'No Place Like Home': Boundary Traffic Through the Prison Gate

Introduction

Similar to the identities often constructed for non-nationals, the prisoner is often determined as the 'other', and at a distance, metaphorical as well as physical, from the citizen majority. In this way, prisons and the diverse penal systems that they help make manifest, have entered the geographic imagination as prime exemplars of how seemingly invisible, peripheral sites are integral to the functioning of a purportedly mainstream society. However, despite their often peripheral physical locations, the inter-linkages between prisons and society are numerous and complex. Recent work within and beyond the discipline of geography acknowledges that where we might imagine a sharp boundary between the hidden inside and outside of prisons, there is in fact a myriad of materials that cleave and bind penal geographies, including forms of communication and inscription, networks of machines or technological devices, and buildings, which mark the prison walls as a site of transaction and exchange (Baer and Ravneberg 2008, Gilmore 2007, Loyd et al. 2009, Pallot 2005, Vergara 1995, Wacquant 2000, 2001, 2009).

Political economic analyses stress the profit-generating potential that prisons offer, with the prison system representing a 'recession-proof economy', which is further entrenched by capitalism's need to enforce pauperism and criminality (Bonds 2006, Dyer 2000, Lemke 2001, Neumann 2000, Venn 2009). Indeed, the prison can be seen to provide a venue for entrepreneurial investment, 'solving' the economic problems of depressed regions (Che 2005, Coulibaly and Burayidi 2010, Daniel 1991, Farrington and Parcells 1991, Forest County Conservation District and Planning Commission 1998, Gilmore 2007, Hooks et al. 2010, Millay 1991, Pickren 2011, Rollenhagen 1999), such that prisons now act as "geographical solutions to political economy crises" (Gilmore 2007: 26). Peck, for example, argues that in a

neoliberal economy the prison system is not located on the 'edges' of society—"as the designation 'boundary institution' might imply" (2003: 227)—insofar as it has become a site of privatization and commodification of services more traditionally associated with state welfare. There is a penalization of poverty here, Wacquant (2009) argues, wherein the (especially) urban disorders wrought by economic deregulation are met by what he calls a 'garish theatre of civic morality' that targets deviant figures, such as the welfare mother and the teenage thug, as beyond both social and economic protection by the state. For Foucault (see Foucault1986), prison is a heterotopia—a space that mirrors, yet subverts everyday life. According to Foucault, a heterotopia is the manner in which society and culture define the subject through his differentiation from general society, creating identity categories from the normal to the abnormal. On the one hand, Foucault considers individuals as free-willed members of a society, but at the same time they are subjects of a culture that examines, labels, and constructs them. This reconstitution of identity is one way of disciplining the subject and regulating behavior. Furthermore, Foucault argues that heterotopias are almost invisible and perceived as natural by members of a society. Yet, they are nevertheless measures for controlling and punishing the deviant or different—constituting a critical process in the formation of societal norms and expectations. Indeed, these binary geographies between inside and outside register as ideological obfuscations that serve to hide the crucial role of prisons in current society. The prison is therefore an example of one of several boundaries marked out by the state.

When engaging with the distinct population of the prisoner, I acknowledge a plethora of novel power relationships that ensue as this quite particular boundary between outside and carceral space is crossed, and often blurred. This boundary is different from that crossed by other populations—in scale, legality, expectation, etc.——meaning that the prisoner allows us to move away from the typical populations encountered in border studies, in order to unravel

the numerous scales, the differing boundaries and multiple power-space geometries that operate when different types of people move across and between variously defined territorial/legal borders. This consideration of the prisoner as an agent in border-crossing is situated alongside geographic research that provides a more nuanced understanding of other unique bordering practices. Examples include the bordered lives of young people (Aitken and Plows 2010); everyday experiences of home-making in relation to nature in sub-urban homes (Power 2009); embodied experiences of negotiating the boundary between the physical and the virtual world of video games (Ash 2010); and the theorization of geopolitical structural space in comic books (Dittmer 2007). In this chapter I similarly explore a unique border negotiation, namely prisoner employment as the cornerstone of successful rehabilitation, and examine the implications of this type of boundary interaction upon prisoner identities. I ground this discussion in examples drawn from research conducted on employment schemes for offenders who are either in prison and employed outside on day release, or employed within a company while on probation. By examining these cross-prison-border practices, I examine the implications of belonging to a group of conventional employees *and* those with criminal records; revealing a careful negotiation of 'inside' and 'outside' identities that complicate matters of belonging. In response to this, I explore the unwanted, or less than ideal, relationship with the prison as home, based on the lack of ability to re-integrate with the community that prisoners re-enter.

Throughout the analysis, this chapter attends to the hybridity of ex-offender constructions of 'home'. I illustrate the strong ties to prison and its problematic relationship with the high levels of recidivism that Britain is currently experiencing. A successful outcome for prison service authorities would be that, following completion of a prison term, ex-offenders would leave prison—embarking on a one-way journey. However, this chapter argues that, although ex-offenders may idealize a return to the communities where they lived

prior to incarceration, the ability to re-integrate is often limited owing to the transformations individuals undergo following imprisonment. For example, this may happen consciously, such as through programs designed to shape psychological behavior; subconsciously, owing to friendships and allegiances developed within prison; or becomes manifested in legal markers like the possession of a criminal record. The body, in effect, becomes the carrier of the border (Amoore 2006: 347-348) acting as the finest scale of political space (Hyndman and de Alwis 2004: 549). This concept also displays similarities with offenders released from prison on license, or with electronic tagging, where the body literally carries a marker with them. As such, prisoners' everyday lives engage with both a physical and metaphorical boundary between prison on the inside and non-prison outside that performs a unique type of border crossing—that serves to create/re-imagine/blur and even ignore this border. In this way, the prison wall becomes a porous boundary, with the prison gate facilitating two-way traffic across it. In considering this type of border work, this chapter responds directly to the current call for attention to the value of perspectives from cultural geography in attending to the nuanced space of the prison, and in drawing out their significance "to open up the political at a more 'personal' level" (Turner 2013: 35).

Examining the Prison/Non-Prison Boundary

The purpose of the prison is to remove those deemed a threat to places that exist beyond liberal territory—which is where the literatures attending to borders and nations begin to dissipate into the field of interest of carceral geographies. Anderson (1996) argues that border control—the effort to restrict territorial access—has been a key concern of the state for a long time. Borders are traditionally viewed first and foremost as "strategic lines" which could be defended or breached by the military (Waltz 1999). According to Krasner (1985), it is the right of all states to determine who and what is granted legitimate territorial access.

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While the movement of trade and commerce is widely (and often necessarily) eroding the barriers between states, recent global events simultaneously shifted the emphasis away from military border concerns towards stronger policing of borders to maintain territorial control by each individual state—framing boundaries as social processes and practices that marginalize different geopolitical groups (Berg and van Houtum 2003, Newman 1999, Paasi 1996, 1999, Sundberg 2008: 876).

Physical barriers are created to prevent the movement of armies, uneconomical trade, as well as perceived 'undesirables'—including migrants and the criminal (Andreas 2003). Border enforcement, imprisonment *and* criminalization are fundamental to nation-state building as they are "also key technologies in the continuous processes that make up citizens and govern populations" (Pratt 2005: 1). However, Loyd et al. "challenge the idea that borders and prisons create safety, security, and order" (2012: 3) and posit them as a problematic method of categorizing people as, for example, 'illegal' or 'criminal'. Post-9/11 governments suggest that "because they are fighting an unconventional enemy that has the capability to strike at any time and anywhere, governments need exceptional powers to prevent future attacks" (Jones 2009b: 880). As Andreas (2003) maintains, borders are not eroding or remaining unchanged, but are being re-crafted though new state regimes to exclude certain groups, while assuring territorial access for "desirable entries" (see also Sparke 2006). In this case, sovereign power does not only operate at the border. There are many efforts to observe, sort, and characterize people in their everyday lives, such as CCTV, biometric passports, immigration policing, visas, and so on, all of which aim to mark bodies as either acceptable or as a threat (Fyfe and Bannister 1996, Jones 2009a). We are also categorized, for example within UK populations, through the implementation of mechanisms such as Anti-Social Behavior Orders (ASBOs) or public house banning orders, both of which are designed to mark those who are deemed to be a threat to the rest of society.

Ridgley (2008) describes how, eight weeks after 9/11 took place, US Attorney General John Ashcroft authorized the questioning of around 5,000 Middle Eastern men, many on temporary visas in the United States. Although they were not suspected of any crime, they were selected because they matched "criteria of persons who might have knowledge of foreign-based terrorists" according to their gender, age, and national origin (Office of the Attorney General 2001: 1). The unlawful action of the government based on stereotypes was called into question by civil liberties and immigrant rights groups who were concerned about racial profiling, mass detentions, and the targeting of immigrant communities in the post-9/11 security climate. Furthermore, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba—a detention center for those suspected of terrorist activities, which suspends the rule of law—bears striking similarities to the concentration camps holding Jews, Romani Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, and many others, run by Nazis in World War Two. Guantánamo Bay acts as a cornerstone for a regime in which liberal movement and multiculturalism poses a threat to the political authority of the state (McClintock 2009).

As such, strategies aimed at spatial exclusion are proliferating across contemporary societies. In the US, over 1.3 million people were in state or federal prisons in 2000, up from 218,000 in 1974 (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000: table 6.27). This massive expansion of the prison system is a strategy that is being emulated by other countries with high numbers of prisoners, such as China and the UK. The processes of locking people up, and the segregation that it entails, renders incarceration a common and everyday practice (Gill 2009: 187). Yet, this is the obvious method of segregating space and creating boundaries within a national space. Other literature concerning the regulation of the built environment calls for focus upon architectural forms of socio-spatial exclusion, such as the methods used in urban spaces to channel social undesirables. These include the fences, gates, walls, surveillance, and armed security which protect luxury areas in cities such as São

Paulo, London, or Los Angeles (Caldeira 2000, Crawford 2008, Davis 1998, Harcourt 2005, Lynch 2001). Furthermore, previously-lost methods of criminal justice such as banishment are being re-imagined as concepts in the contemporary world (Beckett and Herbert 2010), and other mechanisms such as sex offender registration (Tewksbury 2002) emerge as hybrid tools to control populations. In Seattle, for example, the adoption of 'civility codes' and 'trespass admonishments', which prevented panhandling, sitting on sidewalks and camping; and 'drug-free zones' and 'prostitution-free zones' imposed in Portland, Oregon compelled certain people to avoid certain places for a period of time. Prior to the implementation of these ordinances, authorities needed probable cause, such as a criminal offence, to remove individuals from public space. Now, the Seattle authorities authorize police and parks officials to exclude alleged rule violators without providing any evidence of wrong-doing—effectively 'banishing' the homeless from public spaces (Beckett and Herbert 2010: 6). As Beckett and Herbert (2010) rightly identify, the rationale of banishment divides the world neatly into orderly and disorderly, identifying the latter spaces as those rife with crime and vice.

However, in spite of these efforts, concerns about the effective segregation of law-breakers from the rest of society derive from the presentation of the physical boundary of the prison as an exchange point. The prison walls also act a border for other transactions, both legitimate and illegitimate. A prison sentence does not usually equate to complete isolation. Ties to the outside world are genuinely allowed, and are promoted by the flow of both people and objects such as gifts, letters, and photographs. However, there are also many other illegal interactions such as the presence of contraband mobile phones or drugs, recruitment of gang members, and even escape attempts, which illustrate that the border is neither as solid nor regulated as the directors of the penal system would hope. In response to this, in terms of the prison itself, location is often used to further deepen the boundary between carceral space the

rest of society. Dartmoor prison located on barren moorland in Devon, England remains as one of these examples, as does Peterhead Prison, a lonely granite fortress in Scotland towering above a crag into the North Sea many miles from the nearest town (Sparks 2002). The architecture of the buildings themselves is often used to further enforce the prison/non-prison divide. Traditionally, prisons exhibited a threatening exterior, which was often decorated by gargoyles or figures pictured behind bars. This meant that as well as the bricks constituting a physical boundary, the public could still be reminded of the somber nature of the building and the detrimental aspects of committing crimes through the metaphorical juxtaposition with law-abiding society (Pratt 2002: 37).

Acknowledgement of the importance of spatial boundaries manifested itself in the architecture within prison as well. The 'separate system' relied heavily upon penal architecture to enforce a regime of total cellular separation (Henriques 1972, Ogborn 1995: 301). This system followed a well-defined rationale about particular ideas about 'society' and the 'individual'. As well as concerns about poor ventilation, lack of hygiene and the spread of 'gaol fever' for example, depravity (corrupt acts or practices) was considered to be something that could cause some kind of moral infection or contamination. By using architecture and separating practices in the daily regime to reduce contact, both physical and moral contamination of new prison arrivals by more 'hardened' criminals could be eliminated (Fiddler 2010, Ogborn 1995: 301).

Aside from physically separating prisons from law-abiding society, one of the main aims of imprisonment is to furnish individuals with skills that enable to them to manage the transition from prison to society successfully upon release. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore offender employment programs as one mechanism that penal authorities implement in order to facilitate the successful re-integration of prisoners with outside society. As I will argue, there are many occasions whereby prisoners gain skills that enable them to

effectively—that is, permanently—cross the prison border. However, what is also apparent, is a number of attachments to the prison 'home' that allow us to posit the prison walls as a two-way boundary, across which individuals often participate in a cycle of leaving and return.

Working *With* and *In* the 'Outside'

One of the methods by which offenders and those released from prison can reassert some of their liberties, perform obligations of good citizenship and therefore successfully negotiate a permanent crossing to the world outside of prison is in employment. In order to ground this discussion, I draw upon research carried out with two different employment schemes specifically targeting prisoners at various stages in their sentences[1]. The first is the Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau (hereafter OxCAB), which employs prisoners who are permitted daily release from HMP Springhill to work as prisoner-advisers. Secondly, I discuss Blue Sky Development and Regeneration, which employs those released from prison on a six-month paid contract. In doing so, I critique the method in which schemes designed to allow prisoners and ex-offenders training in work-based environments merely serve to embody wider contemporary work ethics. These employments also reflect societal expectations of modern citizenship (in general) and the mechanisms via which penal authorities negotiate a particular rendering of these as they seek to create/recreate/reform

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[1] A number of different companies targeting offender employment as a means of rehabilitation were approached via email or written correspondence. Those detailed in this chapter represent two case studies where I received invitation for further research. Original intentions were to recruit participants from those currently incarcerated *within* UK institutions to research prisoner attachment to 'home'. However, due to the legal and ethical issues surrounding access to this environment—chiefly the prisoners' inability to give non-coerced informed consent— this chapter uses empirical evidence obtained from two of the companies that responded to my call for participants.

'ideal' workers/citizens who are/were subject to a penal system of punishment and rehabilitation.

OxCAB developed the idea of training serving prisoners to become volunteer citizens' advisers in order to increase capacity and meet growing demand. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) delivers advice services from over 3,500 community locations in England and Wales, run by 382 individual charities. The membership organization of the bureau is run by Citizens Advice, which is itself a registered charity. Following much debate, prisoners at HMP Springhill are now able to become Citizen Advisers. Springhill is one of the country's twelve category D^2 open prisons, to which male prisoners at the lowest level of risk are allocated. It does not take sex offenders or arsonists. Owing to the fact that people who visit the CAB are also, often, vulnerable members of society, the selection of prisoners is rigorous and they must comply with certain eligibility requirements. Alongside other volunteer advisers, their training and performance monitoring is on-going (Interview, facilitator, January 12, 2012). Prisoners are available on a full-time basis and typically work four times as many hours as other volunteers. As such, most prisoner volunteers complete their training more quickly than traditional volunteers (within 6-8 weeks) and the OxCAB can now give advice to many more people than ever before.

Research was also conducted with Blue Sky Development and Regeneration, in the Wakefield branch located in West Yorkshire in England. Working as a viable business venture, Blue Sky tenders for commercial contracts from soft-landscaping (designing elements of a landscape such as fencing and planting) through to recycling and ground-working (digging foundations and other under-support for various types of structures). The

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[2] Category D prisons are known as 'open' institutions, offering much greater levels of freedom including day release. Category A and B prisoners present the greatest security risk, whereas individuals who are categorised C prisoners are those who cannot be trusted in open conditions but are unlikely to try to escape.

company reinvests income into providing six-month contracts specifically for those with a criminal record who are involved with their local Probation Trust. Originally designed as a rehabilitative scheme through the Future Jobs Fund, Blue Sky has developed into a profitable company, with schemes such as recycling plants generating profits for the Local Authority of £120,000 per annum. However, more importantly alongside the work experience, employees are supported in CV building and given the opportunities to do training courses for such things as construction-machinery operation and building-site safety, each costing as much as £800 per person (Interview, facilitator, August 11, 2011).

In the first 18 months of the project, Blue Sky Wakefield helped 19 ex-prisoners successfully finish their employment contracts. For many, this type of work was a new challenge, unlike any work they had carried out before. But, what is overwhelmingly apparent from those who I spoke to, is the ethos of care and future well-being that is promoted by the project. Facilitators highlighted the main focus to be getting employees back onto the first rung of the ladder to a stable routine of work and earning a steady income—a package attractive enough to prevent them from reoffending.

In both the cases of Blue Sky and OxCAB, focus groups were carried out in the workplace with participants who had volunteered and been selected by the company themselves[3]. Conversations were taped, with permission from the participant, and later transcribed and coded using the key themes of my wider doctoral research focusing upon engagements across the prison/non-prison boundary—namely penal spaces, penal identities, rehabilitation, and constructions of 'home' (either on the 'inside' or the 'outside'). Participants' names are anonymized, although the case studies of Blue Sky and OxCAB are not, as identification was requested owing to the companies setting a precedent for other

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[3] All of my participants were male. HMP Springhill is a male prison. Furthermore, although Blue Sky does also employ female ex-offenders, none were available to participate in the interviews.

offender/ex-offender-employment-schemes, and interviewees agreed to be anonymized in conjunction.

Crossing the Border to the 'Outside'

As findings by Graffam et al (2005) suggest, gaining paid employment upon release lowers the rate of reconviction. Therefore, getting a job can be highly significant in helping ex-offenders reintegrate into society outside of prison. My interviewees recognize that contributing to tax, National Insurance and paying their way, rather than society paying for them, all plays a part in their process of normalization. Barke (2001) notes the emotional importance of dwelling in a private, domestic property—allowing individuals the freedom from the critical gaze of society. In a similar way, employment generates an ability to achieve both reintegration into the mechanisms of capitalism, *and* the respect of family members through the wages it provides. At OxCAB, Prisoner-advisers relish the feeling of 'fitting in' with other, non-prisoner colleagues, and express a great enjoyment at having a conventional '9 to 5' working day outside of the prison environment. Indeed, the importance of achieving regular work in the future in order to legitimately provide for themselves and their families is a fundamental concern of both groups of participants. As the employees at Blue Sky explain:

> **Ben:** It makes it look better, doesn't it, when the family's saying "oh what are you doing now?"
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> **Steve:** It makes you feel better doesn't it? … Yeah, cause you can say "yeah I'm working now". "Aw right good, where are you working?" Instead of saying, "oh yeah, [nothing], just the usual on the dole, sat at home".
>
> **Chris:** Yeah it gives you that image that you're going out and working I think…

Rich: You feel better within yourself as well … looked up to by my missus and my baby … And you can afford things, you can afford to actually go out and do things … buy my baby things, and buy him nice clothes rather than having nothing. **(Focus Group Blue Sky, August 11, 2011)**

Although the OxCAB-Springhill partnership was originally developed to aid the Bureau rather than act as a rehabilitation project, prisoners find many benefits in their preparation for release. For the prisoners interviewed, certainly, work at the CAB is very different to anything they had ever done before: their role gives them the possibility of a sense of normality and social inclusion, particularly in relation to the expectations of family and friends. The impact that a positive family relationship can have upon the reduction of recidivism is widely attended to by both scholars across a variety of disciplines (Comfort 2002, 2008, McGarrell and Hipple 2007, Mills and Codd 2008) and official reports (Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation (HMIPP) 2001, Home Office 2004, 2006). Once solid links exist they can be a major contributor to severing all ties with prison. Mills and Codd (2008) find that families generate 'resourceful social capital', which can aid in forging positive links with liberal society—particularly useful when finding gainful employment (Farrall 2004). After a string of cautions, Chris finally received a prison term, which he claims, has scared him. However, he worries that the relationships he has built up since his release would simply be destroyed if he were to be incarcerated again:

I think they just gave me [my sentence] to make me realize … an eye-opener, just to scare me and I think it has really … I was scared shitless to be honest … but no, I don't want to go back. My girlfriend's pregnant … part of me going to jail was for pinching from [a supermarket] and my girlfriend's mum got me the job … she hasn't

spoken to me for like 12 months and now we go to her house … so now, I'm building up a better relationship with her part of the family … if I went back to jail it would be for them to think "what are you doing with him?", you know what I mean? **(Focus Group Blue Sky, August 11, 2011)**

Conversely, 25-year-old Ben spent nine years in and out of prison. Similarly for him, the return to prison is undesirable as he now believes his life is much better outside of it and is motivated by the desire to perform his obligations to his family. He (like two of his other colleagues) believes that the birth of his first child changed the pattern:

Before it was just girlfriends I had to think about … but now I've got a kid, this time I went to prison all I could think about was I'd let her down, not just myself, I've let her down as well cause I'm not there to see her, you know what I mean, and look after her … I wouldn't like to go to prison now … it's alright when you've got something to do during the day, which isn't much to do, but it's something … it's when its night-time and you're just sat there with [nothing] to do and all you're doing is thinking and the only thing that kept coming into my head was my daughter … thinking I wanted to go home because I wanted to see her, and I wouldn't want to go again just to have that feeling again, that gut feeling again because it was horrible. **(Focus Group Blue Sky, August 11, 2011)**

Aside from the reward of praise from family and friends (and the stronger familial ties associated with this), these types of employment stimulate something else amongst prisoners: a sense of personal aspiration. A comparison is sometimes made with this 'intellectually-

challenging' employment and 'mundane' or 'mediocre' jobs (repetitive and low-skilled tasks such as laundry work) that are typically deemed appropriate for the prisoner:

> **Liam:** I've never been in this line of work … building sites, warehouses, things like that, but … I've now discovered … that it is something that I enjoy doing, compared to what I was doing before, which was something that I didn't like doing … so, yes … I've discovered something new about myself … I didn't think I was into this sort of thing but now, obviously, I've changed completely.
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> **Oliver:** What I like about this here is that it's not mediocre work … Some of the community work jobs that people do are a bit … mundane if you like, they have to steam and press clothes, that sort of thing. **(Focus Group OxCAB, January 12, 2012)**

The CAB also aims to equip people with the knowledge required to deal with any problems they face, as well as endeavouring to shape the way policies influence daily lives. According to Citizens Advice, their service provides "free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities" (2012, no page). It is interesting that in this case, then, that the OxCAB is staffed by prisoners, who society posits as *not-good* citizens (Thompson 2000). And, interviewees spoke about the development of their personal knowledge database as a result of their work experience; particularly their ability to find sources of support and information for themselves following future release. Facilitators explained scenarios where prisoner-advisers are asked to help with form filling and make suggestions about appropriate organizations for their fellow inmates. In this

respect, it can be argued that this turns the CAB itself into a training ground, both in terms of the users and the prisoner-advisers themselves.

Both of these examples illustrate the different methods by which prisoners may negotiate a successful, permanent border crossing from carceral spaces to liberal society outside. However, not all prisoners effectively enact these methods and there are a variety of reasons why certain offenders will return to prison. In the next section of this chapter, I address a number of barriers to re-integration (that may prompt a return journey through the prison gate), namely, prisoners' attachment to the prison 'home'.

The Prison 'Home': A Barrier to Re-Integration

According to figures from the Ministry of Justice, in the quarter ending September 2011, over 32,000 first-time receptions were made to the prison system in England and Wales (see Table 9.1). During this same time, there were also nearly 22,000 offenders discharged from determinate sentences. Of those, 2,500 had served more than four years in prison. This means, that in addition to the prison/society relationship being highly fluid with numerous networks, there is a large number of people re-entering society having spent a significant time incarcerated within the specific prison lifestyle.

[insert Table 9.1 here—portrait]

There is a very clear relationship between recidivism and high levels of ex-offender unemployment. Ex-offenders face many difficulties when seeking employment including poor reading, writing and numeracy skills; behavioral and health problems; debt and homelessness; as well as discrimination by employers (Webster et al. 2001). According to Opperman, 50 percent of prisoners cannot read and write or do basic mathematics. Hence,

half of the prison population is lacking in the skills required for 96 per cent of jobs (2012: 24). Unemployment among offenders is very high. A 1997 UK study found that employment of offenders under probation was only 21 percent compared to around 60 percent of the general population (Mair and May 1997). Fletcher et al. (1998) reported that ex-prisoners are said to comprise between 2 and 3 percent of the average monthly inflow to the unemployment pool. Aside from the personal issues that lack of a job may create, research highlights the impact of this upon reoffending. Although there is little direct evidence of a causal relationship between unemployment and crime, studies at the individual level reveal that periods of unemployment are related to periods of offending (Farrington 1996) and reconviction (May 1999). Currently, recidivism in the UK is of serious concern[4], with more than a third of those released from prison committing another offence within the first year[5] (Ministry of Justice (MoJ) 2011). As such, the prison wall can be posited as a kind of border, with both 'migrants' and 'returnees' crossing in both directions for different lengths of time.

Furthermore, with many jobs in the UK requiring a criminal records check, the offence is likely to have significant logistical and legal effects upon the life of the ex-offender—acting as a permanent reminder of their incarceration. For many prisoner volunteers, the reference from OxCAB is a major contributing factor to their decision to participate, as it goes a long way to prove their credentials to potential employers, particularly in the face of the decreased opportunities owing to their criminal record:

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[4] Although it might be useful, raw reoffending rates between countries should not be directly compared as there are a range of underlying differences in the justice systems and the methods of calculation (See Ministry of Justice (MoJ) 2010. *Compendium of Reoffending Statistics and Analysis: Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin.* London: Home Office).

[5] The report found that 39.3 percent of adults were re-convicted. This is defined as offences committed in a one year follow-up period and convicted within the follow up period or a further six month waiting period.

Liam: … the fact that it's good for future references … you're going to do well to get a reference when you leave prison, because obviously you've got the thing of having a criminal record, coming out of prison to get a job with employers not wanting to take you on, so obviously if you've done this you've got a head start, haven't you? **(Focus Group OxCAB, January 12, 2012)**

The potential negative consequences of being exposed as a former prisoner were raised as a concern by many participants. For example, it is clear that there remains a necessity for anonymity for staff who are prisoners to be retained with regards to members of the public using the Bureau. Although it is advertised that the branch acts in partnership with Springhill, the prisoner-advisers have never been individually identified as such to any clients. When asked to comment on anonymity and disclosure, the comments were varied:

Oliver: I think it's quite important, but not to the people who volunteer … they might not like prisoners giving them advice.

Liam: I don't mind them knowing. They might look at it as … you're giving back and you're changing your life around. **(Focus Group OxCAB, January 12, 2012)**

Although CAB staff recalled instances where the media were critical of the use of prisoners as advisers (with one referring to the 'Con Advice Bureau'), facilitators maintain that the prisoner status is of no more relevance to the job role than someone's age or sexuality. This is largely based on the quality of work that CAB receives from its prisoner volunteers, the positive feedback, letters of thanks, and even monetary contributions that members of the public offer in return for the service. Certainly, the invisible nature of the

prisoner-adviser renders them able to exert their participation in ways that may not be afforded by their exposure in this environment. However, it could be argued that the elision of volunteers' identities as prisoners serves precisely to erase the 'prisoner' as 'citizen' while ensuring that he/she must simultaneously give advice to others about how to successfully participate in civic regimes.

Conversely, my interviewees describe Blue Sky's workplace, where disclosure is one of the eligibility requirements, as one where the common ground is welcoming. No-one is forced to lie to anyone, as both employees and facilitators are aware of individuals having spent time in prison. Ben and Rich also commented upon the negative treatment they encountered when visiting the Job Centre to claim their Job Seeker's Allowance, and the difficulty in finding a job they have experienced.

> **Rich**: They treat you like you're trashy on that Job Seekers' [allowance] …
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> **Ben**: … you go in and they just talk down to you. They know you're on the dole, they know you're coming to sign on, you're getting your money for [nothing] … They like really belittle you and talk down to you …
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> **Rich**: And they always say to you "Why haven't you found a job, there's all these jobs out there?" … but it's like you apply for hundreds and hundreds of jobs and they don't understand that not every job you are going to get. **(Focus Group Blue Sky, August 11, 2011)**

I note here that social processes of inclusion and exclusion critically depend on the categorization of people as belonging and non-belonging (Ralph and Staeheli 2011: 523). However, this categorization is less about the subjective feelings of the individual and more about powerful actors such as societal elites, and political authority figures, for example,

saying who belongs and who does not (Castles and Davidson 2000, Crowley 1999, Ilcan 2002). Membership must be validated (Young 2011). Drawing upon Probyn (1996), ex-offenders clearly exist between two interrelated states that together define belonging: that of 'be'-ing, and that of 'longing'. There is a definite antagonism between the actual and idealized meaning of home (Ralph 2009). It is unsettling for those released from prison to discover that, despite every effort to sever all ties to carceral spaces, they may no longer belong in the place they always called their *home*. The reality of return to life outside prison may be far from the one that was dreamt about. For some, this may create a disenchantment, but more importantly, forces others "to revise their self-identities and articulate a liminal status as both insiders and outsiders" (Ralph and Staeheli 2011: 523).

In recent years, geographies of home have come to be theorized as both material and symbolic, located on the threshold between past memories, the everyday present and future dreams and fears (Blunt and Varley 2004). In similar vein, Baer (2005) illustrates the manner in which prisoners 'decorate' their cells with items considered mundane in the 'outside', in order to provide a material link to the non-prison world. Equally, for migrants, the desire to pin down identities to a fixed home provides a stable sense of self in a world characterized by flux (Conway 2005). This flux is intrinsic to my on-going research surrounding the relationship, and more specifically the 'boundary traffic,' between prison and society (Turner 2013).

Scholars problematize notions of home as a fixed entity or physical dwelling place (Brettell 2006, Datta 2010). Instead, home is linked to local networks and communities, or even national identities through ideologies and practices with both humans and non-humans (Jacobs and Smith 2008, McDowell 1997, Miller, Miller 2001). Home is also a threshold-crossing concept, traversing the boundaries across time/space. It is therefore messy, mobile, blurred and confused (Ahmed et al. 2003, Nowicka 2007). For Ralph and Staeheli, "the

challenge … is to conceptualize the simultaneity of home as sedentarist and as mobile"

(2011: 518). Therefore, the concept of home can be both dynamic *and* moored—a location,

or a set of relationships that shape identities and feelings of belonging. Mobility *and* stasis,

displacement *and* placement, as well as roots *and* routes go into the making of home (Clifford

1997, Gustafson 2001). This ambiguity about 'home' is well researched, positing the

possibility of multiple homes (Constable 1999, Ní Laoire 2007, 2008a, 2008b).

Recent work considers the generation of 'hybrid' identities (Brubaker and Cooper

2000, Walter 2004, 2006, Yau 2007). Home, therefore, incorporates both a lived and longed

for state (Ralph and Staeheli 2011: 522). Fluid, fragmented or partial identities do not exclude

the desire for an integrated, whole and stable identification with home (Varley 2008, Young

1997). This is of particular interest when we consider penal spaces, and the generation of a

hybrid attachment to both prison and the outside community they are released into.

Participants also acknowledged the way that ex-offenders generate attachment to a prison

'homeland', which results in further inability to forge positive links with the communities

they are released into—making a return journey across the prison/non-prison border all the

more likely.

Scholars such as Hayner and Ash (1939) illustrate the informal rules created by

inmate hierarchies, or gang allegiances, which exist alongside those of the administration.

Other attachments may include adhering to prison jargon—which often becomes a

subconscious activity (Fox 1999). They might become part of the system of supply and

demand that is prominent in prison life, where everyday objects such as the foil in sweet

wrappers become valuable trading commodities due to their alternative use as aids in drug-

taking (Valentine and Longstaff 1998). This 'inside' world soon becomes a domestic regime,

a way of life, and in many cases a 'home'—something that became clear to me even through

the conversational language used when talking about the prison. On one occasion, an unintentional use of the word 'home' sparked discussion:

> **JT:** And so when you get home, oh sorry, I've said it again ...
>
> **Ian:** [laughs]
>
> **Oliver:** It's alright it is home.
>
> **Liam:** I find myself saying that all the time ... when I'm on home leave, for instance D-cat prisoners can go home, I say to the missus or whatever, "I've got to go home [back to prison] tomorrow", I'm at home but I still say it. **(Focus Group OxCAB, January 12, 2012)**

However, for some, the ambivalence towards the prison environment is clear. Ben described to me how he settles fairly quickly into the routine of prison life, always easily achieving the most sought-after jobs, and learning to do what was necessary to "make it look good". The former-prisoners are quick to recognize the leniencies of the prison environment, with one describing it as "a boarding school where you just don't get to go home at the weekend". When I asked Ben if he wanted to go back he said not seeing his daughter and losing his job would be the only downside to it. Harman et al. (2007), for example, use evidence sourced from wives of incarcerated prisoners who are affronted and dismayed at the degree of free time and relaxation that their male partners enjoy when in prison, at precisely the time when they are having to manage both the family finances and the children themselves. There is also a clear recognition of the fact that some of the people who experienced prison found it to be less harsh than their original pre-conceptions. May and Wood (2005) demonstrate that many American prisoners would prefer to go to prison than do community service, house arrest or 'boot camp' when offered the choice. Furthermore, there

are others who purposefully make prison a return destination if they are not succeeding in the outside world upon release. Prisoners can receive basic needs, such as shelter and food, but may also be offered opportunities not enjoyed by some people on the 'outside', such as enhanced access to education (Cohen 2012) or a social network that they might lack elsewhere (Howerton et al. 2009). As such, a return journey to a homeland widely defined as problematic and undesirable may still exhibit appeal for this group of people.

For ex-prisoners, it seems they are torn. As discussed earlier in the chapter, prisoners may have families on the outside, often aiding their reintegration into liberal society. However, the friendships or 'families' that are often metaphorically created in prison can also be strong—particularly for those with dysfunctional upbringings and other difficulties with their biological kin. This sense of ambiguity comes when prisoners exhibit a sense of allegiance with the other inmates. This sense of allegiance is something I explored with my interviewees insofar as it makes Blue Sky something of a nurturing environment; its employees can remain within the comfort blanket of likeminded people for the daunting and often-difficult first six-months after release. Rich comments:

> I don't know, there just seems to be something between people, because they've done the same kind of thing … it's not like we start a new job and everyone's law abiding citizens and none of them have seen police unless they've phoned 'em, we're all the same so when we come to this job … you know that he's been in prison and he has, so you feel comfortable … **(Focus Group Blue Sky, August 11, 2011)**

Other recent work within a carceral setting notes particularly how prison may constitute a positive place of friendship (Caine 2006), or generate a hybrid form of prisoner citizenship (Turner 2012). Bronson (2008) observed the intense friendships that are forged

within the prison environment, with commonalities provided by jobs on the outside, religions, birthplace or hobbies. These friendships also become intensified by the close contact of the penal environment, facilitating relationships as strong as familial ties:

> **Jake:** Three or four guys in here I consider *almost like blood brothers*. Like they're real relatives. I know I could tell them anything, show them any side of me, whatever (Bronson 2008: 79, emphasis added).

As such, these relationships further complicate the engagements by prisoners with the prison/non-prison boundary—creating a depth to the border that exists well beyond the prison gate—both blurring its solid definition and reproducing it as a two-way interface between the opposing sides.

Conclusion

In this chapter I consider the prison as one, among many, manifestations of a border. This is a boundary different to that crossed by other populations—in scale, legality, expectation, etc.—meaning that the prisoner allows us to move away from the typical populations encountered in border studies to consider the novel power relationships that ensue as this quite particular boundary between 'outside' and 'carceral' space is crossed (and often blurred). By illustrating the complexities of this situation in relation to prisoner employment programs I present one way in which we can re-conceptualize traditional notions of the border in order to unravel the numerous scales, the differing boundaries and multiple power-space geometries that operate when different types of people move across and between variously defined territorial/legal borders.

In particular, this chapter considers that, while prison authorities would aim to produce ex-offenders that successfully negotiate a permanent border crossing from prison to society, high levels of recidivism in the UK are indicative of the number of individuals who are more likely to participate in a frequent cycle of leaving and returning. Prisoners and ex-offenders may generate a hybrid attachment to both prison and the outside community into which they are released. However, those like OxCAB and Blue Sky recognize the support of peers that ex-offenders may subconsciously require during a period in their lives where a sense of 'home' might be ambiguous. Trapped between the place that they want to belong to and the one that binds them, the time spent in prison may indeed render them ever more absent from the societies they are released into, with their 'prison home' remaining ever present in their everyday lives. The sentiment is worrying, as one interviewee commented, "Prison has totally changed me … but, deep down, you can never really leave" (Focus Group Blue Sky, 11 August 2011).

In view of this, however counter-intuitive they seem, prisoners and ex-prisoners may hold positive attitudes to prison, and this should be recognized by key agents in the penal system in order to produce a "person-centered approach to supporting resettlement" (Howerton et al. 2009: 458). In this way, perhaps paying attention to the hybridity of both 'home' and prisoner-migrant may facilitate the reintegration from 'inside' to 'outside' more effectively, that is, a one-way journey through the prison gate to liberal society.

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