit on it? Somebody's cashing in. Somebody's getting paid.⁸

Derrick Prison is what I like to call a **warehouse** system.⁹

Tony and Derrick were only ever held in public prisons. Few of the prisoners I spoke with were ever held in private facilities—all had done at least some time in public facilities. Yet, a dehumanizing property relation clearly imposed itself upon my participants during their imprisonment. While the organizational form is different between public and private prisons, the threat of profit from human misery runs rampant in both types of facilities (Herivel and Wright 2007). To the extent that prisoners in private prisons are commodities, then, so are prisoners in public prisons. Human beings are treated as commodities to be warehoused in both public and private prisons. The creative history of capitalism has always been about the search for—and discovery of—new ways for human bodies to be put *into motion*. But the privatized prisoner's body is not an "accumulation strategy" in this sense (cf. Harvey 2000, 107; [1982] 2006, 447). Rather, the prison treats the accumulation of bodies as an accumulation strategy. Today, prisons entail *the accumulation of bodies as an accumulation strategy* (cf. Harvey 2000).

So the deployment of commodity is useful, but it misses its full potential here unless it is grounded in a human geography that can account for the materiality of imprisonment. Without recourse to such a material account, critics run the risk of distracting political energies and imposing a bodily commodification of their own. This second layer of commodification results when, paraphrasing Kineberg (2001, 130), prisoners are produced as the subjects of spectacle, commodified materials for selling stories rather than substantive human beings.¹⁰ Thus, any material grounding of imprisonment requires that we center our analyses and criticisms on the

experiences of prisoners (Terry 2003; Martin and Mitchelson 2009). Doing so illustrates that it is not *only* the introduction of market relations to the ownership or operation of the prison that produces the body as a commodity. Rather, it is the production of this particular, dehumanizing type of space itself and the imposition of the property relation upon human bodies (Soja 1980; Harvey 2006; Lefebvre [1974] 1991). Private prisons don't commodify prisoners any more (or less) than their public counterparts do. This brings us to the question of how private prison firms actually work.

Occupancy and the Production of Bedspace

Bedspace doesn't have an entry in my personal dictionary, the 4th or 5th editions of the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, or my *Encyclopedia of American Prisons* (McShane and Williams 1996; Johnston et al. 2000; Gregory et al. 2009). But bedspace is a term that pervades official penal discourse (Fairclough 2001). In a cursory search, I found the term in documents from prison systems in every state, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and other government entities and consultants (Parent, Snyder and Blaisdell 2001; Federal Bureau of Prisons 2002; Tennessee Department of Correction 2008; The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General 2009). The term is also commonplace in the private sector. Private prison companies' annual reports often read like a corporate bedding manufacturer's. We can start to understand the importance of this term by turning to the writings from the firms themselves. The first page of CCA's 2007 annual report contains the word *bed* 17 times, for example. A graphic titled "Bed Development" on page three of the same report projects that the cumulative number of beds developed between 2005-2009 will approach 20,000 (CCA 2008a). The next year's report celebrates "aggressive development efforts in 2008" that resulted in "an attractive inventory of

beds as we enter 2009” (CEO John Ferguson and COO Damon Hininger, quoted in CCA (2009, 5)). Similarly, Geo Group’s corporate leaders announced:

Our core market segments continue to experience strong demand, and our organic project pipeline remains strong with ten projects currently under development totaling approximately 8,300 beds, which are scheduled to open between 2009 and 2010 (from CEO George Zoley's Letter to Shareholders, quoted in Geo Group (2009, 3)).

But private prison firms are not bedding manufacturers.

Bedspace abstracts violently from the materiality of imprisonment. The human-geographic complexity of imprisonment—namely, “the involuntary loss of self-determination and mobility, and the consignment of human lives to cages” (Gilmore and Gilmore 2008, 151)—is discursively collapsed into a piece of furniture: a bed. The prison is effectively masked as a *humanless* geography (cf. Mitchell 1997; Davis and Shaylor 2001; McKittrick 2006). So bedspace creates serious empirical, analytical, and ethical problems because prisoners, who are clearly not invisible human beings, are discursively rendered as *unvisible* and *ungeographic*, placeless subjects. Bedspace—much like “overcrowding” (Bleich 1989)—serves as a powerful ideology (cf. Mitchell 1997).

This spatial representation is highly potent because of what it does not—*what it cannot*—say (Fairclough 2001; Sitze 2009; Lefebvre [1974] 1991). Bedspace cannot speak to the violence and vulnerability that typify prisons. But bedspace also omits the material differences between punitive settings, such as jails, prisons, and detention centers, or their different security classifications. These different institutional settings have more than nominal impacts on the lives (and life chances) of those who are held within them. Again, the power of bedspace is its capacity to reduce all of this socio-spatial complexity to a single piece of furniture. So it is

important to ask: if they are not bedding manufacturers, then how do private prisons reap profits from beds? How do these firms work?

The Costly Nature of Imprisonment

As a business model, it seems remarkable that these firms might profit at all. On appearance, everything simply *costs*. So it comes as no surprise that cost figures so prominently in prison privatization debates. The prison itself typically amounts to an enormous, intricately designed built environment. The production of bedspace almost always implicates a massive construction project that must be designed and built (Mitchelson in press). Private prison firms may design, build or buy these facilities and, once built, they will variously own and/or operate them. For example, as of their 2008 annual report, CCA operated 64 correctional and detention facilities; the company owned 44 of those facilities, plus two more, which they “lease to third-party operators”; and the firm had a contract in place “to design, build, and operate a new 1,072-bed correctional facility in Pahrump, Nevada” (2009, 3). Some of these facilities are remarkably expensive in and of themselves. In the first quarter of 2009, the firm finished construction on a prison in Eloy, Arizona, “at a total cost of approximately \$200.0 million” (CCA 2009, 10).

Further, upon completion, these facilities also have to be maintained and the functional reproduction of these facilities requires the labor-power of wardens, staff members, correctional officers, and other workers. For Geo Group, “labor and related cost represented approximately 56.3% of our operating expenses in the fiscal year 2008” (Geo Group 2009, 26). Similarly, CCA explains that “approximately 63% of our operating expenses consist of salaries and benefits” and adds “containing these expenses will continue to be challenging” (cf. Camp and Gaes 2002; CCA 2008a, 15; and see CCA 2008b). The exploitation of these laborers is almost always

brushed aside in critical commentary. And though these workers clearly deserve our attention (cf. McElligott 2007; Taylor and Cooper 2008), full consideration is beyond this chapter's scope.

It also costs money to keep prisoners alive. As Kropotkin once wrote, "the ideal of prison officials would be thousands of automatons, arising, working, eating and going to sleep by means of electric currents switched on by one of the guards. Economies might then be made in the budget" (SPFPA 2008; [1877] 1975, 48). Problematic as prison conditions are in many facilities, even the worst of food, healthcare, educational programs and so on are all costly. A recent CCA report explains that "we constantly seek to identify ways to reduce the cost of the basic goods and services we purchase" (2008a, 15). The summative point here is simply that it costs money—quite a lot of money—to design, build, own, operate, maintain, and staff private prisons. The private prison must keep its operating costs as low as possible, relative to its revenues. So the key to increasing the *rate* of profit is cost savings in payroll and purchasing (Marx [1867] 1976, 320-329). And, because all of these things cost money upfront, private prison firms must generate or coordinate economies of scale at the onset.

Economies of Scale and Organizational Form

From design, through construction, and day-to-day operations, it takes remarkable quantities of money to produce a punitive environment, let alone make punishment profitable. Private prison firms use large sums of money to both produce and participate in "economies of scale" (Smith 2009), which are cost advantages that result from large-scale operations (e.g., bulk buying or mass production). This requires the mobilization of considerable capital. These firms are often supported by massive credit lines, and, these firms generate a lot of money through equity and debt markets (Welch and Turner 2007). For example, CCA has a \$450 million loan,

arranged by Banc of America Securities LLC and Wachovia Capital Markets, LLC (CCA 2008a, 60-1); Geo Group has a \$365 million loan, arranged by BNP Paribas (Geo Group 2008:85). For 2008, Geo Group reported \$512.13 million in total debt (2009, 55); in that same year, CCA reported \$1.19 in total debt (CCA 2009, F19-F22). These firms receive additional capital (indirectly) through their institutional stockholders. CCA and Geo Group have nearly 200 institutional stockholders between them, including some of the world's largest financial institutions; for example, Barclay's Bank PLC held 1,178,783 shares of CCA stock and 868,028 shares of Geo Group as of January 2006 (Welch and Turner 2007).

Unsurprisingly then, private prison firms draw on complicated networks of economic and political coordination. A survey of Geo Group and CCA's corporate leadership gives a cursory indication of these firms' socio-political and capital coordination (cf. Davis 2003; Mills [1956] 1970). As of their 2007 Annual Reports (CCA 2008a; Geo Group 2008) the two firms' executive boards included: a president emeritus of the University of South Carolina; the CEO of the Philadelphia Television Network; a former Under Secretary of the U.S. Air Force; a former speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives; a former director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons; Thurgood Marshall, Jr. (son of former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and former aide to President Clinton); a former Deputy Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Defense; and retired U.S. Senator Dennis DeConcini—one of the Keating Five (Thompson 1993). In addition, these boards include several venture capitalists and a host of other corporations' executives and officers. The wide range of corporations and cities that are indirectly related to private prison firms through their corporate leadership appear as a convergence of elites (Mills [1956] 1970).

These corporate interlocks, however informal, afford CCA and the Geo Group crucial knowledge transfer between otherwise disconnected firms, on the one hand, and cities/jurisdictions on the other (cf. O'Hagan and Green 2004). These cities/jurisdictions map onto particular legal, political, and carceral territories; leadership's socio-political networks can cover these same spaces. In this context, all of these political territories can become market areas. The crucial question of how this remarkable assortment of agents, institutions, interests, and agendas has come together is an important and lingering question to be answered through biographic and institutional-ethnographic research (Kezar 2003; Smith 2006). However, the question of *why* these groups have assembled is unambiguous: regardless of intentionality, these directors are unified in their immediate task of accumulating capital (Marx [1867] 1976). But, again, these particular capitalists proceed by producing punishment via the private prison and this brings us back to the question of prisoners' bodies. In what kind of positive environment is the punishment of human beings—and imprisonment, specifically—profitable?

The Profit Question

Profit, and the “specter of immoral gain” (Gilmore and Gilmore 2008, 150), attract so much attention from critics of prison privatization that it is difficult to keep these firms in perspective. On the one hand, firms like CCA and Geo Group are large, powerful economic actors. This industry imprisons more than 100,000 human beings in the United States (Sabol and Couture 2008, 20). The *private* U.S. prison population is larger than the entire prison populations of Indonesia or Pakistan (Walmsley 2007). Globally, CCA estimates that “the number of privatized beds has grown from 10,973 in 1990 to over 164,000, a compounded growth rate of 17.1%” (2008a, 3). On the other hand, if capital was somehow expunged from the

ownership and/or operation of prisons—if the doors of private prisons were simply flung open—there would still be more than 2.2 million people imprisoned across the United States (Pew Center on the States 2008). And the question of profits is no less important in these settings.

Individuals profit (directly and indirectly) whenever prisoners consume or produce. All prisoners consume, and they do so without much choice (Helliker 1995; Dyer 2000). The \$100,000 annual soap contract between Dial Corporation and New York City’s jail system during the mid-1990s and the \$34 million annual meat substitute contract between VitaPro Foods and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice are telling (Helliker 1995; Dyer 2000). Telephone calls placed from state prisons often fall under a convoluted pricing system that ultimately taxes the calls’ recipients; profits are divided between the telephone provider and the department of corrections. The 2,000 prisoners at Washington’s Airway Heights Corrections Center “spent an astonishing \$458,581 calling home for Christmas” in 1997 (Hallinan 2003, 146). Dyer (2000, 14) estimates that one prison pay phone can generate up to \$15,000 annually.¹¹ Relatively few prisoners work as commodity producers (Pryor 2005, 3). However, prison industries are lucrative and growing.¹² Federal Prison Industries, Inc. (FPI hereafter, which is also known as UNICOR) employs more than 23,000 prisoners at an hourly wage of \$0.23 to \$1.15. FPI’s *net* income in 2007 was \$45.8 million (2008, 15). The U.S. Bureau of Justice’s (2002, 1) Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIE) was designed “to establish employment opportunities for prisoners that approximate private-sector work opportunities.” From PIE’s inception in 1979 through September of 2007, prisoners saw less than one half of their cumulative wages (National Correctional Industries Association 2008b). Recent evidence suggests that they now see less than 40 cents on the dollar (National Correctional Industries

Association 2008a). The fact that all of this happens in the name of the public sector illustrates the relatively shallow depth of the boundary between public and private imprisonment.

In this sense, CCA and Geo Group are two firms in a long list of (public and) private sector actors who profit from imprisonment. Barring political intervention, we can expect such processes to intensify in frequency and magnitude. However, private prison companies—as owners and/or operators of prisons—are distinct from the majority of these actors, both in economic form and practice. Firms like CCA and Geo Group do not need prisoners to consume or produce in order to generate revenues or earn a profit. Instead, these firms are dependent upon the production of a very particular form of space. The crucial question is, then: how do these firms make their money?

Occupancy

For private prison firms, occupancy is a necessary condition for sustaining revenue streams and earning a profit. Owners of empty prisons go unpaid, and investors generally discipline emptiness severely (Greene 2001; Slevin 2001). The terms of some contracts (e.g., minimum revenue guarantees) may help to alleviate the tensions between lower-than-expected occupancy levels and the remarkable investment and cost-structure that prison construction and maintenance requires (Geo Group 2008, 21). In this sense, private prison firms are a lot like motels, opera houses, and university lecture halls. Returning briefly to the quote from Derrick (above), the prisons are like a warehouse system. An empty prison is like a stockpile of unsold inventory for these firms, devalued (Harvey [1982] 2006).

The firms themselves make the importance of occupancy clear in their forward-looking statements and explanations of risk factors. The firms report that:

Since we are paid on a per diem basis with no minimum guaranteed occupancy under most of our contracts, *the loss of such inmates* [transferred from Geo Group-operated facilities] *and resulting decrease in occupancy would cause a decrease in both our revenues and our profitability* (emphasis added Geo Group 2008, 21).

A decrease in occupancy levels could cause a decrease in revenues and profitability. While a substantial portion of our cost structure is generally fixed, a significant portion of our revenues are generated under facility management contracts which provide for per diem payments based upon daily occupancy. *We are dependent upon the governmental agencies with which we have contracts to provide inmates for our managed facilities. We cannot control occupancy levels at our managed facilities* (emphasis added CCA 2009, 20).

So *occupancy* is necessary to keep private prison firms afloat. But necessary relative to what (Harvey 1973, 101-106)—or, in this case, who is where and why? Asking this question with the materiality of imprisonment in clear focus complicates the supposed market for bedspace in at least two ways. First, in terms of demand, no one is voluntarily checking in to private prisons. Second, in terms of supply, private prison firm employees cannot simply walk out into the world, grab a human being, and force her or him into their prison. And so we must turn to the question of prisoners as *occupants*.

If we start with the materiality of imprisonment and follow “not just the money, but that too” (Gilmore and Gilmore 2008, 142-143) we return to the concept of the prisoner’s body-as-commodity. However, the privatization debate is now poised to shift course considerably. The economic form and practice of firms like CCA and Geo Group are different from other actors (who profit from prisoners’ consumption or production); yet, like these actors, private prison firms’ revenues (and, potential profits) trace directly to public funds. The ‘service’ offered by prison privatization is an expansion of a particular state capacity (i.e., imprisonment) in *the name of the market*. For Gilmore, such privatization is emblematic of the “anti-state state”, or, a state that is actually grown through the promise of its shrinkage (2007, 245; Gilmore and Gilmore

2008, 152). As the firms themselves make clear, they are dependent upon the state to produce inmates. The prisoner's body may be a commodity, but it is only so because it has been coercively mobilized (Clear et al. 2001), displaced (Hyndman 2000), geographically excluded (Hubbard 1999), institutionally segregated (Herbert 2009), or, in other words: put in prison (i.e., forced into a cage). This redirects the question of prison privatization into the much broader social context of crime and punishment: namely, mass imprisonment and the political production of human beings as occupants.

Producing Occupants and Carceral Consumption: Bedspace and the Rise of Mass

Imprisonment

Mass imprisonment is the material-geographic context in which private prisons are found, yet the debates surrounding prison privatization consistently abstract from this context. Mass imprisonment is characterized by two features: the size of a prison system and the social concentration of its prisoners (Garland 2001, 1). Both features are well-documented elsewhere (Christie 2000; Wacquant 2005b; Gottschalk 2006; Western 2006; Sabol and Couture 2008). The history of the U.S. state is deeply intertwined with the history of the modern prison as a built environment (Takagi 1975; Casella 2007). However, *mass* imprisonment is a relatively new phenomenon (Gilmore 2007). Tonry describes “unprecedented levels” of U.S. imprisonment, both with regard to rates of incarceration in other countries and with regard to historical rates in the United States (1999, 419). Beginning in 1973, U.S. prison systems (e.g., jails, state, and federal prisons) sustained four decades of expansion; during this time, the US prison population grew by an order of magnitude (Wacquant 2005b).

Abstracting from the context of mass imprisonment is a problem for prison privatization debates because the entire private prison market is premised on: first, the social necessity of (exchangeable) prison space; and, second, the scarcity of this space. Unfortunately, the foundation of mass imprisonment—a suite of geopolitical processes and their material outcomes—rests almost entirely on the pseudo-geographic promises and purposeful silences of bedspace. Thus, the same spatial problematic that circumscribes the prison privatization debate characterizes the context in which that debate is situated. In this final analytic section, then, I argue that the emergence of mass imprisonment has shaped (and been shaped by) the discursive dominance of bedspace as ‘the’ geographic knowledge of imprisonment. The shortcomings of this form of geographic knowledge circumscribe the public debate on prison privatization by neglecting the crucial question: the legitimacy of the prison itself. In particular, I call attention to the depth of the relationship between mass imprisonment and bedspace through shifting approaches to social control and the penal philosophies of the late 20th century. Both have had violent—often fatal—consequences in the lives of the imprisoned.

The Relationship between Crime, Space, and Imprisonment

The rise of mass imprisonment traces over a time when law and order and “tough on crime” approaches to social control have assumed political power (Garland 1991; Beckett 1997; Bauman 2000). During the 1960s and 1970s, politicians mobilized unprecedented public support by attaching crime to other social issues through their definitional activities and specific political initiatives (Beckett 1997; Wacquant 2005b). For example, crime was effectively merged—rhetorically and in practice—with civil rights movements and desegregation, urban uprising, political dissent, welfare, and drugs in particular during the 1960s (cf. Hall et al. 1978). Similar

political initiatives characterize the war on drugs and more recent anticrime campaigns (Tonry 1995; Corva 2008). This is not to say that—whether it is officially reported or not—crime is not a very real concern, or, that the needs of victims should not be met. It is to say that just as the geography of crime entails more than the precise location of a criminal act, the geography of mass imprisonment signals social forces beyond the individual criminal or victim (Smith 1984; 1986; Herbert 1997; Herbert and Brown 2006). It is important to remember that mass imprisonment was not inevitable, nor is it a destiny (Wacquant 2001a; Gilmore and Gilmore 2008). Mass imprisonment is the grounded accumulation of times, places, structures, and agents who consciously (and often unconsciously) reified the connection between crime and imprisonment as necessary (Gilmore 2007).

Law and order approaches to social problems also institutionalized measures certain to structure and sustain prison expansion with little regard for the material geographies that would result (Casella 2007; Gilmore 2007). California's three strikes initiative, which mandated life in prison for a felon's third conviction, was iconic in this regard (Tyler and Boeckmann 1997). The political promise was straightforward: "offenders convicted repeatedly of serious offenses should be removed from society for long periods of time, in many cases for life" (Clark, Austin and Henry 1997, 1). But the political purchase of this ideal is built upon spatial abstraction. Criminalization *is* one of the principal mechanisms through which individuals (and entire social groups) are politically excluded from social processes and removed from particular places (Beckett and Herbert 2010). But prisons function at the spatial limit of political exclusion; imprisonment is, in effect, one form of intranational exile (cf. Thomas and Torrone 2006). Indeed, the point I have been arguing throughout this chapter is that imprisonment does not remove anyone from society, however totalizing (Goffman [1961] 1990), or far from home

(Christian 2005), the institution may be. Prisoners clearly exist, despite their imprisonment. However, instead of a meaningful space of justice, an a-spatial overdetermination of time (i.e., sentencing) assumed center stage, politically (Blecker 1990). Thus, instead of a human geography that can account for the prisoner's bodily existence, mass imprisonment was built upon bedspace.

The rise of mass imprisonment was accompanied by dramatic shifts in approaches to imprisonment itself: "a radical departure from the established trajectory of penal development" (Garland 2002, 53). Increasing reliance on the prison, in practice, was coupled with the collapse of confidence in what imprisonment could be expected to do, in theory. The credo 'nothing works'—what at least one scholar has termed "penal nihilism" (Smith 1996, 69)—effectively ended popular support for the rehabilitative ideals of earlier penal regimes (Garland 2002, 61-63; Brown 2009, 153-189). Philosophically, the justifications for punishment (e.g., retribution for past offense, deterrence from future offense, the incapacitation, or, rehabilitation of offenders) are all—save one—prefigured by ends, and pay significantly less attention to the means by which these ends are achieved. The exceptional case is incapacitation, through which the purported end (i.e., solving social problems through spatial reconfiguration) is spatially and temporally harmonized with its means (i.e., spatial reconfiguration). For advocates of incapacitation, occupancy is enough; geography is reducible to location, or, a position in absolute space.

Unfortunately, incapacitation undergirds mass imprisonment (Gilmore 2007). These philosophical shifts and their attendant geographic knowledge have significant impacts on the material geography of imprisonment:

The distinctive new form and function of the prison today is a space of pure custody, a human warehouse or even a kind of social waste management facility.... The waste management prison promises no transformation of the prisoner through penitence, discipline, intimidation, or therapy. Instead, it promises to promote security in the community simply by creating a space physically separated from the community in which to hold people...political leaders compete to protect the public in their willingness to stretch the concept of “unchanging propensity” to fit ever larger potential offender populations (Simon 2007, 142-143).

Conceptions of prison space had consequences for spatial configurations within the prison itself; at the same time, particular geographic knowledge (e.g., crowding) of the prison were produced to harness popular support and public monies (Bleich 1989). All the while, from the distanced vantage points of policy and public debate, prison space was produced as an exchangeable unit. The experience of imprisonment became a thing to be bought and sold.

Beginnings?

In Geo Group’s 2004 Annual report, before forecasting “the growth ahead,” two corporate officers explain that “since our inception, we have relied entirely on organic opportunities and projects to grow our company” (Geo Group 2005, 4). While biological metaphors are commonplace in such documents, the corporate officers make the implicit organisms more legible in the following paragraph, which begins:

As we go forward, our company’s core growth must continue to be driven by a vigorous pursuit of organic growth opportunities and projects in the areas of correctional and detention management and mental health services, both on our domestic front as well as internationally. The organic growth pipeline for the private corrections industry currently is as robust as it has been in many years.

There is little doubt that these officers’ optimism is warranted, and that this pipeline is robust.

The dimensions of this pipeline suggest so much: its circumference, which makes room for more

and more human bodies; its mass, which weighs down on those bodies, their friends and their loved ones, in terms heavier than concrete; its length, which already stretches onto four continents. The placement of this pipeline is crucial. On one end is the prison; on the other, the criminal class. These two ends of this pipeline need each other—breed each other (Wacquant 2001b). But, for capital, can the removal and re-placement of 130,000 prisoners be enough?

Even if the criminalization and imprisonment of socially concentrated “domestic” populations reaches its limits (see Chen (2008)), this pipeline can grow (Wacquant 2005a). The construction and militarization of state borders (Nevins 2002; 2008)—the very process to which both CCA and Geo Group’s origins are traceable—produces more and more bodies for imprisonment (Welch 1996; Feltz 2008). This formation of the border forces the inner dialectic of the U.S. capitalist-carceral process outward (cf. Marx [1867] 1976, 931-940; Harvey [1982] 2006, 413-445). Time will tell what awaits “the enormous and continuous flood of humanity, driven year in, year out, onto the shores of America” (Marx [1867] 1976, 940) in the future. Today, for many, the promise is prison.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff (quoted in Feltz 2008, 26) announces that undocumented border crossings “will require [migrants] to actually serve some short period of time in a jail or prison setting—and will brand them as having been violators of the law.” This is not empty political rhetoric. Policy shifts produce migration as criminality (see Varsanyi 2008). And, once convicted, reentry can be prosecuted as a felony—punishable by decades of imprisonment (Feltz 2008). The number of detainees, 2005-2006, held in private prison facilities under exclusive contract to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on any given day increased 42 percent (Sabol, Couture and Harrison 2007, 9).

Under the auspices of bedspace, imprisonment breeds imprisonment. These abstract spaces multiply as public space recedes (Mitchell 2003; Lefebvre [1974] 1991). United States Department of Justice research suggests that at least one in four felons released from prison return within three years (Langan and Levin 2002, 1), and that other punitive measures such as parole are increasingly resulting in prison sentences (Sabol and Couture 2008, 5). Capital must accumulate and circulate, and imprisonment follows suit, all but ensuring that criminalized bodies will both accumulate and circulate. The prison sentence serves as accumulation; recidivism serves as circulation. With capitalism at the helm, future rounds of carceral expansion will almost certainly assume increasingly globalized forms. Bridging prison abolition and immigrant justice movements is a necessary starting point. Working with these movements to resistance the undergirding social system that values punishment is crucial. As Harvey (1996, 14) has asked so urgently, “what kind of architecture (in the broadest possible sense of that term) do we collectively want to create for the socio-ecological world in which we have our being?” The profitable incapacitation of human beings may answer for us. It may.

In this chapter, I have argued that prison privatization should direct energy and attention to question the prison itself (Davis 2003; The CR10 Publications Collective 2008; Loyd et al. 2010). The frustratingly narrow political horizons envisioned by prison reform offer little in the way of meaningful change. My analytic argument is that the private prisons signal a change in the production of prison space, and that this change came about through mass imprisonment (Lefebvre [1974] 1991). Bedspace now describes what the process of imprisonment has become. But other geographies are possible.

Endnotes

- ¹ CCA's "management views operating results in two reportable segments: owned and managed correctional and detention facilities and managed-only correctional and detention facilities" (CCA 2008a, 72). Geo Group (2008, 21) operates as four reportable business segments, three of which earned revenues in excess of operating expenses (p. 38-9). Geo Group consists of: a "U.S. corrections" segment (which accounts for 65.6 percent of revenues); "international services" (i.e., the operation of prisons in Australia, the United Kingdom, and South Africa); Geo Care, Inc., a wholly-owned "privatized mental health and residential treatment services business" (p. 21); and a "construction and design" segment. There are many other private prison companies. Besides CCA, for example, Geo Group (2008, 13) lists "Cornell Companies, Inc.; Management and Training Corporation; Group 4 Securicor, Global Solutions, and Serco" as competitors. These firms—and others—merit careful attention, but are beyond the scope of this chapter. It should also be noted that, though this work centers explicitly on the United States, prison privatization is of international concern. I focus on the United States for two reasons. First, the United States has (by far) the world's largest private prison population—roughly 70% of the total private prison population (Walmsley 2007; Sabol and Couture 2008); the *private* U.S. prison population is larger than the entire prison populations of Indonesia or Pakistan. Second, U.S. criminal justice policy is often exported; thus U.S. policy is likely to have a direct impact in other nation-states (Wacquant 1999); see Davis (2003, 97-100), who argues "The global prison economy is indisputably dominated by the United States."

- ² See Dolovich (2005) in particular for both a comprehensive overview and an excellent critique of these debates.
- ³ According to Clear “The debate about private prisons has been long on rhetoric, short on information. The bulk of the dispute has turned on whether private prisons are actually cheaper to run than their public counterparts. Considerable arguments have been marshaled in both directions, and it is safe to say that proponents of both sides of the question have made empirical cases to support their views.”
- ⁴ Thus, these “pre-eminently geographical objects” (Watts 2005, 534) have inspired a remarkable amount of scholarship and debate. This work has taken place within formal academic geography (Jackson 1999; Bridge 2001; Castree 2001; Jackson 2002; Le Heron and Hayward 2002; Bridge and Smith 2003; Castree 2003; Crang, Dwyer and Jackson 2003; Castree 2004; e.g., Bakker 2005, 542; Page 2005; Cook et al. 2007) and beyond (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; Thomas 1991; Haugerud, Stone and Little 2000; Sharp 2000; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2003).
- ⁵ I owe a debt of gratitude to Anne Bonds, Kate Driscoll Derickson, and my anonymous reviewers for encouraging me to probe this question more fully than I had in earlier drafts of this work.
- ⁶ This work was supported in part by the National Science Foundation award #0727443. This research project and all related documents were reviewed and approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) as project #2007-10726-2.
- ⁷ Interview with Tony, July 21, 2008.
- ⁸ Tony reflected on these specific remarks in a follow-up interview, July 23, 2008.
- ⁹ Interview with Derrick, July 10, 2008.

- ¹⁰ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for calling my attention to this point.
- ¹¹ The Florida Prisoners Legal Aid Organization has estimated the U.S. correctional phone market to be worth more than \$1 billion a year (New York Campaign for Telephone Justice 2007). Louisiana's 17,000 state prisoners generated more than \$12 million in phone calls during 1995 (Hallinan 2003, 146). Contraband cell phones—generally considered a security breach in prisons, but also an obvious competitor for pay phones—have attracted much attention of late. Prison officials in Texas, for example, have asked for \$66 million to “fight illegal cell phones,” in a state where “death row has been the most highly visible source of illegal cell phone activity” (Sandberg and Bureau 2008, A1).
- ¹² Prisoners have made MicroJet aircraft components, clothing for Eddie Bauer and others, crab pots and industrial fishing equipment for Elliot Bay, and blinds for A&I Manufacturing (cf. Wright 2003, 114; Turner 2008). Prisoners have worked, either directly or indirectly, for Toys R' Us, Victoria's Secret, Microsoft, Spalding, IBM, Compaq, Texas Instruments, AT&T, Chevron, TWA, and Honda (Dyer 2000, 19; Lafer 2003, 121). At least one company has substituted labor in a *maquiladora* for labor in San Quentin State Prison (Dyer 2000, 18). In 1997, a South African furniture maker packed its Capetown plant into 40 crates and shipped it to a prison in Ridgeland, South Carolina (Hallinan 2003, 146).

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CHAPTER 3

THE URBAN GEOGRAPHY OF PRISONS: MAPPING THE CITY'S "OTHER" GATED COMMUNITY¹

¹ Mitchelson, M.L. To be submitted to *Urban Geography*.

The effects of imprisonment extend far beyond a prison's walls and mass imprisonment currently impacts the entire United States, where more than two million people are held in jails and prisons. Urban geographers and other urbanists tend to think of prisons as beyond their purview because most prisons are located in rural settings. In this paper I argue that prisons are central urban institutions, however distant they may be from the city. The paper works in three parts: in the first two sections I argue that prisons are remarkably city-like sites of displacement in their own right, but that these places are not cities unto themselves; in the third section I examine the spatial structure of imprisonment in terms of distances and population flows between prisons and cities. I draw on Georgia Department of Corrections prison admission records to make my argument, and I analyze these records using gravity model and principal components analysis approaches. I conclude that mass imprisonment is produced and sustained through a dynamic and distinctly form of urban population geography, and that prisons and cities are threaded together by the sprawling nature of contemporary urbanization.

Introduction

Urban geographers have written very little about prisons. For example, in the 5th edition of the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, Steve Herbert argues “the geographical literature on prisons is scant” (Herbert 2009, 583). This seems to reflect the often great physical and cognitive distances between cities and prisons, which are commonly sited in rural areas. One scholar has argued that “prison siting in rural areas is as old as the prison itself” (Marquart 2004,

489). Much of the (implicitly, if not explicitly) geographic literature concerning imprisonment now centers on questions of rural prison building as a means of economic development (King, Mauer and Huling 2003; Hooks et al. 2004; Che 2005; Glasmeier and Farrigan 2007; Bonds 2008).

The distance between these urban and rural sites can be misleading, like the seemingly impermeable boundaries that distinguish the inside from the outside of prisons (Baer and Ravneberg 2008). This is especially true when “the urban” and “the rural” are conceptually and analytically isolated from one another. Even so, the most remotely located prison is an urban institution in many ways. The majority of prisoners come from cities (Lotke and Wagner 2005). The prison itself is a remarkably city-like built environment (Mitchelson in press). A given prison will be part of a larger prison system, which is shaped by (and is currently reshaping) urban space (Wacquant 2001b). In this paper, I argue that prison systems are no less a part of U.S. cities than are the constellation of suburbs, exurbs, gated communities and other places that surround urban cores and are threaded together by the sprawling nature of contemporary urbanization.

Imprisonment is produced and sustained through a process of intra-state exile, most often from urban areas to prisons in rural settings or “prison towns” (Beale 1998; Huling 2002; Lotke and Wagner 2005; Bonds 2006; 2008). Prisons are unlike other gated communities in that they are coercive institutions designed to punish.¹ They have none of the conventional pull factors exerted by relatively privileged places (cf. Clear et al. 2001b; Fan 2002). As gendered racial and class formations converge—often violently—in the “punitive neoliberal city” (Herbert and Brown 2006), the prison has emerged as the spatial limit of criminal punishment (i.e., social enclosure and political exclusion) for states (Gilmore 1999; 2002; 2007). Urban space is

produced, then, in part, through the social and spatial displacement of prisoners (Wacquant 2001b; Lefebvre [1974] 1991).

In this paper, I examine the spatial interdependence between urban “high incarceration communities” (Clear, Rose and Ryder 2001a) and prisons located in predominately rural settings. The spatial interactions and flows that make up the geography of imprisonment are generally represented as discrete, geographically bounded things: cities’ criminal hot spots or prison towns, for example. Rather than treating *either* the city *or* the prison, I begin with the population flows and social relations through which these places are produced and sustained (Harvey 1996; Ollman 2002). Shifting my vantage point in this way, I observe a spatial process that is structured by—and restructuring—urbanization. You would not have mass imprisonment without urbanization; you would not have contemporary urban form without mass imprisonment. The ‘urban criminal’ and the ‘rural prison’ are now two central threads in the same urban fabric. With this work, I join a small but growing number of geographers who are concerned with broadening the conceptual and analytical contexts in which imprisonment is situated (Gilmore 1998/99; Pallot 2007; Baer and Ravneberg 2008; Peck and Theodore 2008; Bonds 2009; Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Moran, Pallot and Piacentini 2009).

The paper proceeds in three substantive sections. In the first, I argue that prisons are populated by displaced urban bodies. Without distant cities, serving as a constant, churning source of prisoners’ bodies, there would be no rural prison (Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Loyd, Burridge and Mitchelson 2010). In the second, I argue that prisons are quite similar to the U.S. cities from which its prisoners have so often come, despite their often rural settings. The prison itself is like a city by most definitions. But, of course, the prison is not a city unto itself; prisons are central institutions within a given jurisdiction’s urban regions. The theoretical arguments

shift into a related set of empirical questions at this point. In order to examine the population flows through which mass imprisonment is produced and sustained, I treat the state of Georgia and its Department of Corrections explicitly.² Thus, in the third section I use the Georgia case study to consider the population flows between particular cities and the orbit-like, regionalizing spatial distribution of prisons that takes shape around them.

Prisons as Sites of Urban Displacement

Washington State Prison rises like a city skyline from the farmland that surrounds it (Figure 2.1). Everything around the prison seems to indicate a rural setting. The prison looms large in a county with more than 300,000 forested acres that is economically anchored by agriculture and (kaolin) mining. However, almost everyone imprisoned *within* Washington State Prison has come from a distant city.³ Consider the population geography through which this prison was produced and sustained between 1990 and 2006. Roughly two-thirds (4,622 of 7,162) of the people admitted to this prison between 1990 and 2006 were from one of the state's Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), none of which are closer than 30 miles. More than forty percent (2,991) of the prisoners admitted to Washington State Prison during this time were from Atlanta, approximately 140 miles away.



Figure 3.1 Washington State Prison in Washington County, Georgia (photo by the author).

And, while imprisonment often traces back to particular cities, it also traces back to particular neighborhoods within those cities. In the Georgia Department of Corrections “Choose Freedom” media campaign, for example, the “Top 25 Zip Codes Contributing Georgia Prisoners” are identified in concert with roughly forty neighborhoods and housing projects. These zip codes make up 10% of the state’s total population, they accounted for 26% of the state’s prison admissions. These zip codes also accounted for more than 34% of the state’s black prison admissions though they are home to less than 24% of the state’s black or African American population. Many of the neighborhoods identified (i.e., contained within these zip codes) clearly trace over the remarkable social transformations that characterize Atlanta and the state’s other major cities (Keating 2001; Kruse 2005).

The Georgia case is not unique in all of this. A vast literature, spanning several disciplines, clearly identifies the social and spatial concentration of incarceration levels in

particular urban places (Wacquant 2001b; Petersilia 2003; Travis and Waul 2004; Clear 2007; Peck and Theodore 2008; Wacquant 2008b). Gonnerman, for example, laments the “oft-ignored reality that most prisoners come from just a handful of urban regions” (Gonnerman 2007, 27). The Justice Mapping Center (<http://www.justicemapping.org/about-us/>), for example, has found that more than half of adult male inmates from New York City have come from areas making up only 17% of the city’s total population (Lee-St. John 2007). In Brooklyn alone, there are 35 “million dollar blocks”: city blocks from which so many residents are incarcerated that the cost of their imprisonment exceeds \$1 million (Gonnerman, 2007). The Center has documented similar spatial patterns in Phoenix (AZ), Houston (TX), New Haven (CT), and Wichita (KS). These “high-incarceration neighborhoods” generally map onto broader social inequalities—racialized, segregated spaces with drastic wealth inequalities, for example. A growing body of evidence suggests that imprisonment—which is premised on improving neighborhoods by removing criminals—actually worsens these conditions (Clear 2002; Clear 2007).

Given all of this, it is tempting to overstate the case and claim that crime is an exclusively urban problem or that prisoners come only from cities; neither is so.⁴ Not all of Georgia’s prisoners come from urban areas, nor is crime limited to the city. At least one scholar has gone so far as to say that “the level of crime in rural Georgia is reaching epidemic proportions” (Arthur 1991, 30). Over the last two decades, methamphetamine production and distribution in particular have had a devastating impact on rural communities, and this is increasingly reflected in Georgia’s prison population (Georgia Department of Corrections 2010a). Clearly, crime and imprisonment are no less pressing social problems if they involve people in a rural setting, and I am not trying to argue otherwise. Part of what I am arguing, however, is that all prisoners are entering an urban environment. I mean this in at least two senses: first, prisons are

disproportionately populated by people from cities; and, second, prisons are remarkably city-like spaces in their own right. I will expand on the latter point now.

“A City behind Razor Wire”

Considering the 200,000-plus felons supervised and its 15,000 employees, if the Department of Corrections was a city in Georgia it would be the second largest only to Atlanta (Donald quoted in Georgia Department of Corrections 2007, 3).

In the quote above, then-commissioner James E. Donald alludes to the sheer size of the Georgia Department of Corrections. But prisons are strongly analogous to U.S. cities in a surprising number of ways. I conducted complementary interviews with former prisoners during the larger research project in which this work is situated.⁵ These interviews are generally beyond the scope of this paper, but one of the themes that emerged is particularly germane. Rick, a former Georgia state prisoner, told me “When I went [to Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison] I thought, “This is like a city.” You know? This is like a city behind razor wire.” My interview with Rick evokes a thorny question, posed recently by Steinberg and Shields (and cf. Brown 2009; Keil 2009) in their edited volume on post-Katrina New Orleans: *What is a City?*

After several decades, and thousands of pages of debate, there is little consensus as to what a city *is*. For example, in the first paragraph, on the first page of their book *Cities*, Amin and Thrift argue “we can no longer even agree on what counts as a city” (Amin and Thrift 2002, 1). Scholars have responded to the question using thoughtful typologies and rigorous spatial analytics, and they have been doing so for a long time. I don’t intend a one-size-fits-all ontological commitment to an essentialized city in this paper (i.e., the question is not *is a prison a city?*). I simply wish to argue that prisons are remarkably city-like; this is true in enough ways, and overlaps meaningfully with enough attempts at defining the city to at least merit urban

geographers' attention. As a point of analytic entry, I draw on four themes from the typology put forth by Mumford in the early twentieth century and revisited recently by Steinberg (2008).⁶ The thematic overlap along at least four dimensions—shared by both cities and prisons—are instructive: both entail a built environment; both exhibit notable levels of population density; both operate as culture hearths; and both function as hubs in important networks, including the migratory flows of imprisonment's dynamic population geography.

The Built Environment of Imprisonment

Like cities, prisons are “a tangible, built environment—an environment which is a social product” (Harvey 1973, 196; Lefebvre [1974] 1991). Echoing Rick's experience, the prison is like a city behind barbed wire. It is challenging and expensive to construct, let alone reproduce, prison space (Gilmore 2007; Bonds 2009; Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Mitchelson in press). Individual prison construction projects can cost hundreds of millions of dollars; state-wide construction costs over the last 40 years are staggering (e.g., Bonds 2009, 428). The buildings and grounds require massive transformations and are routinely celebrated as feats of architecture and engineering (Mitchelson in press). The Georgia Department of Corrections built twenty-three facilities, with an average capacity of 1,240 prisoners, during the 1980s and 1990s alone (Georgia Department of Corrections 2008b).

Prison Population Densities

Prisons have high population densities. In fact, during Census 2000, many prisons were registered as urban.⁷ Of the 3,630 urban areas identified across the United States by Census 2000, eighty-five of them would not have met the minimum population threshold without their

prison population. In 37 cases, prison populations made up at least two-thirds of the entire population of these areas. Prisons in Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho (Idaho State Correctional Institution), Illinois, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia were essentially designated “Urban Clusters” in their own right during Census 2000; in California, *twelve* prisons received that designation. Unfortunately, there is a well-documented relationship between prison crowding and aggressive behavior (Lawrence and Andrews 2004); yet, the population density of most prisons continues to rise (Bleich 1989). This has become increasingly true during the widespread proliferation of so-called “warehouse prisons” (Irwin 2005; Simon 2007).

Prisons as Culture Hearths

Prisons crystallize heartbreaking personal and social historical geographies. Time often becomes visible in these places in a deep, social sense. In part because so many people come to—and are released from—prisons, we are now beginning to see important qualitative changes across the landscape of mass imprisonment. The prison has always served as a *culture hearth*, or, an important site that shapes (and is shaped by) cultural processes. However, that role now appears to be intensifying—or perhaps to have changed altogether—as mass imprisonment follows on the historical heels of other social institutions (e.g., the plantation or the Jim Crow South) that wrought devastating outcomes for marginalized social groups, and black Americans in particular (Wacquant 2001a). And while the relationship between phenotype and racialization appears to have shifted drastically during the rise of mass imprisonment, it is not premature to think of the prison as one of the central *race-making* institutions of our time (Davis and Dent 2001; Gilmore 2002; Wilson 2007).

Prisons as Network Hubs

Some of the prison's position of relative power in this cultural context stems from its physical position of centrality in many important social processes. Because, like cities, prisons themselves function as *hubs* in several very important networks of flow; people, capital, and commodities all converge in these places (Martin and Mitchelson 2009). Nearly 14,000 correctional officers and others working in "direct offender supervision" go to work in Georgia's prisons each day, for example (Georgia Department of Corrections 2006, 10). These and other flows deserve attention in their own right. However, in this paper, I am primarily concerned with prison admissions as a population flow. For example, Figure 3.2 illustrates the population flows (i.e., prison admissions) through which all (six) women's prisons were produced and sustained between 1990 and 2006.⁸ From the vantage point of the prison, the prison itself is a remarkable hub, linking one place to cities across the state's urban hierarchy. Metro State Prison and Metro Women's Transitional Centers both present an interesting case in which major Atlanta facilities are linked to prisoners displaced from cities such as Savannah (roughly 250 miles to the southeast) and Columbus (roughly 100 miles southwest). There are also flows—most often in the opposite direction—as prisoners return home (Travis 2001; Petersilia 2003). The 700,000 people who are released from all state and federal prisons each year, nationally, now functionally integrate distant prisons with the cities to which these prisoners return.

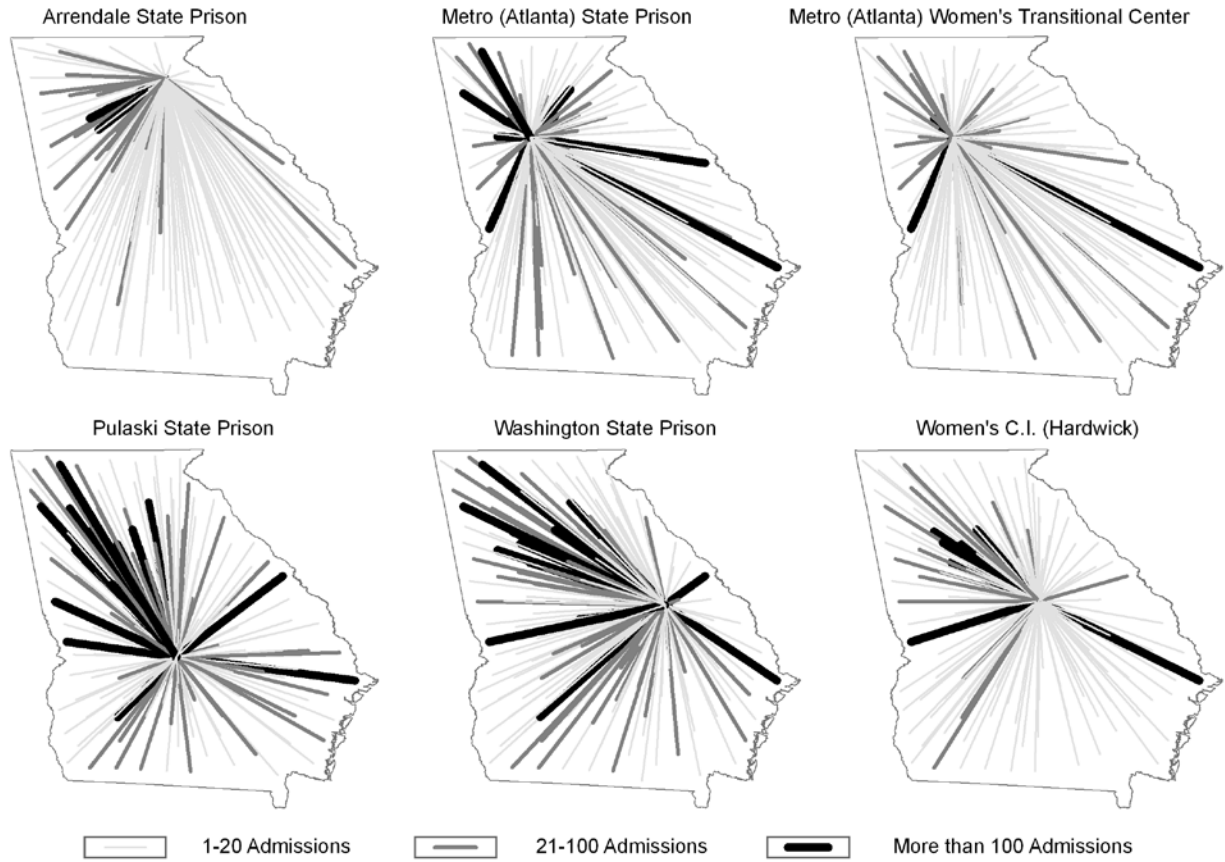


Figure 3.2 All women's prison admissions to the Georgia Department of Corrections, 1990-2006.

Again, while these institutions are clearly city-like in many ways, they are not cities unto themselves. They share more in common with the “reserved spaces” (Wacquant 2008a) of gated communities and other satellite settlements than they do with cities outright. Nonetheless, the spatial structure of prison admissions to which we now turn illustrates that prisons are central institutions in the process of urbanization that produces (and is sustained by) urban regions. In the following section, I present the results of empirical work that will further illustrate the deep relationship between prisons and cities.

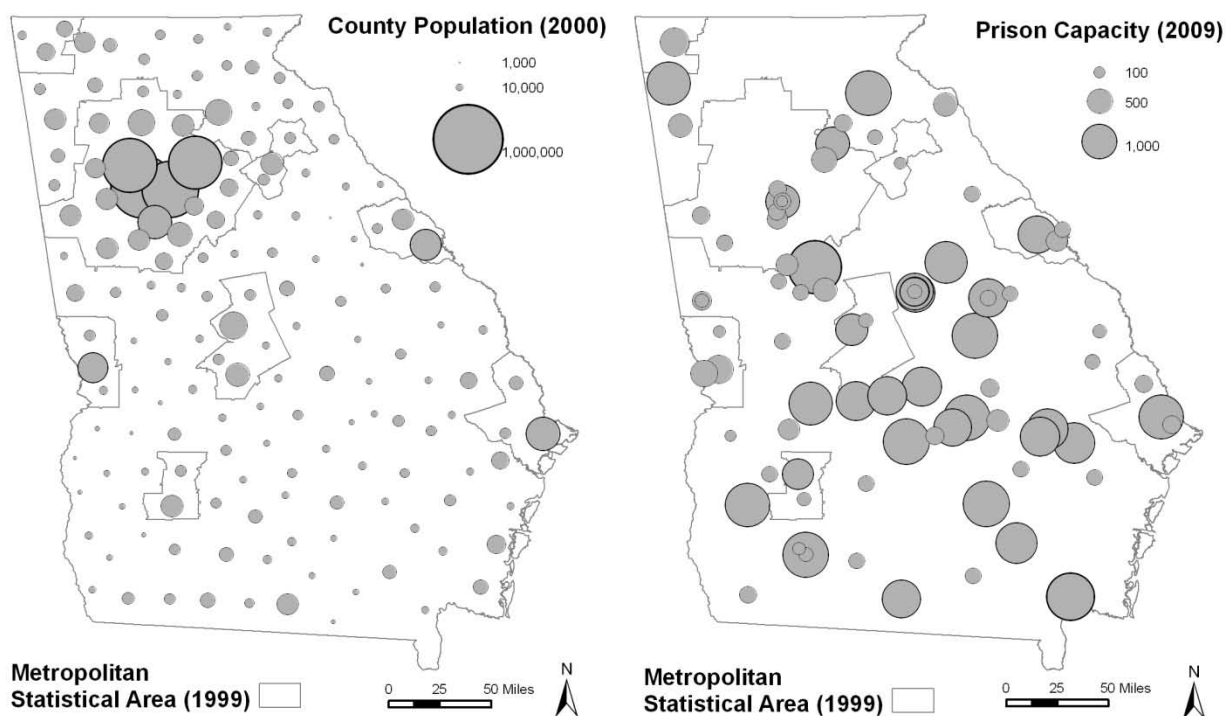
Urban Geography and the Spatial Structure of the Georgia Department of Corrections

Study Area: Georgia's Urban Regions and Prison System

This study centers on Georgia's urban regions and the role of Georgia's state prison system (i.e., the Georgia Department of Corrections) in those urban regions, and I will briefly characterize both here. Atlanta figures most prominently in the urban geography of Georgia. Atlanta is both the region's most powerful economic center and the state's political capital. More than half of the state's total population lived inside the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)⁹ on Census Day in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). Other MSAs include: Albany, Athens, Augusta, Chattanooga, Columbus, Macon, Savannah; their populations range from 477,441 (in Augusta) to 120,822 (in Albany). In sum, nearly 5.7 million people—69.2% of Georgians—lived inside the seven MSAs identified during Census 2000 (Figure 3.3a). The rest of the state's population is distributed more or less uniformly across the agricultural lands of the coastal plain or in the hills of the piedmont.

I am primarily concerned with prison facilities under Georgia Department of Corrections jurisdiction, but several prison systems operate in Georgia.¹⁰ This entails a wide variety of institutions because Georgia's prison system has grown over the last 40 years and is large by any standard. Prisoners were admitted to more than 100 facilities between 1990 and 2006 (Figure 3.3b). Most of the state's prison capacity is in roughly 40 large, fortress-like institutions that prison commonly connotes. Prisoners are also held in transitional centers, boot camps, probation detention centers, and mental hospitals. Local governments often own and operate additional facilities, from which the state may lease space. These are typically county jails in the Georgia case. Roughly 9.1% (i.e., 4,874) of the state's prisoners were confined in 23 county jails as of March of 2010. While jails and prisons are generally considered to be much different facilities—

where jails typically confine misdemeanants and prisons typically confine felons—these systems are becoming increasingly open to one another in the Georgia case, and elsewhere, as the state prison system continues to grow. Figures 3.3a and 3.3b demonstrate clear locational differences between the state's population centers and its prison capacity. Roughly 70% of the state's population lives either in, or upland from, the piedmont. That same area hosts less than 30% of the state's current prison capacity; more than 70% of the state's current prison capacity is located on the less-densely populated agricultural lands of Georgia's coastal plain (Georgia Department of Corrections 2008a).



Figures 3.3 and 3.3b Georgia's population by county and (state) prison capacity.

In the Georgia case, as in so much of the United States (Western 2006), prison sitings and social inequalities produce and sustain the dynamic population geography with which this paper

is concerned. There are clear social inequalities between the state's population and its imprisoned population (Table 1). Georgia's prison population is disproportionately urban and non-rural.¹¹ Like other prison systems, it is overwhelmingly—roughly 90%—male (but see Davis 2003). The prison system also plays an increasingly powerful role in racial formation during the supposedly colorblind post-Jim Crow era (Omi and Winant 1994; Goldberg 2002). Black people make up less than 30% of the state's population, but nearly two-thirds of its prison population. The relatively small number of Latina/o state prisoners makes up less than five percent of the state's total. However, that number more than tripled—from 651 to 2,065 prisoners—between 1999 and 2010 (Georgia Department of Corrections 2010a).

Table 3.1 Population figures for Georgia and the Georgia Department of Corrections.

	State of Georgia's Population ¹		Georgia's State Prison Population ²	
	Total	%	Total	%
Urban & Non-rural	5,864,163	71.63%	43,602	90.22%
Rural	2,322,290	28.37%	4,725	9.78%
Male	4,027,113	49.19%	49,597	92.92%
Female	4,159,340	50.81%	3,777	7.08%
White	5,327,281	65.07%	17,972	34.88%
Black	2,349,542	28.70%	33,419	64.86%
Other Race(s)	509,630	6.23%	130	0.25%
Hispanic	435,227	5.32%	2,369	4.44%
Not Hispanic	7,751,226	94.68%	51,006	95.56%
Total	8,186,453		53,375	

¹Figures from Census 2000 Summary File 1.

²Figures from Georgia Department of Corrections (2010)

% reflects only reported totals.

I will now briefly describe the data and methods I employed while conducting this study before proceeding with the arguments and evidence at hand.

Data and Methods

Data representing roughly 250,000 admissions to Georgia state prisons between 1990 and 2006 were acquired from the Georgia Department of Corrections. Each (anonymous) admission record in this database included: demographic variables such as race, gender, and age at admission; the zip code from a pre-arrest address; the county of conviction and, ostensibly, the county of prosecution; and, the institution to which the prisoner was admitted. The Georgia Department of Corrections also provided a prison-level dataset that included the institutions' names and mailing addresses. I use Census 2000 data in concert with the Georgia Department of Corrections dataset because its enumeration occurred nearest to the dataset's temporal midpoint. All Census data were treated at the level of Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs).¹² I analyzed 246,289 prison admissions records after cleaning; this was 97.2% of the 253,503 records in the original dataset.¹³ These prison admissions involved pre-arrest addresses located in 703 ZCTAs and 119 institutions under the Department of Corrections' jurisdiction.

These records were then processed in a relational geodatabase, designed to represent the relationship (i.e., the population flow magnitude) between the origin and destination associated with each prison admission. A prisoner's pre-arrest home serves as their origin and the prison to which they are admitted serves as their destination. I geo-coded the records and created two data products. The first is a flow volume database, in which each record represents one of the 83,657 possible flows between 703 ZCTAs and 119 prisons. The second is a corresponding 703-by-119 interaction table in which (703) ZCTAs serve as origins (rows) and (119) prisons serve as

destinations (columns). Aggregate flows and the distance between specific origins and destinations were calculated in both datasets.¹⁴ Shapefiles representing the geometry and magnitude of flows between origins and destinations were generated using Flow Data Model Tools (Tobler 1987; Glennon and Goodchild 2005) and ArcGIS software.

I use these datasets to ask two distinct, but related sets of geographic questions. Both are drawn from a broad popular and scholarly literature. In this literature, two spatial claims pervade. The first claim is that prisoners are often held great distances from their homes (cf. Blunt and Dowling 2006); the second claim is that prisoners disproportionately come from urban origins, whereas prisons are located in rural areas (Clear et al. 2001a; Hallinan 2003; Petersilia 2003; Gonnerman 2004; Lotke and Wagner 2005). Both claims center on the spatial structure of intra-state exile that *imprisonment* (i.e., a process, not a place) entails. The first claim hinges on a question of distance. The second claim hinges on questions of location and context. Together, these claims speak directly to the argument that I am making: however distant the nearest city may be, prisons are populated and sustained through dynamic and distinctly urban population geographies.

In response to the first claim, I seek to characterize the spatial nature of prison population flows with an explicit treatment of distance. Thus, in addition to basic descriptions of the prison admissions data, I use a gravity model approach in which the size effects of ZCTAs (i.e., origins) and prisons (i.e., destinations) are controlled for in order to isolate the effect of distance on flow magnitudes between these places (cf. Mitchelson and Wheeler 1994). The model employed is:

$$\text{FLOW}_{ij} = \alpha_1 \text{OPOP}_i^{\alpha_2} \text{DPOP}_j^{\alpha_3} \text{DIST}_{ij}^{\alpha_4} \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where:

FLOW_{ij}	=	the number of prisoners who flowed between ZCTA 'i' and prison 'j' between 1990 and 2007
OPOP_i	=	the population of ZCTA 'i' in Census 2000 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau (2001)
DPOP_j	=	the total number of admissions to prison 'j' between 1990 and 2007
DIST_{ij}	=	Euclidean distance between the centroid of ZCTA 'i' and prison 'j'
ε_{ij}	=	residual term
$\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4$	=	parameters to be estimated

This model is made linear in terms by logarithmic transformation and then estimated using ordinary least squares such that:

$$\log(\text{FLOW}) = \log \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 \log(\text{OPOP}) + \alpha_3 \log(\text{DPOP}) + \alpha_4 \log(\text{DIST}) + \log(\varepsilon)$$

I expect that the size effects associated with origins and destinations will be positive, i.e., relatively large ZCTAs and prisons will be associated with flows of a relatively large magnitude on average; relatively small ZCTAs and prisons will be associated with flows of a relatively small magnitude. I also expect the distance effect to be negative, which will reflect some level of distance-decay. I broadly expect that the Georgia Department of Corrections incarcerates people great distances from their homes, but that maximizing the distance between these places is not a departmental objective. Instead, I anticipate a spatial structure that reflects size and distance effects along with sensitivity to transportation costs and perhaps prisoners' visitation or other social networks imbedded within the broader criminal justice system. Yet, however distance does (or does not) affect the magnitude of prison flows, broader geographic questions of context will remain.

As a complement to the analysis of distance effects, I seek to identify and characterize the spatial structure of flow patterns between prisoners' origins and destinations (Wheeler and Mitchelson 1989; Mitchelson and Wheeler 1994; Limtanakool, Dijst and Schwanen 2007). The characteristics of a spatial structure, if such a structure exists, will directly address the second claim: prisoners disproportionately come from urban origins, whereas prisons are located in rural areas. To this purpose, I analyze the 703-county by 119-prison interaction table, or, Origin/Destination matrix (O/D matrix). Identifying the similarities and differences in flows between particular origins and particular destinations is the goal. Holding origins constant, flow magnitudes across the entire prison system can be thought of as 119 variables. However, this particular O/D matrix contains 83,657 discrete flow magnitudes—far too much information to read or geovisualize at once. Principal components analysis (PCA) is one of the most common geographic approaches used to make large, complex datasets more easily interpretable (Rogerson 2006).

Principal components analysis (PCA) offers two basic advantages to the analysis at hand and requires one point of clarification (Johnston 1978, 127-182; Rogerson 2006, 257-274). The first advantage addresses the overwhelming quantity of information in the original dataset, is that PCA is an excellent data reduction technique. The second advantage, which addresses the spatial structure of the original dataset, is that PCA identifies inter-correlations between variables. In this case, a PCA of the O/D matrix will identify prisons (i.e., destinations) that extract flows of prisoners from ZCTAs (i.e., origins) in a similar manner. However, these two advantageous qualities of PCA require a statistical transformation of the original dataset. Technically, this requires the removal of collinearity across observations. In this case, I extracted the eigenvalues and eigenvectors from the correlation matrix of prison flows. Following seven rounds of

sensitivity analysis, varimax rotation toward a simple structure produced eight components that accounted for 79.5% of the original flow variance.¹⁵ Ultimately, this means that the original dataset was rewritten, using eight new variables (i.e., components), to summarize the relationships between 703 ZCTAs and 119 prisons as succinctly and meaningfully as possible.

In its rewritten form, the data provide information about both origins (i.e., ZCTAs) and destinations (groups of prisons); I start with prisons for clarity's sake. For each prison, a component loading measures the correlation between the (119) original variables and each of the (eight) new components. Like a correlation coefficient, these loadings may range from -1.0 to 1.0. In what follows, I isolate loadings greater than or equal to 0.50, which can be interpreted as accounting for 25% or more of the original dataset's variance of prison admissions across ZCTAs. A component score measures the contribution that ZCTA makes to the original dataset's variance in terms of the new component. Large flows between a ZCTA and prisons with high component loadings will result in large component scores. Scores are standardized, such that the mean component score (across all ZCTAs) is 0, and scores represent the number of standard deviations that a given ZCTA is, relative to all ZCTAs, from that mean. Together, component loadings can be thought of as indexing sets of prisons that are similar in flow characteristics and component scores can be thought of as measuring the importance of flows from a particular ZCTA to those indexed prisons.

I expect that prison admissions to Georgia's Department of Corrections will reflect a spatially organized system of population flows that are structured in relation to the state's urban geography. More specifically, I expect that the components will reflect a group of (functional) urban regions, where, for a given component, an individual city (or, perhaps, neighboring cities) will have high component scores on groups of prisons that load highly on that same component

and form an orbit-like pattern around that city. Interpreted alongside the gravity model analysis and results, I anticipate a much stronger (urban-)regionalizing tendency than has been acknowledged in the broader literature to this point.

I turn my attention now to the results of the analysis at hand and suggest that these results should be taken seriously but interpreted modestly. My use of quantitative techniques here is a means of rethinking the distance between prisons and cities (Kwan and Schwanen 2009). I make no claim on objectivity or the establishment of positive law. The nature of the dataset and the methods employed will yield an advantageous set of results that speak meaningfully to the ‘ground truth’ of these matters by treating both the city and the prison. Nonetheless, like all representations of space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991), there is a danger at the ontological level that real prisoners—real human beings—may be confused with the records I am analyzing or, worse, as somehow less important than their admission records. The point of this paper is neither to resolve the epistemological tensions between critical and quantitative scholarship nor to deny the merits (and, often, the accuracy) of critical critique of the methods I use here. The merit of such a criticism does not foreclose the importance of the social problem at hand, nor the need to characterize the broader context in which these socio-spatial problems are situated (Wyly 2009).

Imprisonment in Georgia

The Question of Distance

I find overwhelming support for the claim that prisoners are often held great distances from their homes in the Georgia case (Figure 3.4). Across all records, there was an average distance of 100 miles between a prisoner’s origin (i.e., pre-arrest ZCTA) and their destination (i.e., the prison to which they were admitted). Nine out of every ten admissions involved a

journey to prison of more than 40 miles. Roughly three out of every four admissions involved an origin and destination that are at least 75 miles apart. Most of the prison admissions considered here involved origins and destinations that were between 75 and 175 miles apart. However, a relatively small number of prisoners (i.e., 368, or, 0.2% of all admissions) were actually held in excess of 300 miles from their pre-arrest homes. Of course, distance is a relative concept and the subjective dimensions of imprisonment will vary greatly. I encourage readers to consider the ways that mobility and access will actually compound the physical distances I am reporting here—for prisoners' loved and loving ones in particular.

There were a few relatively short distances between some origins and destinations. However, the shortest distances between prisoners' origins and destinations—what appears to be a matter of several city blocks in some cases—generally involved admissions to transitional centers, or, local jails that lease space to the Georgia Department of Corrections. Two major state prisons also impact these findings and bare mention here. The first is Metro State Prison, which is located in Atlanta, and in which roughly 25% of women prisoners are currently imprisoned (Georgia Department of Corrections 2010b). The second, which likely has a much larger impact on the overall analysis, is the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison (which is often referred to as Jackson). This is the state's largest prison; it had the largest number of admissions between 1990 and 2006, because most male prisoners are classified there (often before being transferred elsewhere); it is roughly 40 miles from Atlanta. Future research, beyond the scope of this paper's aims, will investigate the relationship between security (and other) institutional classifications for both prisons and prisoners. However, these important qualifications do not foreclose the overall argument at hand.

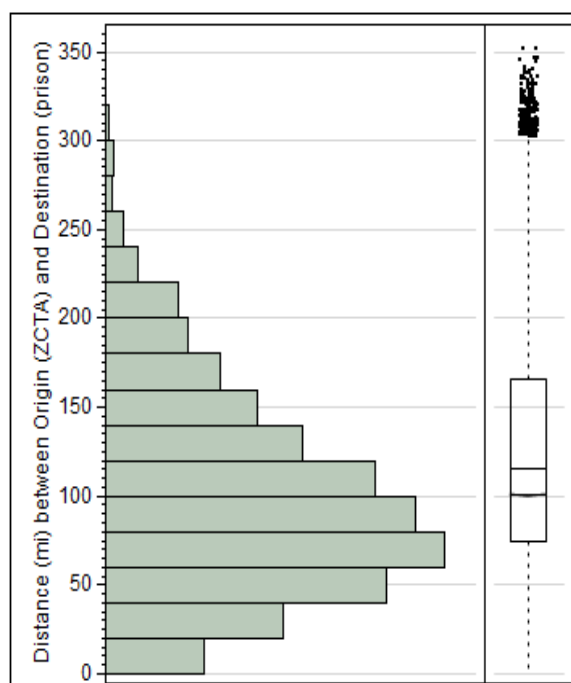


Figure 3.4 Distance between prisoners' origins (ZCTA) and destinations (prison) for Georgia Department of Corrections prison admissions, 1990-2006.

While I did find evidence to support the claim that prisoners are most often held great distances from their homes, I do not see evidence that would suggest the Department of Corrections seeks to maximize this distance. On appearance, this suggests that there may be numerous, perhaps competing, spatial logics at work within the state's prison system. For example, the Department likely seeks to mitigate its transportation costs. In 2006, Georgia Department of Corrections-owned vehicles tallied 19,171,419 miles, with fuel costs of \$2,342,420.85 (Georgia Department of Corrections 2006, 19). In order to formally examine the effect of distance on population flow magnitudes, a basic gravity model was employed (see above).

The magnitudes of prison flows within Georgia's prison system correspond well with a traditional gravity representation (Table 2). Nearly half of the variation in these flows is accounted for by size and distance effects (i.e., the adjusted R-squared is 0.46). The signs

associated these effects are as expected; with positive size effects and a clear distance decay (Table 2). My primary concern is with the estimate of the distance parameter. It is negative and suggestive of a relatively strong decay in prisoner flows as distance is increased. On average, a one percent increase in the distance between a prisoner's origin and destination results in a nearly twenty-two percent decrease in the magnitude of flows between that origin and destination.

Table 3.2 Gravity model results for the regression of prison admissions on variables representing ZCTA and prison size and the distance between them.

Model Results		
RSquare	0.463442	
RSquare Adj	0.463423	
Root Mean Square Error	0.700389	
Mean of Response	0.663297	
Observations (or Sum Wgts)	83,657.000000	
Term	Estimate	Prob>[t]
Intercept	-1.640193	0.000000
LgOPOP _i	0.312310	0.000000
LgDPOP _j	0.320221	0.000000
LgDIST _{ij}	-0.216739	0.000000

We have already determined that prisoners are often held great distances from their homes and so the results of the gravity model should not be interpreted as contradictory findings. These results suggest that there may be multiple, even contradictory, spatial logics at work in this prison system, and that these logics may cumulatively result in distance decay. On the one hand, there appears to be a substantial journey to prison across all cases; on the other, the goal is clearly not to maximize the distance between prisoners' origins and destinations. In short, a regionalizing process may be in motion. So we have responded to the question of distance: prisoners are often held great distances from their homes. But, we have also identified a complication: levels of

movement between origins and destinations exhibit a significant level of distance decay. This begs the question of context: *how are prisons and cities now interacting, spatially?*

The Urban Question

I investigated the potential role(s) played by distance in the spatial organization of Georgia Department of Corrections prison admissions in the previous subsection. In this subsection, I seek to further the investigation by investigating the urban/rural relationships (i.e., population flows) by which this prison system is produced and sustained. I perform a principal components analysis (PCA) of the origins (i.e., ZCTAs) and destinations (i.e., prisons) represented by prison admissions records (see above) in order to do so. As Figure 3.5 illustrates, I find clear support for this paper's argument that Georgia's prisons interact meaningfully with the state's urban geography. In sum, these eight components account for 79.5% of the variance observed across flow magnitudes in the original dataset. The eight components that were identified, statistically, by PCA mapped almost directly onto the state's major cities, spatially. In effect, the statistically identified components map onto spatially organized carceral regions, with one city (or a small number of neighboring cities) anchoring flows from prisoners' urban origins and an orbit-like pattern of prisons. In what follows, I interpret these results for individual cities/components.

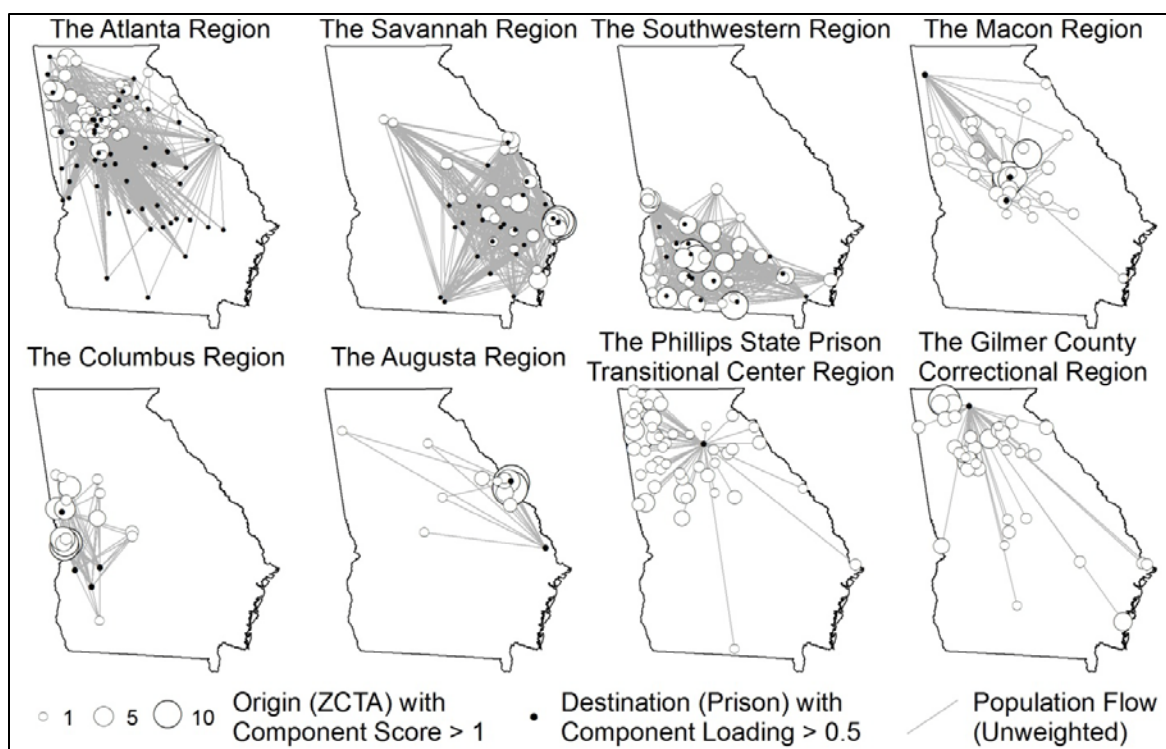


Figure 3.5 The eight carceral regions identified by principal components analysis of prisoners' origins and destinations, as represented by Georgia Department of Corrections prison admissions records, 1990-2006.

The Atlanta Region

The first component isolates a subsystem that I am calling the Atlanta Region (see Figure 3.5 above and Figure 3.6a below). Unsurprisingly, given its regional prominence as a population center, Atlanta dominates both the state's urban hierarchy and its prison systems. This component is anchored by admissions from 62 ZCTAs, 48 of which are located within the Atlanta MSA; admissions isolated by this component¹⁶ account for slightly less than one third of Georgia's prison admissions: 77,279 out of 245,179 (Figure 3.6a). Fourteen ZCTAs, generally just outside or in cities nearby Atlanta—notably Athens—also scored highly on the first component. All told, the first component also accounts for 36% of the total flow magnitude variance in the original dataset. 74 institutions loaded relatively highly (i.e., with a component

loading of 0.5 or higher) on the first component. Fifty of these institutions—to which nearly three fourths of these admissions were destined—are located outside of MSAs. Of the 24 metro institutions that loaded highly on the first component, 10 are county jails that lease space to the Georgia Department of Corrections and 5 are transitional centers in the Atlanta MSA.

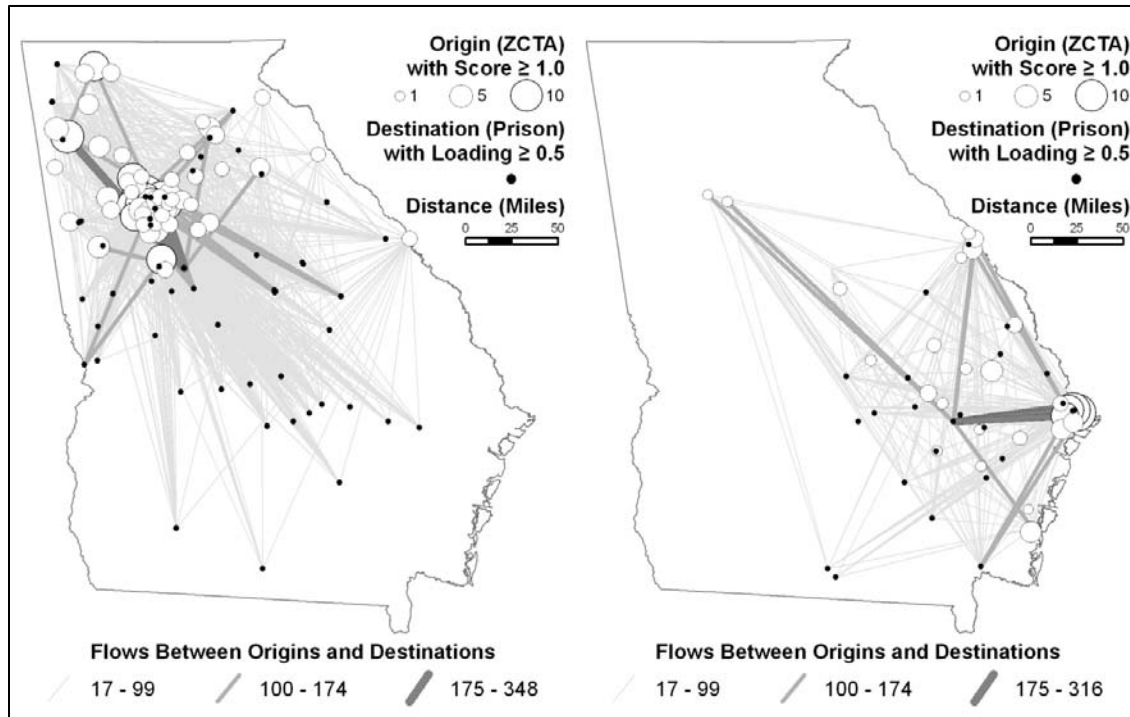


Figure 3.6a and 3.6b The Atlanta and Savannah Regions, with flow magnitudes.

The largest flows isolated by this component lead to the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison near Jackson, Georgia. This reflects the institutional importance of the classification process (cf. Richards and Ross 2003) and this prison in particular to the broader prison system. This prison was the destination for thirteen of the fifteen largest flows identified by the first component. The four ZCTAs associated with the largest flows to Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison are all on the southeast side of Atlanta. More than 1,100 people were

displaced from these four ZCTAs to this prison alone between 1990 and 2006—roughly 70 people each year. The first component also isolates large flows between Atlanta and Baldwin State Prison, 1,000-prisoner capacity male facility with the state’s highest security rating (i.e., close), which is roughly 100 miles away.

Atlanta is known for relatively high levels of reported crime, and it was known for a time as “America’s most dangerous city” (Ackerman 1998). However, it is unclear how accurate these crime statistics actually are as 22,000 reports for responses to 911 calls in 2002 can’t be found (Hart 2004), and official crime reports are always questionable representations of the processes they represent. The relationship between crime and imprisonment is neither necessary nor causal—‘white-collar crime serves as a prime example (Gilmore 2007; Dewan 2008). I argue that high levels of imprisonment in these ZCTAs tell us nothing about the innate criminality of their residents. Geographers have convincingly argued that urban criminality results from the social production of fear, uneven development, racial segregation, and state intervention (Smith 1986; Holloway and McNulty 2003; Herbert and Brown 2006).

Atlanta is also iconic in its trenchant neoliberal economic policies, through which it courted and ultimately hosted the 1996 Olympics (Rutheiser 1996) and is developing a heritage tourism industry (Inwood 2009; 2010). This particular form of entrepreneurial governance (Stone 1989; Keating 2001) serves as the crucial context in which mass imprisonment has unfolded across Atlanta. This is perhaps most evident in the strengthening race-class divisions that polarize the city. While the city has long been divided racially (Holloway and McNulty 2003; Kruse 2005), it also holds the nickname Black Mecca (Copeland 2004). Yet, 43% of Atlanta’s kids were living in poverty and 14,000 homes had no telephone as of 1990 census in this “model of middle-class black achievement” (Iyer 1996). These extremely high rates of

imprisonment speak to the social and spatial contradictions that characterize the ‘progressive’ Atlanta, and, the city to which we turn now: Savannah.

The Savannah Region

The second component is anchored by zip codes from the Savannah MSA and can be thought of as the Savannah system. Six of the ten zip codes that scored most highly on the first component—with component scores ranging from 4.0 to 14.1—are located within the Savannah MSA. The remaining four zip codes come from Bulloch County (which neighbors Savannah) and the nearby city of Augusta. The flows isolated by this component account for only 6.9% (16,897 out of 245,179) of Georgia’s prison admissions, but the second component accounts for nearly 18% of the flow variance in the original dataset.

The prominence of the Savannah Region is surprising, given its relative size across the state’s urban geography. Whereas Savannah is the 5th-largest MSA in the state, the city’s residents accounted for the 2nd-highest level of prison admissions. While the Savannah MSA (pop. 293,000) is less than twice the size of the Athens MSA (pop. 153,444), for example, Savannah’s prison admission level (121,301) is more than four times the size of Athens’s (28,852).

Savannah shares many of Atlanta’s characteristics, though it is considerably smaller (in terms of space and population). Reported crime rates are very high—higher than Chicago, Kansas City, or Los Angeles, for example (Lockwood 2007, 197). The city also has higher murder and robbery rates than other cities in the region, such as Jacksonville, Charleston, and Augusta. However, there can be little doubt that the city’s long history of racism (e.g., roughly half of the city was populated by slaves in 1850 (Alderman 2010)) and its largely tourism-

dependent regional economy result in a level of punitiveness higher than the population and other explanatory characteristics alone can account for.

The Southwestern System

The subsystem identified by the third component can be thought of as the southwestern system. The zip codes anchoring this system are generally west of Valdosta and south of Macon. This subsystem is primarily anchored by zip codes from the Albany MSA and zip codes near the city of Valdosta. The three zip codes from the Albany MSA have component scores ranging from 4.8 to 11.5; the primary Valdosta zip code from which prisoners were admitted scored at 10.2 on the third component. The southwestern system accounts for roughly 5% (12,200 of 245,179) prison admissions but accounts for 11.5% of the original interaction table's variance.

Valdosta's geographic location on interstate 75 (I-75) is of particular interest when interpreting this system. This interstate runs from Miami, FL, north, through Michigan, to the Canadian border. En route, it passes through several cities across six states, including Atlanta, Knoxville (TN), Cincinnati (OH), and Detroit (MI). It may be the case that Valdosta serves as an important node in a broader narcotics network (cf. Allen 2005). It may also be the case that Valdosta serves as an important point of interdiction, particularly for the drug enforcement agency.

Smaller Carceral Regions

The fourth, fifth, and sixth components isolate flows between the cities of Macon, Columbus, and Augusta, respectively, and a relatively small number of prisons. The three subsystems account for The Macon subsystem accounts for 3,061 flows, with 1,093 originating

from Macon, 1,331 originating from Columbus, and 637 originating from Augusta. The three subsystems account for 10.9% of the original flow variance, collectively. Each of these subsystems accounts for between three and four percent of the original flow variance; the Macon subsystem accounts for 3.6%, the Columbus subsystem accounts for 3.5%, and the Augusta subsystem accounts for 3.2%. Both the seventh and eighth components isolate flows that seem to be predicated on the institutional uniqueness of one prison. The seventh component isolates flows between 51 zip codes and the Phillips Prison Annex; the eighth component isolates flows between 37 zip codes and the Gilmer County Correctional Institution, in Ellijay.

Putting the Regions in Context

In effect, across the flows identified by these eight components, we see a pronounced cohort of regionalizing processes. The state's largest cities anchor these principal components, and population flows from zip codes within these cities generally lead to a constellation of prisons about the cities' cores. Most of the variance in the original datasets is accounted for by the first two principal components, which map onto the cities of Atlanta and Savannah, respectively. The impact of these cities upon the state's prison system, and, in turn, of the prison systems' impact on these cities, should not be underestimated.

Conclusion

Urban geographers should treat distant, rural prisons as central institutions in urbanizing processes. Prisons are inaccessible, segregative institutions. Prisons are often located in rural areas. However, these places are also produced through population flows, processes of uneven development, and social relations that neither begin nor end at the prison's razor wire-lined

gates. By examining the processes that produce and sustain mass imprisonment a richer, fuller geography emerges beyond the comparatively static urban hot spots or rural prisons that threaten to obscure the processes through which these places take shape.

Reconsidering prisons as central urban institutions has important policy implications. In particular, the process of prisoner reentry will only grow in importance as 700,000 prisoners are released and return, overwhelmingly, to urban areas. These populations are particularly vulnerable, and require energy and resources *at minimum* equal to those deployed during their punishment.

Reconsidering prisons as central urban institutions also has important social implications. Imprisonment is a traumatic experience, and substantial evidence documents that ex-prisoners will earn less over the course of their lifetimes, have a harder time finding (and keeping) jobs, be less likely to maintain romantic relationships, and suffer a wide range of psychological and medical problems at levels of incidence far greater than those found amongst people who have not been to prison (cf. Clear 2007). Tragically, but predictably, these adverse impacts neither start nor end with the prisoner, whose family or loved and loving ones are often unjustly punished by imprisonment (cf. Travis and Waul 2004). In closing, I encourage urban geographers to engage the prison, to engage it as an important institution in the broad processes of urbanization more specifically, and to reconsider distant prisoners as past and future neighbors.

Endnotes

- ¹ Despite their obvious differences—particularly with regard to mobility and agency—it is remarkable how much gated communities and prisons share in common. Like gated

communities (Low 2003, 12), prisons can be defined by their inaccessibility. Prisons and gated communities are most often physically enclosed by walls and fences. Entrances in both places are guarded, and, both places are routinely patrolled by security personnel. Despite the enclosure of public spaces and services in gated communities and prisons, both restrict public access. Perhaps most interestingly, both of these segregative spaces are premised—at least in part—on the public’s fear of crime.

² Two cautionary notes bare mention. First, these are not closed systems. The state of Georgia imprisons residents of other states, just as Georgia residents who are convicted elsewhere often serve time outside of the state; and, overcrowded state prison systems are increasingly transferring prisoners across state lines. Second, while the Georgia case will likely resonate with other state-level analysis, the generalizability of this case is unclear at present; additional studies—within and between other prison systems—are needed.

³ Even a large number of correctional officers commonly commute to work from distant cities (cf. Gilmore 2007, 155-166).

⁴ Several scholars have called a supposed urban bias into question—with some critical criminologists arguing that their discipline would be well served by “discarding wholesale its urban bias and conducting research in rural communities instead, as they provide a better laboratory for the conduct of both quantitative and qualitative research on crime” (Donnermeyer, Jobes and Barclay 2006, 205). These critics do raise important methodological questions for those interested in the origins and contexts in which criminal behavior takes shape. However, these questions are only indirectly related to the relationship(s) between this paper’s focus (i.e., urban geography and the spatial organization of mass imprisonment).

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6 I do not intend for this to be exhaustive, and I select these urban qualities with Wirth's
self-reflexive, cautionary advice in mind: "Rather than taking our conjectured rural-urban
types for granted, we might turn to what we actually find under specified conditions of
life associated with what we call urban and rural communities" (Wirth 1938; 1965, 225).

7 Technically, these prisons were registered as "urban clusters," which are urban areas with
populations of less than 50,000 people.

8 I illustrate women's prison admissions in order to represent a relatively small prisoner
population sub-set (i.e., roughly % of the total Georgia prison population) that
nonetheless covers the entire state. Some of these institutions have changed between
men's and women's facilities between 1990 and 2006; Washington State Prison opened
as a male facility in 1991, was reclassified as a women's prison in 1992, and was
reclassified as an all male facility in 2005, for example.

9 As defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget in 1999 (Spotila 2000).

10 For example, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has a strong presence in Georgia, with both
the regional system and community corrections offices, three federal prisons, and a
training center. Similarly, the Stewart Detention Facility is a 1,750-person U.S.
Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility (Loyd et al. 2010). All of these prison
systems merit attention in their own right but they are beyond the scope of this paper.

- ¹¹ The U.S. Census Bureau reports its population as either urban or rural. However, the Georgia Department of Corrections data includes urban, rural, and two additional classifications, which I have termed “non-rural”.
- ¹² Technically, zip codes are routes (not areal units). However, they can be functionally integrated into the spatial database by joining zip codes to shapefiles produced by the Census Bureau to represent their Zip Code Tabulation Areas. There are differences between zip codes and ZCTAs, and these differences are well documented by the Census Bureau. However, for the purposes of this analysis, ZCTA boundary files are sufficient.
- ¹³ Roughly 5,800 prison admissions involving Georgia convictions and pre-arrest addresses outside of the state of Georgia were excluded. An additional 7,300 records were cleaned due to zip code fields that were either originally mistyped or could not be manually reconciled. The ZCTA boundary file for Georgia is an exhaustive coverage, with close to 800 ZCTAs. However, only 707 of these ZCTAs are populated. Four ZCTAs—from which 0 prison admissions were recorded between 1990 and 2006—were excluded from this analysis. Two of the zip codes without prison admissions 1990-2006 are near the small towns of Sharon and Maxeys, Georgia; these zip codes had reported populations of 38 and 45, respectively, during Census 2000. One of the zip codes is much larger, but hosts Moody Air Force Base, near Valdosta, in southern Georgia. The fourth zip code in question basically covers Taccoa Falls near the Chattahoochee National Forest, which had a reported population of 7 in Census 2000.
- ¹⁴ Distance, in this case, refers to the Euclidean distance calculated between two points: origins (ZCTA centroids) and destinations (prison’s physical locations). These points

were positioned on a Cartesian plane (i.e., Georgia West Zone 1002, which is a part of the State Plane Coordinate System).

- ¹⁵ I considered solutions ranging from three to ten components during sensitivity analysis. The plot of eigenvalues begins flattening between the seventh and tenth components. While the ninth and tenth components did have eigenvalues above (or very near) one, they contributed little statistically (i.e., they both account for less than one percent of the variance in the original dataset). There was also little difference in the attendant spatial narrative whether they were included or not, and I thus settled on an eight component solution. I then subjected these (eight) truncated eigenvectors to varimax rotation, a widely accepted rotation method. Rotations offer a cleaner interpretation of the data by reallocating some of the explanatory power of the first factor across the remaining components.
- ¹⁶ By “admissions isolated by this component” I mean admissions that involved a population flow between only these origins (i.e., 62 ZCTAs with a component score of 1.0 or more on the first component) and destinations (i.e., 74 prisons with a component loading of 0.5 or more on the first component).

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CHAPTER 4

CALCULABLE TERRITORY AND THE PRISON: NUMBERS, COUNTING, AND THE
CENSUS IN INTERVIEWS WITH FORMER PRISONERS¹

¹ Mitchelson, M.L. To be submitted to *Political Geography*.

Because prisoners in the United States are included in decennial census counts as residents of prisons, the political power of nearly two million prisoners effectively flows ‘up the river’ with them, from their pre-arrest homes to the places where they are incarcerated. Controversies surrounding the Census Bureau’s practice center on the question of where prisoners should count. In this paper I argue that: 1) this question of placement is inextricably linked to the ways prisoners are numbered, counted, and accounted for using identification numbers, roll calls, and population counts; 2) these spatially indexed inscriptions mark bodies, buildings, and populations as “calculable territory” (Hannah, 2009); and, 3) the census controversy arises as the U.S. nation state attempts to integrate this geographically fragmented territory. I draw from fifty interviews with former prisoners in making my case, and argue that the inherently political practice of representing prisoners spatially uncovers power relations. I propose a politically inclusive spatial politics of representation and conclude that the Census Bureau is uniquely positioned to facilitate such a practice.

Introduction: Where does the prisoner count?

Prisoners are currently tabulated as residents of the prison in which they are held (Lotke and Wagner 2005; U.S. Census Bureau 2006). Most prisoners have come from cities far away from the prison in which they are confined and prisoners generally cannot vote (Lotke and Wagner 2005). So the Bureau must account for the geographic contradiction between physical presence and ‘inclusion’ in total institutions (Goffman [1961] 1990), on the one hand, and the displacements premised on political exclusion that it takes to produce and sustain such institutions, on the other (Clear 2002; Clear 2007). Prisoners appear as “phantom constituents”

on paper when prisons are included in census counts that are used for political districting (New York Times Editorial Board 2006).

The question of where prisoners should count during the U.S. decennial census is predictably controversial (Webster 2004; Lotke and Wagner 2005; Roberts 2010). The U.S. Census Bureau (2006) primarily defends their practice in terms of cost and operational efficiency. Critics of the practice have called it “the 5/5ths Clause” and insist that it enables “prison-based gerrymandering” and violates the principle of “one person, one vote” (Marantz 2006; Prison Policy Initiative 2010). Congressional hearings were held before and after Census 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006; Wagner, Lotke and Beveridge 2006; Groves 2010; Wagner 2010). The controversy is unresolved, but the Census Bureau is providing a technical fix: they will release prison population figures at the block level for purposes of redistricting after Census 2010 (Groves 2010). State and local governments will have the option to work around the important problem of malapportionment, but, they will have to do so by removing the prison population altogether.¹ The question of where prisoners should count will be moot. Prisoners will not count at all (cf. Western 2006, 85-107).

In what follows I argue that the question of where prisoners count during the census is inextricably linked to the means by which prisoners are numbered, counted, and accounted for in prison (cf. Foucault 1982, 216-226). I amplify the narratives of former prisoners while making this argument.² These narratives should inform the debates that will no doubt shape Census 2020 and shed new light on the practices of Census 2000 and 2010, even if readers are unsympathetic to my claims. Participants reveal that the census controversy actually traces over a sequence of three territorializing inscriptions: prisoner identification numbers, prison roll calls, and the census count of the prison population.³ Each inscription is a project of what Scott

(1998, 1-84) calls “legibility,” which marks territory through a system of spatial references and renders territory both readable and physically accessible to the state (cf. Hannah 2000, 14-17; Hannah 2009). Prisoners are spatially indexed to the prison in each case. This effectively paves over a remarkably dynamic population geography, which is produced and sustained through massive physical and social displacements, most often from urban centers to rural settings.

I conclude that removing the prison population from census figures will not fix the problem at the root of this controversy (i.e., physical presence and political exclusion), and in fact demonstrates it brilliantly. The root of the census controversy will be sidestepped where prisoners are removed, but it will remain unresolved. But this is not simply a problem of an autonomous, monolithic state imposing the powers of representation upon its subjects (Foucault 1982). A politically inclusive spatial politics is possible. Treating prisoners as human beings whose lives, by and large, neither start nor end with their imprisonment can resolve the inherently spatial question of political representation in a representative democracy that resides at the heart of the census count. The qualities of this politically inclusive spatial politics are illustrated through resistance to numbers, counts, and accountings that are taking place every day, and I consider these forms of resistance at length below.

The remainder of this paper is organized into four sections following a brief expansion of my theoretical framework and methodological approach. The three sections immediately following this introduction form the this manuscript. I present interview responses regarding identification numbers, prison roll calls, and the census count, in turn. In each case I present a brief overview of the territorializing inscription at hand, present extended responses from the participants, and consider these responses alongside my primary argument. I also signal the theoretical implications of these narratives. In the fifth sub-section of this paper, I summarize

the paper's empirical content and explicitly retrace the series of inscriptions from which 'the prison population' is produced. I conclude this paper by signaling concerns related to the placement of this census count, specifically, and echoing the broader underpinning concerns that I heard voiced by participants.

Guiding Theoretical Questions and Concerns

The census is a spatially organized epistemological tool that necessarily entails a politics of representation (Anderson and Fienberg 1999; Rose 1999; Hannah 2000; 2001). The census controversy at hand illustrates both the shortcomings and political potential of "statistical citizenship" for prisoners. Hannah (2001, 516) coined the phrase and defines statistical citizenship as "a strategic active participation in the construction of the statistical representations by which individuals are constituted as political actors, objects of social policy, and/or consumers." He argues the representations produced through censuses and other surveys may be of more political importance than voting, though being counted appears to be a passive form of representation as opposed to casting one's vote. The key question then revolves around an individual's capacity to self-consciously and politically manage these representations. Statistical citizenship describes this capacity. By what means is the statistical citizenship of prisoners enabled, constrained, or denied?

The power to count and account for human beings during the census clearly entails an important spatial politics (Hannah 2000, 113-159; Starkweather 2009). The census controversy of where prisoners should count is exemplary. Three numerical, geo-coded inscriptions construct the prison through three distinct but related representations of space (Rose-Redwood 2006; Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 36-46). The first operates at a corporeal scale, indexing individual

prisoners' bodies to the disciplinary power/knowledge and space of the prison (Foucault [1975] 1995; [1976] 1980).⁴ The second operates at an institutional scale, where the head counts of specific prisons are used to index groups of prisoners' bodies to particular buildings as they are allocated across a broader prison system: Foucault's "carceral archipelago" ([1976] 1980, 68). The third operates as an "*unambiguously national* technique of power" (Hannah 2000, 9; emphasis in original), where prisons are indexed to the wider census geography of the United States. These three inscriptions mark bodies, buildings, and populations as objects to be numbered, counted, and governed from a distance (Scott 1998; Elden 2005; Legg 2006; Rose-Redwood 2008; Hannah 2009). Statistical citizenship entails an important set of spatial questions in each case. First, how are the corporeal geographies of prisoners represented? Second, *where* prisoners are represented? Third, what topological relations connect prisoners, who are in very specific places by definition, to other distant places?

Prisoners, prisons, and the prison population are fragmented geographies that must all be integrated as "calculable territory" by the census; this is a pressing political problem of governance that Hannah (2009) has explained very well through his model and general framework of that concept (and see Elden 2005; 2007; Rose-Redwood 2008; Starkweather 2009). How, which is also to say *where* in this case, do people, places, and things count when they have been territorialized in very different ways, and for very different purposes? The question can be asked in both empirical and normative terms. Where do prisoners count? Where should prisoners count? The census controversy presently centers on both of these important questions. But the question of how geographic beings are constructed as governable objects (Hannah 2000, 43-59) to be numbered, counted, and accounted for is equally important in this case. In fact these questions are inextricably linked.

The answers to these questions result from (and produce) relations of power; they involve several modalities of power in Foucauldian terms (Foucault 1982; [1954-1984] 2000). Foucault differentiated between sovereign and modern power relations in terms of life and death, for example (Hannah 2009). Foucault also identified several forms of modern power: disciplinary power and governmentality each address biopolitical questions (i.e., questions of biopower, or, power over life) but they operate in very different ways (cf. Foucault [1978] 1991; Foucault [1978] 2007, 87-114). For Foucault (1982, 224):

...one can define different forms of power. The forms and the specific situations of the government of men [sic] by one another in a given society are multiple; they are superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another.

The distinctions and articulations between these forms of power have been documented elsewhere (e.g., Hannah 2006, 626-628). But I want to contextualize the work that follows by signaling one unavoidable shift in the relationship between power and prisons: the rise of mass imprisonment.

“Mass imprisonment” (Garland 2001) refers to the historically and geographically unprecedented increase in the use of imprisonment. The sheer size of the phenomenon and its deleterious social consequences have been well documented elsewhere (Hallinan 2003; Pettit and Western 2004; Clear 2007; Gonnerman 2007; Pager 2007). There were fewer than 400,000 people in U.S. jails and prisons in 1975, when *Discipline and Punish* was published; that population grew by roughly six hundred percent over the next thirty-five years (Western 2006; Sabol, West and Cooper 2010). The implications for a Foucauldian approach to imprisonment are clear: the discourse of imprisonment must expand beyond his treatment of disciplinary power. As the imposition of medical disciplines during prisoner classification will demonstrate

below, for example, the modern U.S. prison system is a fully biopolitical terrain, upon which sovereignty, discipline, biopower, and governmentality all take shape and action.

Methodological Approach

The statistical citizenship of prisoners is at the root of this particular census controversy, yet few prisoners are visibly involved in the debate (cf. Hannah 2001; 2009). This work argues that former prisoners are uniquely positioned to comment on the census controversy; to explain both how it has come to be and what the stakes are for those being represented by numbers and counting. I interviewed former prisoners as part of my research on prisoner location and the decennial census and this paper reports the primary findings of those interviews. I asked people who had been through various prison systems *where* they might want to be counted and *why*. In response to Hannah's call for "a more 'nuts and bolts' political explanation" of the ways that numbers and counting both register and transform reality (Hannah 2001, 517), then, I also wanted to understand *how* these particular census counts come to be from a very important vantage point: the former prisoner's. Former prisoners have been all the way 'through' the spatial process of imprisonment and can speak to this holistic process entailing arrest, adjudication, prison admission, displacement, captivity, institutional transfers, release, and reentry.

I conducted fifty semi-structured interviews with former prisoners. All interviews took place in Athens, Georgia. Twenty-five were conducted during the summer and fall of 2008 and twenty-five more were conducted during the summer and fall of 2009. Interviews with two participants were so productive that follow up interviews were arranged; I interviewed 48 former prisoners. The Athens Justice Project (AJP), a local non-profit, and I formed an indispensable

research partnership during this process. The AJP office is conveniently located and provided a locally recognizable and comfortable setting for participants and it functioned as an ideal host site for these interviews (Elwood and Martin 2000). The AJP also worked as a primary recruiter. Roughly one third of the participants were introduced by Athens Justice Project employees, interns, and clients. Roughly two thirds of the participants were snowballed from this AJP-related population, locally distributed recruitment fliers, and informal word of mouth. The AJP's partnership in this research was as indispensable as the healing and justice it facilitates in the Athens area.

Demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, race, and ethnicity) were self-reported by participants (Table 1). Most of the participants (40 of 48) were male. The participant population was disproportionately black and mirrors the state-wide trend; whereas less than one third of the state's population was identified as "black or African American" during Census 2000, nearly two thirds of the state prison population self identified as black. Only one participant self-identified as Hispanic. The average participant was in their 40s, which is older than both the state's prison and total populations. This simply reflects the fact that the folks I talked to had already been through the prison system (aging throughout the process).

The experiences of former prisoners make up this work's study area. Participants were all residents of Athens-Clarke County or an adjacent county. However, as expected their incarceration histories involve a remarkable geography of imprisonment. Though I am not reporting findings specific to these experiences, all of the participants save one had served time in local jails. All but two of the participants served time in state prisons: 45 participants served in Georgia; in addition to Georgia, participants served time in Florida, New York, Maryland, and Virginia state prisons. One participant was transferred between 11 institutions in 8 states while

serving a single sentence under the Federal Bureau of Prisons' jurisdiction. In sum, participants had served a total of 59,195 days (i.e., just over 162 years) in Georgia's state prisons.⁵

Participants' experiences in the Georgia prison system ranged from one, relatively short imprisonment (90 days) to seven imprisonments totaling more than 20 years. Most participants (26) had served only one sentence in a Georgia state prison; 18 participants had been imprisoned multiple times; seven participants had been imprisoned five times or more.

I intended to learn what participants could teach me about what I already knew about the geography of imprisonment; I also needed to learn what I didn't know—what I couldn't know without having been imprisoned myself, and what I couldn't learn from a book or a dataset (Richards and Ross 2001). I thus employed a semi-structured method of interviewing, which makes use of an interview protocol, but also allows participants to actively shape the interview (Dunn 2005). I used an unobtrusive digital voice recorder during the interviews in forty-nine of the interviews; in one instance, a participant requested that I not record the interview. I transcribed the interviews and triangulated them with official Georgia Department of Corrections records and my personal field notes and research journal (Janesick 1999; Hodder 2000; Janesick 2000; Cresswell 2003). This data forms the heart of the research reported here.

Table 4.1 Self-reported participant characteristics, Georgia Department of Corrections population statistics, and Georgia Census 2000 statistics.

	Participants	GA Department of Corrections*	State of Georgia**
Population	48.00	53,682.00	8,186,453.00
Average Age (Years)	42.00	35.00	33.40
Gender			
Men	40.00	49,954.00	4,027,113.00
(%)	83.33	93.06	49.19
Women	8.00	3,728.00	4,159,340.00
(%)	16.67	6.94	50.81
Race			
Black	33.00	33,698.00	2,349,542.00
(%)	68.75	65.35	28.70
White	15.00	17,762.00	5,327,281.00
(%)	31.25	34.44	65.07
Another Race	0.00	107.00	509,630.00
(%)	0.00	0.21	6.23
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	1.00	2,368.00	435,227.00
(%)	2.08	4.44	5.32
Not Hispanic	47.00	51,006.00	7,751,226.00
(%)	97.92	95.56	94.68

*As of March 2010 (GDC 2010)

**Census 2000 Figures

In what follows, the question of names—the power to name, un-name, and rename—is crucial (Guenther 2009). In all cases I report only first names for the reader’s convenience, unless a participant self-identified using an abbreviation or self-selected an anonymous abbreviation. The general protocol for reporting participants is to use pseudonyms. Many of those interviewed insisted that their real names be used in any dissemination and I have honored

that wish. However other participants selected pseudonyms and I respected their wish, too. I do not explicitly distinguish between the two groups here. My reasoning is that those who wanted to be recognized by name can be, and, those who opted for anonymity have their privacy ensured through their pseudonym. This concern resonates strongly with the first round of analysis, to which we turn now.

Identification Numbers: Legibility and the Prisoner's Body

Numerically Identifying the Individual

Identification numbers are unique identifiers for each prisoner within a prison system. Every prison system in the United States uses an identification number of some kind, but different prison systems use different formats. Some systems use alphanumeric codes. For example, the biography of former New York prisoner Elaine Bartlett explains that “all of her clothes were marked with her new identity: 84-G-0068” (Gonnerman 2004, 75). The identification number itself (i.e., 0068) is expanded to account for time and space in this case; 84 represents the year of admission (i.e., 1984) and G represents the institution in which Elaine’s sentence started (i.e., Bedford Hills Correctional Facility). The Georgia Department of Corrections uses several “Numeric Offender Identifiers,” but in this paper I will focus on the *GDC number*.⁶ As the quotation above suggests, these numbers often function as names in disciplinary institutions. A cursory search for a given name (e.g., James Smith) in Georgia Department of Corrections records will return hundreds of records, but a search for a specific GDC number will return only one.

Identification numbers are banal in appearance like other numbers: instruments of standardization and order; tools wielded in the name of objectivity and order (Porter 1996; Rose

1999; Foucault [1966] 1994; Cohen [1982] 1999). Prisoner identification numbers serve a technical role that is not altogether unlike a credit card number, social security numbers, routing or bank account numbers, drivers license numbers, or a Universal Product Code (UPC). These numbers all impose order so as to codify and standardize relationships between distant entities and discourses. But the “types of objectives” for which these tools are used vary greatly (Foucault 1982, 223). There are clearly great differences between someone using a self-selected personal identification number to withdraw cash from an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and a number tattooed across a Holocaust survivor’s forearm. Different identification numbers circulate through—and thus, perhaps, signal—different modalities of power.

I asked participants about their identification numbers, trying to gain a sense of the number’s relative importance (or unimportance) during their imprisonment and the power relations these numbers might signify. Participants consistently described their identification numbers as institutional replacements of their birth names. During separate interviews Melinda, Deyshaun, and Tim explained:

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|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tim | That’s how they recognized you. They knew who you were by the number. |
| Deyshaun | Your name ain’t [expletive]. You know? It’s not. |
| Melinda | All you have inside of prison is your GDC number. You don’t have a name. You’re just inmate number so-and-so in diagnostics. |

These responses suggest that naming, un-naming, and renaming are far from simple or innocent practices (Alderman 2000; 2003; Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2009). These nominal changes, from name to number, actually signal the imposition of a property relation for several participants:

- Tony When you go to prison and become state property you definitely get a number.
- John Your name goes away and you are state property.

Prisoners themselves are divided through identification numbers: into a pre-incarceration sense of individuality, marked by their birth name, which may not be of use or interest to correctional officers, but cannot disappear outright; and a disciplinary individualization, marked by their identification number, and imposed by the institution. The identification number marks a form of power relations that simultaneously recast the individual's subjectivity as something different than it was before incarceration (at least in name), and reposition prisoners as subjects within a discourse of state property (Foucault [1975] 1995).

The identification number emerges while other forms of disciplinary knowledge are taking shape during intake, diagnostic, and classification procedures. Prisoners are indexed by their identification number to whatever information a prison system deems useful or necessary.

As K.P. explained:

- K.P. Your GDC number's pretty much your name, especially when you're going through diagnostics. That's the first six to eight weeks of your prison sentence. They're classifying your security level, your mental status, your health, your educational level and all of that. Everything. They don't care about your name. You may occasionally hear your last name, but pretty much you'll hear inmate [number omitted].

Here, as always, knowledge and power are deeply entangled, but this is not an exclusively modern form of power. Foucault ([1975] 1995) argues that a "trace" of sovereign power (i.e., torture, in this case (but see Hannah 2006)) is manifest in such disciplinary techniques (see also

Richards and Ross 2003). Both John and Rico were noticeably uncomfortable, angry in my view, as they described their experiences:

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|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| John | Intake is pretty rough on you. First thing they do, they take you in there and they strip you down. They shave your head and give you blood tests—DNA tests and stuff like that. |
| Rico | It really ain't questions. In Diagnostics they check you. They check everything about you. Everything. You got any kind of disease, you're gonna find out right there, right then. They put that stuff on you to make sure you ain't got no crabs, no lice, nothing like that. They give you some clothes to put on: your jumpsuit. You stay in a jumpsuit until you leave there. |

Prisoner identification numbers thus emerge as prisoners are being stripped naked, diagnosed and evaluated in a number of ways (including medical discourses), formally classified, and then bodily marked as state property with jumpsuits and other uniforms. Anywhere else these practices would likely be considered sexual assault (Davis 2003, 60-83).

But such practices are legal—indeed, they are performed in the name of justice—because the identification number indexes a prisoner within what Foucault terms a “system of differentiations” (Foucault 1982, 223). From an institutional perspective, separate from but related to juridical moments, identification numbers differentiate those who belong in prison from those who do not. This has important spatial implications, as Bobby explained:

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|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bobby | Those numbers are how the Department of Corrections keeps up with you. I mean, of course they have your name. But they don't look at your name. They look at your number. It's important. Once your release comes around, they want to make sure they've got the right person. It's so important, you understand, that you know your number. That's what the Department of Corrections goes by. They've got a picture there, with your name, but they go by the number. Everybody gets a GDC number, and that's how they keep up with you. |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Prisoners are thus indexed to both disciplinary knowledge and space through their identification numbers. Like street addresses or zip codes, identification numbers are geo-coding techniques that make the prisoner legible to the enclosed prison system (Rose-Redwood 2008). These are like toponymic inscriptions at the corporeal scale (Yeoh 1996; Rose-Redwood et al. 2009).

Identification numbers thus mark the body *in* space, *as* space, and *for* space, as it is produced by the prison system and the broader systems of governance to which prisons systems belong (Lefebvre [1974] 1991). Systems of differentiation such as inmate classification systems are circuitous in that they: result from power relations; and, they are the conditions of possibility for those power relations (Foucault 1982, 223). The sovereign power to seize bodies and position them within enclosed disciplinary spaces must move bodies before it can incapacitate them (Clear, Rose and Ryder 2001; Hannah 2009, 69). And once they have been codified by an identification number, a prisoner's body can be allocated or transferred across a prison system that covers thousands of square miles: Foucault's "carceral archipelago" ([1976] 1980, 68-70). The prisoner's identification number is a key identifier in all of these spatial decisions, including admission and release, as Bobby explained in the quotation above.

Resentment, Resistance, and the Identification Number

The individualization marked by identification numbers is often a painful experience, and it is often deeply resented. Participants often remembered a strong sense of personal erasure or anonymity during their imprisonment, and they often expressed their memories in numerical terms. Several participants were clearly still in pain, sometimes years after their release. During our interviews M.J. described this sense of erasure and Waller explained her feeling of anonymity:

M.J. When you're in prison, you're just a number. That's why they call us inmates. You're just a number to them. You're just a number in prison. I mean, they didn't ever call me by my name. [Imitating a prison employee's voice.] "Inmate number so-and-so, report to so-and-so and report for this-and-that!" You know? You're like a number when you're in prison.

Waller You're not individual, and sometimes you get lost in that cycle of being a number for so many months. Like, for me, I was so obsessed with being a number. You have no privacy.

The intensity of these responses was initially surprising. For example M.J. was a very polite and soft-spoken participant who only raised his voice once during our interview; he did so while imitating a prison employee's voice in the quotation above, referring to himself as inmate number so-and-so. A sense of loss was palpable. Prisons had clearly deprived participants of a sense of "liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property" (Foucault [1975] 1995, 11). Participants' resentment at this sense of loss was thus only to be expected. What was perhaps more surprising were the *explicitly numerical* terms in which this resentment was expressed.

The theme of being 'just a number' signals an unambiguously dehumanizing process. At times the experience approaches a sense of enslavement (Alderman and Modlin 2008). The theme of being just a number often emerges alongside the property relation that John and Tony signaled (see above), by which bodies are owned as state property. Michael and K.P.'s remarks were particularly troubling:

Michael Man, you just become a number. Once you get—I mean, that's pretty much how the saying goes—once you get sentenced and you're put in prison, you're a number now. And you don't have any kind of personality or anything. You just become state property.

K.P. It makes you feel like an item on a shelf with a serial number, more than a human. That's part of the mental punishment of the whole thing. Lost a name, got a number.

These painful remembrances make two very important points. First, the ascription of a classification number is a numerical exercise and a territorialization of the body in place. Numbered bodies are constructed as standard—even *exchangeable* (Loyd, Burridge and Mitchelson 2010)—governmental objects. Of course participants resented their status within this system of differentiation and its connoted unfreedom. It would be rejected outright if given the choice (and prisoners would leave); so it must be imposed. The body itself must be territorialized—seized, inscribed, and disciplined—in order to reproduce the prison. The identification number marks all of these acts. Second, the “actuarial” logic of numerically identifying all of this produces a very particular, dehumanizing subjectivity (Feeley and Simon 1992; Rose 1999, 235-236). Territorialization via property relations suggests total domination. This clearly produces dangerous levels of vulnerability and produces a politically vacant subject position. The identification number is personally devastating for what can’t be said about you and what you can’t say in response to its imposition. Yet resistance emerges.

There are crucial limitations to the fields of knowledge and power that these identification numbers signify (Foucault 1982, 225). The identification number forms a spatial representation of an individualized subject—*not the individual herself* (Foucault 1982, 216; Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 38-9). Leonard Peltier’s (1999, 4 and 62) writing captures the disparity between his produced and imposed subject position and his own sense of self, by distancing that sense of self from his identification number:

I, Leonard Peltier. Also known in my native country of Great Turtle Island as Gwarth-ee-lass—“He Leads the People.” Also known among my Sioux brethren as Tate Wikikuwa—“Wind Chases the Sun”...in our way, my names tell me and others who I am. Each of my names should be an inspiration to me. Here at Leavenworth—in fact anywhere in the U.S. prison system—my official name is #89637-132. Not much imagination, or inspiration, *there*.

Peltier constructs cognitive distance between his names and his number by emphasizing his number's presence '*there*' and, in turn, placing his presence elsewhere.

To the extent that identification numbers are imposed as abstractions, then, they can be rejected outright. But the material implications to which these inscriptions are inextricably linked present a more limited range of action, as Rick made clear:

Rick It's something like the Matrix. That's how I think about it, really.
 Everywhere you go in the prison—the library, the store,
 the chaplain's office—you've got to have your ID card. They
 ain't looking at your picture and all that. They're looking at the
 GDC number. Everything. "What's your number, inmate?
 What's your number, inmate?" You know? Basically, you're
 inmate-by-number. That's how they look at you.
 At one time I was like, "I'm a [expletive] number, man."
 They weren't interested in who I am. They just knew me by
 number. But I was shooting myself in the foot, because that's
 what they wanted me to think. They wanted me to think that so I
 could keep coming back and giving them job security.

Being outside of the prison, and not coming back, is the material goal. But prisoners' behavior must generally adhere to the internal regulations of the prison in order to do so.

If prisoners have to 'be a number' in a docile and orderly fashion in order to eventually stop being 'just a number' then how would a statistical citizenship of the identification number be effected? One option would be to broaden the horizon of classification to account more fully for the person being represented, but this would be meaningless (if not more damaging) unless coupled with shifts in the objectives of imprisonment. At minimum, institutional classification could entail a much more robust geographic accounting of prisoners' lives, and could meaningfully strive to reduce the physical distances between prisoners and their loved and loving ones (see Christian 2005; Christian, Mellow and Thomas 2006). Unfortunately the objectives of imprisonment are increasingly reducible to "incapacitation," which Gilmore

(2007, 14) argues “doesn’t pretend to change anything about people except where they are” (Irwin 2005). And in this shifting mission of the prison—towards incapacitation and away from retribution, deterrence, or rehabilitation, for example—we can observe an attendant shift in power relations, and perhaps the modality of power itself.

The seemingly banal, nominal transformation that identification numbers impose is in fact the first step in a larger project of population management and, in turn, an articulation of disciplinary and governmental powers (Hannah 2000, 23 in particular). The number signifies the production of a prison *population*. It is into this population that the disciplined prisoner’s body has been aggregated. It is in direct relation to this population that the prisoner is measured and classified. It is into this population that participants’ senses of self had disappeared:

Orenthius You’re a number. You ain’t no human being anymore. You go to prison and you’re not a human being. Once you hit diagnostic, you’re not a human being anymore. You’re a number. Everything. Everything’s being counted for. That’s what it’s about.

This is perhaps most readily evident in the days following this diagnostic transformation, during one of the most routine elements of prison life: the roll call.

Standing Count (Roll Call): Legibility and The Prison

“Count Time is Serious”

Participants explained that a numerically identified prisoner’s records make a prison’s roll calls possible. Roll call is a form of bodily enumeration. It is also commonly called ‘the count’, head count, or standing count. Many prison systems, including the Georgia Department of Corrections, perform their own system-wide census counts daily, sometimes multiple times

each day (i.e., it is not conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau). These census counts require prisons to verify their institutional roll call with a number established (and verified) by a centralized and often distant authority overseeing all prisons in that system.⁷ Some form of roll call happens several times each day, regardless of the institutional setting. As Waller explained when I asked her how many times she was counted in a day:

Waller Constantly. You're always counted!

But this is not an abstract enumeration. In this context, counting is a spatial inventorying practice; it is a survey of placement. Just as a prisoner's body is numbered, so too is the prison population in which they are enfolded as calculable territory. As Eddie explained:

Eddie First they wake us up and count us, make us go back to sleep, then they wake us up again, count us before breakfast. After breakfast, they count us again. Then, like two or three hours later, they count us again. Then, right before dinner, they count us. Right before lockdown, they count us again. So, yeah, they count you.
 They want to make sure that you don't go nowhere, or that you're misplaced or anything like that.

This is a territorial inscription like the identification number. However, roll call is an aggregation of identification numbers. The roll call number must integrate multiple identification numbers, through which individual prisoners are indexed to disciplinary knowledge/power and space, to one number signifying the prison itself.

While disciplinary power structures individual prisons, governmental power largely structures the prison system. Unsurprisingly, these counts are taken very seriously by prisons across these prison systems. Consider the *Admissions and Orientation Handbook* for the United

States Penitentiary in Atlanta, where one participant was confined. The first paragraph of the first chapter reads:

One of the first realities of institution life is inmate accountability. It is necessary for staff to count inmates on a regular basis. During count, inmates are expected to stay quietly in their designated areas or cells until the count clears (United States Bureau of Prisons 2009, 4).

After detailing the (five) official counts that occur on ordinary days, it's explained that:

Staff will take disciplinary action if an inmate is not in his assigned area during a count. Disciplinary action will also be taken against inmates for leaving an assigned area before the count is cleared. Each inmate must actually be seen at all counts, even if the inmate must be awakened (United States Bureau of Prisons 2009, 4).

In the Georgia Department of Corrections absence from a count (C09) or disrupting a count in some other way (e.g., C10 or C11ii) are class C (i.e., “High” level) disciplinary violations.

Technically, these violations fall between “damage to locks, doors, safety equipment” (C08) and “causing a fire” (C12) in severity (Georgia Department of Corrections 2010).

Perhaps due to the repetitiveness or the intensity during ‘head count’ (or a combination of the two), participants’ responses to the seemingly mundane questions about this daily practice were passionate. For example, Deyshaun smacked the table top when I asked him about the count:

Deyshaun [Expletive]! Man, when I was in [prison] we got counted! It's a big prison with something like 2,000 inmates, so they constantly count. And they're serious about counting. You don't [expletive] around during count. Anywhere I ever went to, you don't [expletive] around. No talking, no nothing. Count time is serious—especially the state count. They have to do a big count, then it goes somewhere—to Atlanta or somewhere. [Deyshaun pauses and takes a deep breath.] Yeah, you get counted.

Deyshaun describes both a sense of frustration with the experience and cognizance that his experience is a practice of legibility, marking him and his prison for ‘somewhere’ like the state capital, Atlanta. Tony similarly underscored the local intensity and institution-wide significance of the count during his sentence, served in New York State Department of Correctional Services:

TS Five or six times a day you stop what you’re doing. Early in the morning, you wake up at count time. Every change of shift is a count. You stop what you’re doing, you line up, and they take attendance. That’s count time. And, if somebody’s missing at count time—if somebody’s strayed away...[Tony shakes his head].

If there’s a miscount, that’s their job. They need to know. You got 20 guys, you’d better have 20 guys. That’s very serious business. That supersedes everything. It shuts down everything. All movement stops.

Nothing else—save for executions, perhaps—has such a widespread effect on the institution.

Resentment, Resistance, and Roll Call

Like the process of having your name transformed into a number, these counts seemed to take a psychological toll on some participants. For example, later in our interview, Tony said:

TS I don’t ever want to line up for count time again. I don’t want to do that.

Aaron's story suggests that the count is so pervasive, so routine, that its effects may linger after release:

AB You have so many mandatory counts. It's a trip. You get counted about 6 or 7 times a day. It takes about 2 weeks to get used to it. Everybody knows it's count time, so you get ready for count. You know? On detail, if we knew it was almost count time, we cleaned our clippers up, cleaned our utensils out, our tools and went out there into the gym where we'd get into our designated area. We'd get counted and then go back to working. You kind of get used to it.

I had a little incident the first night I got home, though. My fiancé was gathering some stuff and I was lying down, looking at the clock. I got up and I was standing straight.

She said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "Oh, man!" and I just started laughing. I said, "You won't believe this, but the reason why I got up here, standing, is that I'm waiting for them to come in here and count me." I was just so used to that count.

She just started laughing. She said, "You're home now."

Roll call doesn't leave much room in prison for practices of statistical citizenship, because disrupting the count in any way is a punishable offense. Resisting the count may ultimately increase a prisoner's sentence and increase the number of times a prisoner is counted, in other words. The practice is important, however, in the ways that it reinforces the individualization signified by identification numbers. In both instances, the solution is to go home.

But the count raises a second layer of problems for statistical citizenship as it indexes the dynamic population geography of imprisonment to a particular immobile building. The problem of statistical citizenship follows prisoners home. Most of the time (i.e., 56.3% of the time in Census 2000) administrative records were used as the source for Individual Census Reports; these would generally be that day's roll call tally, an average daily population for that

institution, or the institution's rated capacity. In other words, prisoners may not count towards redistricting in 2011, but most of them were never directly counted in the first place.

The Census Count: Making the the Prison Population Legible

Prisoners and the Census: Integrating Calculable Territory

The U.S. Census is an iconic technique of governmental surveillance and observation. It is also, less overtly, an important nation-building technique with an important social history (Anderson and Fienberg 1999; Hannah 2000; 2009; Starkweather 2009). More than a simple or straightforward count the census as “a geospatial technique for reckoning, representing, and constituting” the United States as a political community (Starkweather 2009, 240). This geospatial technique constructs a geographic framework that exhausts the territory of the United States without overlap (Hannah 2000). The prison—a space of “forced migration” (see Thomas and Torrone 2006) and intranational exile—must be included within this geographic framework. But the prison is a very complex territory; indeed Davis and Dent have argued that it is a border (Davis and Dent 2001).

Prisoners are integrated into the calculable territory of U.S. census geography by way of their index to the prison itself. Participants and I spent time talking about the U.S. Census Bureau and the decennial census during every interview. Participants' familiarity with the census ranged greatly, from those who had never heard of (or could not recall what they had heard about) the census or the Census Bureau to those who were intimately familiar with the process.

Like other populations that are difficult to enumerate (e.g., Americans living abroad), participants often expressed a relationship between their numerical placement and their

personal identity-formation (Starkweather 2009). These relations emerged through one of two themes: a sense of enduring ties to a pre-arrest residence, or, a normative claim to that place. For example, Waller told me about “home” (Blunt 2005; Blunt and Dowling 2006):

Waller I never thought of prison as home. I was just doing what I had to do until I could get home. I mean, in my dreams, I would try—I would spend my free time trying to focus on what home looked like in my memories. And my parents would send me pictures of home, which I had a whole bunch of different pictures of Athens, and stuff, to remember myself. I could say, “this is the street I grew up on.” I could stay focused. Because, if I didn’t, I would lose my mind. Yeah. Because, when you’re in there, you are not a person. You are a statistic.

Kevin was also against being counted as a resident of his prison, though his reasoning was premised on the practices of “good” citizenship:

Kevin I would say—I mean, I think it would be right—for me to be counted in my pre-incarceration home. Just because that’s the most recent place that, if I was being responsible, I paid my taxes—that I had either a home or a mortgage, or an apartment at least, whatever that would be.

This sense of enduring ties to a pre-incarceration or forward-looking residence is locked in tension with the Bureau’s current criteria for establishing what they refer to as “usual residence” (Taormina 2003). On the one hand, prisoners are clearly spending most (if not all) of their time in the prison on Census Day; on the other, a prison is not a home. So, if prisoners all want to be counted elsewhere, why count them in the prison? My sense is that this question will not be taken seriously as the (voting) public is generally apathetic or insensitive to prisoner preferences. But, so far as this apathy or insensitivity goes, the Bureau should be relatively detached. Perhaps a more pressing question remains, then: why is one of

the most frequently counted populations on the planet at the heart of a political controversy that hinges on their count?

Resentment, Resistance, and the Question of Where Prisoners Should Count During the Decennial Census

Participants responded overwhelmingly *against* the practice of being counted in their prison cells. Forty-five participants said they would prefer to be counted in either their pre-arrest home or the address they would be released or paroled to after prison. Two participants were entirely indifferent; only one participant preferred to be counted in the prison.

Many of the respondents were well aware of the political importance of the decennial census. For example Eddie, who was serving time on Census Day (i.e., April 1) in 1990, explained:

Eddie When they came to [prison] to do the census a lot of guys were making a joke out of it. They wanted to know if we were working there—you know, stuff like that.
 The guys would respond, “Oh yeah, I’m sweeping and mopping now!”
 I’d say, “You know this is a serious thing, this census?”
 So, then, after the census people had left, some of the people that were making the joke said, “Are the people still here giving that census?”
 They wanted to get right with the folks then. But, like the guy with the mop, I said to him, “This is very important. It’s just like Martin Luther king said, stand up and be counted!” Stand up and be counted. So, everything they asked me, I complied. I knew what it was about.

Tony responded by signaling the overt state racism signaled by the 3/5ths Clause:

Tony This Census issue reminds me of—back in the days when the North and the South were in conflict about slave issues—the 3/5ths Compromise. Because they wanted the power and the vote, they wanted every 5 slaves to count as 3 white voters. That way they could increase their political power and make laws. They could have the power to control the House or whatever.

Tony describes race, political power, and counting converging at ‘the border’ (i.e., prison) suggested by Davis and Dent (2001). These discourses and the practices they entail share a long history (Nobles 2000; Forest 2001). However, the prison may actually be operating as a race-making institution in the supposedly ‘post-racial’ U.S. state (Goldberg 2002; Wilson 2007).

So what would the practice of statistical citizenship look like in prison? To begin, prisoners would have to be directly enumerated or given the opportunity to respond to their own Census questionnaire. Participants overwhelmingly argued that they should not be counted in prison. The Prison Policy Initiative and others have argued that the Census Bureau can—indeed must—start collecting pre-incarceration addresses from incarcerated people during the decennial census (Wagner et al. 2006). This only makes sense given the dynamic and distinctly urban population geography through which mass imprisonment is produced and sustained. The Bureau is uniquely positioned to facilitate an inclusive spatial politics of representation.

Conclusion

This paper reported the primary findings of interviews conducted with 48 former prisoners in 2008 and 2009. My object of inquiry was a census controversy that centers on where prisoners should be counted. When I asked people who had been through various prison systems *where* they might want to be counted, and *why*, a sequence of numbers, counts, and accountings unfolded. These were not numbers in the abstract, however, these were

territorializations and the production of calculable territory. At the broadest level, this work has simply argued that former prisoners are uniquely positioned to comment on the census controversy; to explain both how it has come to be and what the stakes are for those being represented.

Participants explained that the census controversy traces back to three territorializing inscriptions: identification numbers, roll calls, and the census count. These three inscriptions—the prisoner’s identification number, the prison’s institutional head count, and ‘the prison population’ figure—rewrite bodies, buildings, and populations as “calculable territory” (Elden 2005; Hannah 2009). The inscriptions with which this paper are concerned function effectively because they exclude so much, namely: violent acts of displacement and captivity, both of which are performed in the name of justice and the state (cf. Gilmore 2002; Kirsch 2002; Foucault [1975] 1995). Prisoners are unambiguously excluded during the formation of their disciplinary identities as numbers or bodies to be counted and, in turn, these are widely resented representations. The census controversy cannot be resolved without addressing these matters.

Endnotes

- ¹ In the United States, political power is apportioned evenly across political districts *within* states on the basis of population. Malapportionment occurs when political districts are of unequal population size (Morrill 1981). This should not be confused with the apportionment process by which Congressional seats are allocated *between* states. This paper is focused on the former because, most often, prisoners do not cross state lines.

- ² This research was supported in part by the National Science Foundation award #0727443. This research project and all related documents were reviewed and approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) as project #2007-10726-2.
- ³ By territorializing I mean to emphasize the *always social* processes by which territory takes its form. Territory is “a bounded social space that inscribes a certain sort of meaning onto defined segments of the material world” (Delaney 2005, 14). In particular, I wish to signal Connolly’s argument that “to occupy a territory is to receive sustenance and to exercise violence. Territory is land occupied by violence” (Connolly 1994 and quoted in Delaney (2005, 14)).
- ⁴ Power/knowledge is conventionally signified as such in Foucauldian studies (Foucault [1976] 1980). Foucault argued “power produces knowledge...power and knowledge directly imply one another...there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” ([1975] 1995, 27).
- ⁵ To be clear, these figures only include imprisonments within the Georgia Department of Corrections. The total time served, in state or federal prisons outside of Georgia, is closer to 220 years.
- ⁶ The GDC number is a unique identifier ascribed to those in the Georgia Department of Corrections’ custody. The GDC number is also called UNO and/or a GDC ID. Older numbers—such as the “Offender ID” or “EF Number”—are now called “Case Numbers”; prisoners may have multiple Case Numbers, but will have only one GDC number, regardless of readmission(s).

- ⁷ The Georgia Department of Corrections is overseen, hierarchically, by the Governor and an 18-member, Governor-appointed board of corrections and a Governor-appointed Commissioner.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

To Begin an Ending

We have covered a lot of ground in these pages. I presented three manuscript-style chapters after introducing the project and my methodological approach to this work. The first manuscript (Chapter Two) examined the geography of mass imprisonment through the lens of prison privatization and its attendant debates. The second manuscript (Chapter Three) considered the prison as a central urbanizing institution. The third manuscript (Chapter Four) investigated the spatial politics of representing prisoners through identification numbers, counts, and accountings in the census and other representations. I consider these to be three important windows into the spatial fact of the prison itself. But I also worked through the geography of imprisonment as a spatial process in each case, and I sought to redress harms done through geographic approaches to the prison as a fixed, essentialized place.

This final chapter has three aims. First, it situates this document alongside other research and writing projects that took place during my dissertation work over the last five years. While this dissertation is the most important part of a five year process, it is not the only facet of my larger research project and I briefly broaden my scope to account for other works here. Second, this chapter speaks to additional work that will be directly relevant to this dissertation but is in various early stages of development. I view my larger project as a career-spanning investment of time and energy, and I want to signal what I think will come next. Third, this chapter concludes this formal document with a few final thoughts about my dissertation's

broader implications: the work that I think this dissertation does and the directions to which I would like to see its energy applied.

A View from the End

Concurrent Research

This dissertation was accompanied by six complementary writing projects over the past five years, all of which are now either published or in press. Although this dissertation is composed of three manuscripts I gave twelve research presentations during my time at the University of Georgia and I was the organizer or co-organizer of twelve sessions. All but two of these writing projects resulted directly from a research presentation, session organizing, or some other form of conference collaboration.

Lauren Martin and I (2009) contributed equally to the article “Geographies of Detention and Imprisonment: Interrogating Spatial Practices of Confinement, Discipline, Law, and State Power,” which was published in *Geography Compass*. I believe the beginnings of a nuanced spatial interpretation of the prison are developed in this piece. For example, taking Goffman’s concept of the “total institution” from the seminal *Asylums* as our starting point we argued:

...whatever totalizing characteristics some places may demonstrate, these places still do not exist in a vacuum. Therefore, the conceptual model of ‘the total institution’ can condition empirical researchers to overlook spatial interdependencies. Spatial confinement does not sever social ties (although it certainly strains them). As research on prison visitation makes clear, imprisonment directly implicates other people and places beyond the prisoners or the prison (Martin and Mitchelson 2009, 464).

This piece functioned as a literature review for this dissertation and established the conceptual framework for our distinct, though clearly related, dissertation projects; Lauren’s dissertation is

Outside In: Law, Geopolitics, and Neoliberal Governance in U.S. Immigrant Family Detention Policy and Practice. It also marks the emergence of a potential sub-field, or, at minimum, a research cohort. We co-organized four sessions at the 2008 AAG meeting, after which we were commissioned to write this piece by *Geography Compass* editor Jon May, and approached about a possible book by Ashgate Press. We didn't pursue that book, but were both excited that something 'new' seemed to be developing. Though this piece was not formally included in the final dissertation, it was instrumental in helping me to develop its conceptual framework.

I developed my historical understanding of imprisonment through three pieces. Two pieces are forthcoming book reviews for *Material Culture*. The first is a reaction to Casella's (2007) *the Archaeology of Institutional Confinement*. The book was useful for its historical scope and helped me to ask important questions during interviews about the materials economy described by former prisoners that I will discuss in the following section. The second is a reaction to Andrzejewski's (2008) *Building Power: Architecture and Surveillance in Victorian America*. The implications of this book and my interpretation of it are more wide-reaching for the discipline of geography. Here I am beginning to connect the built environment with spatial projects (including power) in ways that transcend the prison itself, and will hopefully be applicable to a variety of enclosed spaces.

The third piece is a case study. During the spring of 2009 I spent two weeks in the print newspaper archives of the *Coalfield Progress* in Wise County, Virginia. I was theorizing prison sitings in my work, particularly in Chapter Three of this dissertation, but I didn't have a case study. The siting of Wise County's Red Onion and Wallen's Ridge State Prisons were perfect. Both are built atop former coal mines and speak to the global (and always local) shifts that

characterize neoliberal capitalism. They were also at the heart of a census controversy of their own. A Brennan Center for Justice (2004) report is worth quoting at length:

In Census 2000 the Census Bureau first counted people incarcerated in Wise County as residents of nearby Grayson and Russell counties. The town of Troutdale in Grayson County was reported to have a population “increase of 540 percent from 1990,” according to Ray Reed of the Roanoke Times. Census findings showed that 68 percent of Troutdale’s population was black. This came as a surprise to at least two Grayson officials: “How many blacks did you say that was?” asks [Troutdale] Mayor Danny Richardson. “I haven’t seen any of them.”

“There must be an enclave of people living over there that I’ve never campaigned to,” jokes Del. John Tate, D—Marion... “I’m not going to tell anybody,” says Tate. “If they ask me in Richmond [the state capital], I’m just going to say, golly day, it’s a growing community.”

This work (Mitchelson in press) is part of *Engineering Earth*, edited by Stan Brunn and published by Kluwer Press. I anticipate the publication of the book shortly. Moreover, there is enough material left to craft an important piece for Historical Geography in which I will work through the implications for commodity analysis in a place where prisons have replaced coal mines in a local labor market. It is a truly fascinating case.

But I am most excited about the *Beyond Walls and Cages* book project out of all the ancillary work I have done during this time. I am co-editing with Jenna Loyd and Andrew Burridge. In this project we ask timely questions about the ways immigrant detention is building on the prison-industrial complex. We were fortunate enough to attract some really great contributions from an amazing group of scholars and organizers. The three of us went through three rounds of editing with nearly 30 authors, and I am extremely proud of the finished product. The book, when published, will have an impact in the discipline; contributions from Anne Bonds, Ruthie Gilmore, Alison Mountz, Joe Nevins, Monica Varsanyi, and Rashad Shabazz will be widely read. The book will also have an impact well beyond the discipline. Rough half of the contributors are activists and organizers. We are excited about the energy this book already

seems to be energizing. For example, the editors of the journal *Social Justice* commissioned an overview of the project, which was published this spring (Loyd, Burrige and Mitchelson 2010). This project continues my work with the prison and detention centers, but expands my conceptual framework to account for the border itself, and it does so with the benefit of a remarkable group of scholars.

Future Research

A great deal of work remains to be done. I envision ten distinct continuations of this dissertation research that will contribute to prison scholarship explicitly. I exhausted my data in terms established by my dissertation research questions, but am slightly overwhelmed by the richness of both the quantitative and qualitative stories that remain to be told. Each is a story of imprisonment. I have four tasks centered on my interview work; two tasks centered on my spatial analysis; and four tasks will grow from these datasets.

My first priority is to exhaust my qualitative research process and continue drawing on the interview materials. I removed about five pages describing methods from Chapter Four, and I feel like this work needs to find a home. It will be important to document the steps by which I came to interview forty-eight former prisoners and to probe my own positionality, but also to explore the concept of vulnerability—for participants and myself—as it emerged in complicated ways throughout the research process. In addition to this piece I see three related theoretical contributions to be made.

In Chapter Three of this document I demonstrate the flows through which mass imprisonment is produced and sustained. I contextualized this work through a consideration of urbanization and population displacements. But what are these flows like, experientially? I hear

three things in the interview narratives; each will result in a stand-alone publication. The first is *incarceration-as-migration*, which will trace the participants' imprisonment spatially, literally following their journey from institution to institution. But, importantly, all of the prisoners I spoke with had come home. Gonnerman (2004) has described the spatial process of imprisonment as a prison odyssey. I realized very early on that I was speaking with members of what I am terming the *carceral diaspora*. And imprisonment has formally marked each of these folks. Former prisoners struggle remarkably when compared to people who have never been to prison, in every measurable social outcome (Western 2006; Clear 2007; Pager 2007), though they have "paid their debt to society." My work with critical race theory, and the racial state (Goldberg 2002) in particular, suggests that prison is a contemporary *race-making institution*. I allude to this argument in a few places within this document, but a fully formed argument will stand in its own right.

I see three potential contributions to political economy approaches to geography in future work. The first is a treatment of *carceral commodities*. Participants spoke time and again about the tension between food available to everyone and name brand food that could only be purchased through commissaries. I heard the sentence, "I saw someone get killed over a bag of chips" from four different people, for example. The second regards *prison labor* and will, I think, be the final piece that results directly from the interviews. Ruthie Gilmore talks about "objectively similar but subjectively different positions" (Gilmore 2007, 250) in her work, and this contradiction was signaled repeatedly in the interviews. I heard the sentence, "Everybody's got to eat" in reference to correctional officers just doing their jobs a dozen times, for example. The research question is: If prisons are such horrible places, why doesn't everyone just go home? I think the answer must draw on Marx and Foucault, and I think empirical evidence from both

the interviews and my archival work in Wise County will make for an excellent piece. Third, I still want to do an institutional ethnography of a prison system's centralized decision-making offices. This was the first of three goals that constituted my dissertation proposal, but it proved to be logistically impossible during my time here. Doing this work in the future (and perhaps elsewhere) will require a well-developed relationship of mutual trust and appreciation. It will be my first large-scale research project when I am (hopefully) settled (at least semi-permanently) in two years.

I see two policy-relevant pieces of innovative quantitative analysis coming from the dataset on which Chapter Three is based. First, I did so much quantitatively-driven work during my first two years of research that I have somewhat of a store of information characterizing the country's prison population in Census 2000. Comparing and contrasting that information with *Census 2010* will be an important project. Second, building explicitly on the analysis presented in Chapter Two, I want to investigate the effects of racial segregation and wealth differentials on *spatial patterns of imprisonment*. I want to continue the project of identifying problem processes (i.e., racism, wealth inequality) instead of supposed problematic places (i.e., hot spot analysis, high crime neighborhoods).

The final research project that I see resulting directly from this dissertation opens up a larger intended contribution to geography concerning the nature of space. I conclude this document by signaling that work and its implications.

Final Thoughts: To End with New Beginnings

Policy Implications

I see this dissertation as policy-relevant in two immediate contexts. Chapter Four reports that participants (i.e., former prisoners) overwhelmingly preferred to be counted in their pre-incarceration homes. This is a change that can be implemented by the U.S. Census Bureau through the direct enumeration of prisoners during Census 2020. This process will be more costly and time-consuming than current procedures, which rely heavily on administrative records. However, the Bureau is uniquely positioned to simultaneously enable a practice of statistical citizenship and, in so doing, document the remarkable population geographies through which mass imprisonment is currently sustained. This will be the first nation-wide evaluation of carceral displacement. This will also increase the fairness and accuracy of census-based political representations by counting each prisoner “once, only once, and in the right place” (National Research Council 2006).

Chapter Three argues that a dynamic and distinctly urban population geography is producing and sustaining mass imprisonment. But, as I argued in this dissertation’s introduction, prison admissions are one component of imprisonment; 95% of those admitted are eventually released (Petersilia 2003). The policy implications here concern the distribution of governmental funds and where they might be allocated. If prisoners are predominately coming from and returning to urban settings, then prisoner reentry becomes an increasingly important, spatially concentrated, process. Organizations like the Athens Justice Project do remarkable work with limited resources. State and federal governments must begin the process of redirecting public monies from punitive to reintegrating purposes.

Other Geographies are Possible

At various times over the past five years, as this dissertation was being written, I have had the paralyzing sensation that my scholarship was floundering despite constant effort and attention. I felt like my thoughts were all over the place. This is a common experience. Perhaps I just needed to work through it. Then I found a piece of paper taped to the bottom of the filing cabinet in the desk that I actually wrote this dissertation on (Figure 5.1).

28
A

**GEORGIA CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES
METAL FAB PLANT**

SUPERVISOR' CHECKLIST - ASSEMBLY

PRODUCT NUMBER V13302DFB WG R.O. NO. 312182

FINISH: SAND () GREY () WARM GREY (✓) BLACK () OTHER ()

DIVIDER PLATE SETS _____

FOLDER BAR SETS 2

	NO	YES
1. LOCKING SYSTEM, WORKS FREELY AND KEYS	[]	[✓]
2. PROPER ALIGNMENT OF DRAWER FRONTS AND/OR RECEDING FRONTS	[]	[✓]
3. FINISH WITHIN STANDARD (NO DENTS OR SCRATCHES - PAINT COVERAGE GOOD)	[]	[✓]
4. DIVIDER, COMPRESSOR, AND/OR FOLDER BARS IN ALL DRAWERS	[]	[✓]
5. DRAWER BODY MOVES IN AND OUT FREELY	[]	[✓]
6. ALL PAPERWORK, USER'S GUIDE, LABELS (ETC)	[]	[✓]
7. ALL INTERLOCKS WORKING PROPERLY	[]	[✓]

PROCEDURE: IF THE FIRST INSPECTION HAS ANY "NO'S" THEY MUST BE INITIALED BY THE SUPERVISOR AND CORRECTED BEFORE SHIPPING TO THE CUSTOMER.

Tom Edwards
Forest Davidson
SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

6-7-05
DATE

ASSEMBLED BY: DS MM DP

SUPERVISOR III SIGNATURE: _____

Figure 5.1 Georgia Correctional Industries Metal Fab Plant Assembly Inspection Sheet.

And it occurred to me that it was a very, very good thing that my thoughts were all over the place because that is precisely where you will find the geography of mass imprisonment: all over the place.

Ultimately I think that this work is about the nature of space, and this is where I hope to make my long-term contributions to the discipline. My philosophy of interdependence and what I see as the always social production of space are so deeply internalized that they shape everything I have done here, particularly my treatment of imprisonment as a spatial process. Imprisonment, as I have argued, neither starts nor stops at the prison's walls. So if the importance of the prison doesn't exist independently of its context, I think spatial processes must lie at the root of what I study. How better to probe this than by comparing and contrasting prisons with the production of other places that are premised on spatial delimitation?

What might a comparative, multi-scalar analysis of prisons and communes, for example, uncover about the nature of space? What about convents and monasteries, nature preserves, or private property lines? Working through these spatial facts as spatial processes would obviously have much to say about different modalities of power, as Chapter Four makes clear. But these studies will also help geographers to better understand the social construction and material production of the very tools with which they work: distance, accessibility, mobility, and place. I view these comparative studies as my long-term goal and I envision them as a monograph entitled *Walls*.

What I think these projects can help me to do is start "visionizing" alternative spatial configurations and the means by which they might be performed (Ollman 2002). I have been deeply engaged in two processes through this dissertation: the analysis of current socio-spatial relations (particularly in Chapters Three and Four) and their historical preconditions (particularly

in Chapter Two). I view my project of spatial justice as a practice of grouping, looking around, looking forward, and then regrouping; to be repeated indefinitely. I am convinced that society's current spatial practices (e.g., imprisonment) do great harm. I am convinced that they can be changed.

But, what if we redefine Here and begin new spatial practices, now? Are prisons really necessary? Are prisons part of the human condition, or, are they simply a feature of the modern condition (Loyd et al. 2010)? What happens if we open ourselves up Here? If we integrate ourselves, Here, and risk the injuries that may (or may not!) arrive from the unknown, from the Others, out there (Gregory 2004; Said [1978] 1994)? Can we stop seeing Here as a spatial fact—a warm blanket to wrap around ourselves, to isolate ourselves, and, to be fair, to protect ourselves from real threats of violence—and start seeing here and there as an existential coping mechanisms? Here, as it turns out, is too often a very fearful place. Are we capable of practicing an *always spatial* ethic of hospitality (Popke 2003)?

Yes. Other geographies are possible.

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