

REFEREED ARTICLE

Identities, Education and Reentry (Part One of Two): Identities and Performative Spaces

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Abstract

This is part one of a two-part interdisciplinary paper that examines the various forces (discourses and institutional processes) that shape prisoner-student identities. Discourses of officers from a correctional website serve as a limited, single case study of discourses that ascribe dehumanized, stigmatized identities to “the prisoner.” Two critical concepts, performative spaces and identity enclosures, are purposed as potential critical, emancipatory terms to explore the prisoner-student identity work that occurs in schools and elsewhere in prison. This paper is guided by the effort to assist teachers to act as transformative intellectuals in prisons and closed-custody settings by becoming more aware of the multilayered contexts—the politics of location—that undergird their work. Seeing the “bigger picture” has implications for how and what educators teach in prison settings and, perhaps, why education works to facilitate reentry. This paper is grounded in normalization theory. Normalization theorists believe prisons can facilitate reentry when they mirror important dimensions of outside life. The performance of multiple, contextualized identities, considered here and examined in more detail in a forthcoming article, serves as an example of how educators mirror “normal” life by facilitating the performance of different roles for prisoners on the inside.

Keywords: *Discourse; identity enclosure; institutionalization; performative spaces; prisonization; labeling theory; education; stigma; politics of location; transformative intellectual.*

Introduction

This is part one of a two-part essay that explores the particular identities of prisoners/students along with their subject positions of identification and (dis)identification within the specific institutional settings of the prison. The concept of performative spaces, adopted from Goffman’s (1959) work on identity as performance, is introduced in this paper; it is a concept that supports the fluidity of positions that prisoner-students occupy. Ideally, a performative space is a social and physical space where persons experience freedom to present or perform new identities and/or creatively reshape old ones. It is shaped by an emancipatory interest that alerts educators to the multiple constructions of identity, and implicitly, to the transformative possibilities for prisoners-as-students in everyday interactions, pedagogy and curriculum. The concept of identity enclosures conversely alerts educators to consider how, when, where and why prisons generally do not work when they attempt to transform criminal identities without recognition of the whole person.

In part two of this paper (forthcoming), I shall explore how educators intuitively and consciously resist identity enclosures. They create social spaces for prisoners to approximate normal, multiple identities typical of everyday life on the outside. I shall provide examples of ways educators like Jan Walker (2004) provide the social spaces for prisoners to assume multiple identities or roles, such as “son, father, brother, uncle, hus-

band or partner, lover, employee” (p.301).

In this essay I am most concerned with social rather than “felt” identity formation. In other words, I do not offer much by way of the prisoner’s “deeper” sense of self as a result of the institutional processes to which the prisoner is subjected. This is consistent with Goffman’s (1963/1986) work on stigma where he writes:

In this essay an attempt has been made to distinguish between social and personal identity. Both types of identity can be better understood by bracketing them together and contrasting them with what Erikson and others have called ‘ego’ or ‘felt’ identity, namely, the subjective sense of his own situation and his own continuity and character than an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences. (p. 105)

It is the plasticity or fluidity of identity that is underscored in the essay, which is also influenced by communication theorists like Adler, Rodman and Hutchinson (2012) who conflate roles and identities and thereby keep to the socially constructed “surface” of things. (p. 83) Nevertheless, there are suggestions that social identity impacts the felt identity.

Even Goffman (1963/1986) however, does not ignore some of the internal effects of negative interactions with the stigmatized who, “lacking the salutary feedback of daily social intercourse with others, the self-isolate can become suspicious, depressed, hostile, anxious, and bewildered” (p. 13). We know from our own

experience how a failed bid for identity or a failed performance of a role can have devastating consequences on one's identity and self-concept. As I argue in this essay, the imposition of a negative stigmatized role damages the felt identities of prisoners. As one prisoner notes: the "problem with prisons comes down to no recognition of your being" (cited in Rhodes, 2004, p.175). One may lose face due to a faulty performance which then influences future performances, roles, expectations—narrowing possibilities. In academia, the educator who stumbles walking into the classroom, who blanks on a lecture or whose voice cracks unexpectedly, experiences the performance as a personal tragedy. From the research we are aware, too, that when educators label and lower expectations of students (stigmatize them), students perform accordingly (Jussium, 1989).

In the forthcoming second part of this essay, I draw upon the literature related to the concept of possible selves as a concept more closely related to the felt identity of persons. Possible selves "refers to the future-oriented components of the self-concept" (Rossiter, 2007, p. 5). This term is much narrower than the ecological term *performative spaces*, where many more situational factors impacting identity formation are considered as elements of the politics of location.

Prison Education and The Politics of Location

Teaching in prisons and traditional schools is alienating, isolating and exhausting work. As a result, "teachers labor in the public schools under organizational constraints and ideological conditions that leave them little time for collective work and critical pursuits." They work in "cellular structures and have few opportunities to teach with others." They "have little say of the selection, organization, and distribution of teaching materials" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 43). Little wonder, then, that teachers forget that schooling is a social and political activity occurring in "a central terrain where power and politics operate out of a dialectical relationship between individuals and groups, who function within specific historical conditions and structural constraints as well as within cultural forms and ideologies that are the basis for contradictions and struggles" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 36). In prisons, these contradictions and struggles seem more evident because schooling is situated in a field where students are also prisoners burdened by stigma manufactured in total institutions designed to hold them against their will.

Stephen Duguid (1998), a Canadian prison educator, points out how: "One can at times talk about education abstracted from society, politics and even from schools, or at least pretend to, but in the field of prison education the context is pervasive" (p. 18). It is quite a challenge to unpack the complex, multi-layered prison school terrain but Gee (2000-2001) believes that one way to examine how schools work is to focus on student identity formation. With identity construction as the focus, researchers can unveil discourses, illuminate the dynamics of power, and reflect on pedagogy, cur-

riculum and evaluation.

Gee's work on identity can be expanded with input from critical pedagogy and feminist epistemology. According to Giroux (1994), a critical pedagogy should undertake an analysis of the ". . . the specific institutional setting in which the educational activity takes place;" and the "self-reflexivity regarding the particular identities of the educators and students who collectively undertake this activity" (p.30). The knowledge produced by this analysis is tentative, partial; "it is always already contestable and by definition is not the knowledge of the other as the other would know herself or himself" (Giroux, 1994, p. 301). This paper only offers a glimpse then, at the knowledge and experience of the prisoner in prisons. But perhaps it is a start.

Feminist epistemology similarly supports a partial knowledge based on one's social, physical, and cultural locations. Identity formation and analysis is central to developing a politics of location. Identities are shaped in myriad of ways. Identity positions involve:

. . . positionings in time and space which have specific effects and consequences, or 'politics,' that need to be analyzed and historicized. Structurally, a location is marked by parameters of social inequality such as gender, 'race', class, religion, sexuality and geopolitical location and their attending subject positions of identification and dis-identification, material conditions, privileges and feelings as well as 'conceptual resources . . . to represent and interpret these relations.'" (Lorenz-Myer, 2014, p. 2-3)

Rather than setting aside the differences between traditional and prison education programs, this paper explores the tensions—especially the positionings—that emerge in this unique setting. The most obvious tension in prison education resides in the fact that students are also prisoners; this other identity coexists with and in some cases colonizes their student identity. To deny the student's "prisoner" identity is to abstract from prison education a defining context and to render education less pertinent to prisoners. Educators must be attuned to this fact if their pedagogical and curricular efforts in the prison house are to support authentic and relevant forms of teaching grounded in the experiences of the student as Muth (2008a; 2008b) suggests. If educators hope to address the emotional needs of their students (Mageehon, 2006), or if they want to fashion positive school cultures in niches (Seymour, 1977/1992,), they must appreciate the deep and damaging existential effects of prisons on students.

Moreover, it is important for educators to understand the consequences of their educative efforts. With identity as a lens, we might shed some light on "what works" (Martinson, 1974) in education to reduce recidivism rates and facilitate reentry, a prevalent theme in the program literature (Chappell, 2004; Clements, 2004; Duguid, 1992; Duguid, 2000; Fabiano, 1991; Harer, 1995; Owens 2009; Seashore, Haberfield, Irwin & Baker, 1975; Spangenberg (2004) Steurer, Smith & Tracy, 2001; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006; Vacca, 2004). This paper subscribes to many of the tenets of normalization theory, which states that prisons have a

better chance to rehabilitate prisoners if their experiences inside prison approximate those on the outside. Perhaps education programs facilitate reentry and lower recidivism rates because prisoners experience spaces in schools to perform multiple identities similar to those “normal” interactions on the street. Of course, educators must be vigilant regarding unintended alliances with the correctional system; they should not hollow out education (Costelloe & Warner, 2008) so it becomes a form of treatment, indoctrination or behavioral control or as Marsh (1982) notes, a partner, patsy or panacea for corrections. The prisoner’s perspective of educative programs is essential to their success. Educators must simultaneously resist assimilation by the correctional system because prisoners “will dismiss the program as yet another social therapy exercise.” On the other hand, if educators believe that all they need to do is “just teach,” they will find themselves too distant from the “social reality of the prison and prisoner and fail to provide sufficient support for the development of a cohesive, identifiable scholastic community of prisoners” (Knights, 1982, cited in Duguid, 1998, p.29). Behan (2006), for example, would have adult educators create spaces in which adults can discuss the “type of society we live in and kind of world we wish to create” (p. 6). Ignoring the social reality of prison and prisoner means that teachers will narrow their educational practices so that schooling resembles traditional forms of teaching which has not been successful for many prisoner-students in the past.

There are good moral reasons to be concerned about the effects of education on prisoners. One humanist task of prison educators is to reduce the suffering caused by prisons because they damage prisoners (Behan, 2008), their families and communities (Petersilia, 2001) in the carceral diaspora. Educators have to be wide-awake (Greene, 1978/2013) to the moral and social consequences of their pedagogy; their decisions must be grounded in what is best for the prisoner, the community, (and yes, the good order of the institution). Without a heightened awareness of the moral imperatives of their work, prison educators are

likely to drift, to act upon impulses of expediency.

They are unlikely to identify situations as moral ones or to set themselves to assessing their demands.

In such cases, it is meaningless to talk of obligations; it may be futile to speak of consequential choice. (Greene, 1978/2013, p. 206)

Again, it is important for educators to explore their own standpoints to better understand applications of their implicit philosophies of prison education. For this author, this mindfulness begins with the recognition that most of this paper is written from the perspective of a white male teacher, counselor and administrator of educational programs in adult male facilities. Readers must keep this perspective in mind as they consider my comments.

Goffman: Identity Formation and the Dramaturgical Model

Goffman (1959) transformed the perspective on iden-

tity formation when he likened it to a theatrical “performance.” The term directs our attention in interactions to “. . . the verbal and the visual, words and bodies, stasis and movement, objects and space, scripts and improvisation, intention and compulsion” (Barker, 2008, p. 107). Unlike monadic (self-contained) theories of the self which consists of predetermined skills, traits and behaviors, the self is fluid, under construction, negotiated in communication with others. As communication scholars know: “Virtually all conversations provide an arena in which communicators construct their identity” (Adler, Rodman, & Hutchinson, 2012, p. 84.).

In what appears to be a light-handed way, Goffman echoed Shakespeare’s famous line in *Hamlet*: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts.” His works have endured because his understanding of the interactional processes in social life have a succinct analytic value researchers continue to explore today. In Goffman’s model of identity-as-performance, actors wear costumes and “ornaments” (such as jewelry and tattoos) that signal to others how they are to be treated (casually or with deference, male or female). Actors perform (adequately or not), in different settings such as classrooms, boardrooms, and at social gatherings, in front of various audiences like spouses, party-goers and colleagues—according to various scripts that have been worked out in advance but which are still open to novelty and improvisation. These performances are not superficial, as we know from our own experience. A failed performance (forgetting wedding vows, making errors in front of students) may lead to a loss of face and even shattered sense of self. In contrast to monadic theories of the self, this model is ecological because it considers the politics of location as instrumental to the positioning of the sense.

In the highly differentiated physical spaces of prisons, the setting is very restrictive; there is not much of a back stage or region for prisoners to be someone else at least for a moment, or to rehearse, “to prepare a face to meet the faces that they will meet” (as T.S. Eliot would have it). Total institutions, by definition, are places where all activities occur under one roof. Normal identity work outside prisons occurs in many different contexts permitting persons to prepare themselves for multiple roles fitting to various occasions. “In the course of a single day, most people play a variety of roles and assume multiple identities: respectful student, joking friend, friendly neighbor, and helpful worker, to suggest just a few. We even play a variety of roles with the same person” (Adler, Rodman, & Hutchinson, 2012, p. 83).

The prison as social and physical setting offers prisoners few resources to perform multiple identities necessary for life on the street. They must perform before a distrustful and dangerous audience, in unmanageable, sterile and Spartan settings. The accoutrements of alternate identity formation are lacking in the prisons’ homogenized environment. In everyday life, settings (offices, apartments, rooms, street numbers) and props

(lamps, chairs, color, texture) convey to others who we are (or want to be). The depersonalized, antiseptic environment with few resources is “unmanageable,” so to speak. Prison paraphernalia, concertina wire, cameras, movement passes remind and define inhabitants as prisoners, objects of surveillance, differentiation, and incapacitation, precipitating the psychological phenomena of institutionalization. In the high-surveillance, front-stage regions of the prison, an intense management of prescribed identities is the norm, especially due to intense pressure from the prisoner subculture, a phenomena described as prisonization.

Prisons are not much of a stage for impromptu roles and novel performances. The identity stripping process and public degradation ceremonies (Garfinkel, 1956) at intake leave prisoners with few resources to perform different identities. One prisoner describes the damaging effects of the intake process and its narrowing effects on his identity: “The way we are treated when we enter prison amplifies society’s rejection. We are stripped of our personal belongings, given a number, examined, inspected, weighted, and documented” (cited in Meussling, 1984, p. 114). Another prisoner writes:

You’re an ordinary man—but something might happen tomorrow and you’d be in an institution. Would that change you into a bad person? You’d still be the same—but after you’ve had several years of everybody reminding you of what you’d done and treating you like dirt under their feet you wouldn’t be the same. (Sifakis, 2003, p. 191)

The “problem with prisons” another prisoner writes, “comes down to no recognition of your being” (cited in Rhodes, 2004, p.175). The purest form (or ideal type) of the prisoners’ lack of recognition is solitary confinement. As a metaphorical enclosure of identity, solitary is an asocial and destructive psychological space. It is truly a deprivation of others who affirm the prisoner’s presence. Human beings are social animals; to rob them of social contact is to take away their humanness, as we know from studies of “feral” children. There is too, the question of physical enclosure and its effects on identity. Prisoners have little to nothing (props, settings, costume), in their cell to manage. In theatrical terms, solitary is a soliloquy that confronts prisoners with the existential question: “To be or not to be?”

Performative Spaces

Ideally a performative space is a social and physical space where persons experience freedom to present or perform new identities and/or creatively reshape old ones. It is a space where identities are (relatively) fluid, at play, negotiable, unstable. It is an interactive social and physical space where identities are relatively unissued, problematic—requiring negotiation—rather than stereotyped or taken-for-granted. Performative spaces are likely to appear physical and cultural spaces, like borderland cities between nations, where identities and norms, cultures, practices, geographies and knowledges express the “in-betweenness” of experience. The prison visiting room is a liminal social and physical space of “in-betweenness” where prisoners experience some dis-

tance from their institutional identities (a process of identity fission), to temporarily perform as fathers, mothers or brothers. Often prisoners doing short time (between incarceration and release), “act” differently, and become model prisoners. They try to avoid illicit activities that might postpone release dates. Recently arrived prisoners (or “fish”) experience liminal tensions between their previous street identity and their novel prison identities narrowed by prison hierarchies of class, race, gender, norms, cultures and emotional climates in a process of identity fusion. Parole centers and day reporting centers are also liminal temporal sites where trajectories of past and present identities intersect.

Educators, intuitively at least, appreciate how ceremonies provide opportunities for everyone to construct new identities. Prisoners/students attending a graduation ceremony (that distinguishes the past from the present and future), enjoy the performative space that comes from being recognized as more than just a prisoner. They are offered a temporary setting (a stage or more often, the front of a classroom), and awarded legitimating documents such as diplomas and certificates. Their new identities are lauded in testimonials by teachers and students. The families’ presence at the ceremony magnifies the performative space, contributing to the definition of the situation as a normal activity affiliated with the outside; the ceremony shrouds the graduate in identities such as father, son, daughter, mother (another example of identity fusion), at least temporarily.

While identities are shaped by space and time, dialogue is the home for identity formation. “Virtually all conversations provide an arena in which communicators construct their identity” (Adler, Rodman, & Hutchinson, 2012, p.84.). While all conversations consist of identity work, some conversations highlight identities so that “identity conversations” occur. Identity work is a collaborative activity: “Identity-related communication is a kind of process theater in which we collaborate with other actors to improvise scenes in which our characters mesh” (Adler, Rodman, & Hutchinson, 2012, p. 83). Conversations with others about identity are potentially positive transformative activities that shape self-concept and lead persons “to create self-fulfilling prophecies that determine how we behave and how others respond to us” (Adler & Rodman, 2009, p.63).

Educators intuitively and consciously resist identity enclosures; they create spaces for prisoners to approximate normal, multiple identities found in everyday life on the outside. In part two of this paper (forthcoming) I will provide examples to support this argument. For the moment, I hope the single example of Jan Walker (2004), a seasoned correctional educator, will suffice. She challenges the prisoners in her class to break the confines of their narrow identities as prisoners and consider other possible (subject) positions. She describes the first few days of her program in social responsibility at McNeil Island:

We started Monday morning with a session on roles,

rules and individual responsibility. Someone always said: "Roles? We're inmates, that our role." Generally they said 'fucking inmates,' and 'fucking role,' to which I'd raise my eyebrow before saying: 'And students,' thus provoking the first argument of the day. Not all of them saw themselves as students, even though they'd signed a Pierce College registration form and wanted the promised certificate of completion and course credits from the program. We built a list from there. Son, father, brother, uncle, husband or partner, lover, employee—the list went on (p. 30).

Normalization theorists believe that prisons facilitate reentry when prisoners can be in touch with "normal" interactions and lifestyles in the community (Harer, 1975) so there is some evidence here to support how education programs engage prisoner/students in the reidentification process associated with normal identities and behaviors. The transformative nature of Walker's comment becomes clearer when contrasted with the deleterious effects of institutionalization and prisonization on prisoner's identities examined in the next section.

Institutionalization and Prisonization as Enclosures

From time to time educators say that their students are not motivated. There is little doubt that sometimes they are not. However, some of the problem lies not in their character but because prisons rob prisoner-students of agency - a belief that they can take control of their lives. At intake, the prisoners' civic identities are stripped away to better manage prisoners as anonymous and interchangeable parts in the prison machinery (Goffman, 1970). Institutional talk—like "count", "lock-up" and "feeding" time are part of the process where prisoners are transformed from subjects into objects of the institutional machinery. The surveillance apparatus establishes I-It relations between keeper and kept. The prisoner's dossier furthers the objectifying process and narrows identity to criminogenic factors. The prisoner's biography "becomes an object for intense study" (Goffman, 1970, p. 62) for the purpose of intervention and control. Prisoners-students internalize these debilitating systems of the self, undergoing institutionalization, a psychological syndrome

. . . characterized by apathy, lethargy, passivity, and the muting of self-initiative, compliance and submissiveness, dependence on institutional structure and contingencies, social withdrawal and isolation, an internalization of the norms of institutional culture, and a diminished sense of self-worth and personal value. (Johnson & Rhodes, 2007, p. 226)

Prisonization, like institutionalization, can be understood as a social process that narrows opportunities to perform differently. The term refers to the "mindset among convicts that they must defend themselves to the death or face becoming a victim. It is clearly a code of conduct that is verbalized one way or another among many prison inmates" (Sifakis, 2003, p.199). It describes how prisoners adapt to life in prisons and adopt a prison identity "by forming their own informal com-

munities, networks of power, and cultural identifications" (O'Brien, 1998, p.185).

The prisonization perspective reminds us that there is no "backstage" for prisoners to be out of character and no reprieve from the prisoner subculture with its dynamics of threat and self-defense. The private becomes public in the most inhospitable ways. Seasoned prisoners, unlike newcomers, are "toilet trained" to use a "leg in, leg out" as a life-saving technique:

An inmate must be alert for an attack at all times. Killers know that the best time to catch an inmate off guard is when he or she is sitting on the toilet in his or her cell. . . . The most important survival tack is for an inmate to sit on the toilet with one leg completely free of clothes. Thus, he or she at least can jump up and defend him or herself. If, however, both legs are in clothes, the inmate will trip when it is a surprise attack and, helpless on the floor, make an even easier target for a deadly knife onslaught. (Sifakis, 2003, p.260)

Newly-arrived prisoners, immediately entangled in the dynamics of prisonization, waste little time fashioning a prison identity (Carceral, 2004) to fit into the prisoner culture. In their bids for collective approval from other inmates, prisoners "appropriate, distort and recast the values of the prison and disciplinary society" (O'Brien, 1998, p.185) adopting coded vocabularies, acquiring tattoos, and participating in social networks based on homosexual relations. To be a member of this oppositional culture, prisoners are expected to participate in internal social movements like riots and strikes, to resist cell extractions and to offer other prisoners at least a "show" of resistance to the system.

Prisonization is supported by the deprivations common in prisons. Membership in the prisoner collective includes systematically distorted interactions with other prisoners along lines of respect, power, bravado, and physical force (O'Brien 1998, p.184). These interactions are the "natural" outcome of the few resources described such as the loss of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and personal security (Skyes, 1958/1970). Prisonization and deprivation have equal effects on identity because these cultural factors offer prisoners few institutional resources to perform different and nuanced identities. Even shows of resistance and attempts at opposition reproduce the dominant institutional discourse and its construction of prisoner identities:

. . . the prisoner vigorously takes up, argues, uses and contests the issues and forces bearing down on him, protesting against the assumption he is a gang member, comparing himself to 'worse' inmates, describing how his own behavior has differed depending on context, making careful distinctions among correctional workers, and writing a letter of protest to the superintendent. He responds to the fact that classification is both a set of rules that governs the sorting of inmates and a space of negotiation in which a variety of assumptions about learning and behavior are in play. . . . Issues of self-defense, rules about gang affiliation, efforts to avoid damaging

jackets, and punishment are all on the table. On the table also is psychiatry, for whatever its diagnostic categories may mean outside prison, inside they provide an additional way to make sense of how the prisoner 'carries himself'. (Rhodes, 2004, pp. 138-9)

There is little doubt, then, that prisoners as students are far from being "blank slates" that we can rewrite with traditional education. They are complex, nuanced human beings, their identities striated by institutional practices, grated by policies and shaped by the material of confinement. In the next section I consider in more detail how identities are enclosed by institutional discourses that circumscribe prisoner performances by citing examples from a correctional website. Though I present a few examples, these limited case studies typify these officers's particular acerbic attitude towards prisoners and its negative effects on their identity as persons. The section illustrates how stigma is produced and circulated by some officers and other prison staff and it suggests one reason why prisons do not work.

Data: Officer Discourses as Enclosures

Discourse theory adopts a deterministic view of sign systems and language so that the distinction between signifier and signified is blurred. Sign systems (broadly defined) are not only "groups of signs referring to content or representation, but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Cannella, 1999, p. 38). Discourses produce "truths" about reality. They provide frameworks that construct identities, so that one is "recognized as a certain kind of person" (Gee, 2000-2001, p.99) and not someone else.

What gives these [discursive] formations their structuring quality are the particular conditions which made and still made them possible. These 'rules of formation of a discursive formation' include, so far as the objects they allow to be addressed are concerned, each of the following: the social or institutional contexts they allow to be addressed are concerned, often as the loci or sources of concern of some kind; the social identities of those who have or gain authority to pronounce on such problems and their causes; and the 'grids of specification', the intellectual templates so to speak, which are used to separate off the particular objects of concern from the many others with which each is intertwined with reality (Scott & Marshall, 2009, p. 182).

The officers, supported by the institutional apparatus, have the power to determine the "kind of person" a prisoner is and is not, through discourses that establish, reflect or perpetuate power differences between actors. Samples of officer discourses from a correctional website (Corrections ezine) are provided to illustrate how prisoner identities can be narrowed and enclosed. Prisons produce stigma in discourses that reduce persons "from a complex whole, to a single, tainted and discounted trait upon which all social interaction with the person will be based" (Edgar & Sedwick, 1999, p.181). We ". . . believe that someone with a stigma is not quite human" (Goffman, 1963/1986, p.5).

In defense of the correctional officer, I want to be

clear that I am not trying to villainize them because I have always appreciated their support in the many prisons I taught and consulted. I would not like to go into a prison where the officers did not take their jobs seriously. My interest in the officer blogs is to examine how discourses are produced and shared: The officer's views are not simply their own, but are those immersed in the circulating discourse. I empathize with officers, whose job I could not and would not do. I also do not mean to romanticize prisoners, for after all, they had committed some heinous crimes against innocent people. I am interested in the positionings that occur in prisons and how they situate educational programs. I recognize there are many occupational hazards associated with being a correctional officer. Due to their location in the prison apparatus, officers must ultimately be concerned with control. The construction of prisoner types, the reduction of prisoners to their (universally shared) depraved, predacious natures, the reliance on the dossier, and the need to simply do their job of protection, surveillance and incapacitation, while remaining safe, create highly stressful situations. As a result, empathy and compassion towards prisoners from officers that might lead to transformative dialogues are absent as officers, out of necessity, lock up emotions to do their job (Tracey, 2005). As I illustrate in a moment, prisoners have their own narrow views of the officers, trapped as they are in their own discourses.

The blogs by prison staff on one correctional website establish multiple, negative identities for prisoners that can be lumped under the general theme that they are, as stigma theory suggests, not quite human. The animal-like nature of prisoners is established in pictures and texts on the site. One article includes pictures of a lion tamer (presumably an officer), wielding a whip, trying to subdue one of the four lions (the prisoners) in a cage. This article is written by one of the most frequent contributors to the correctional website, Carl Toersbijns, described as someone who has "worked in corrections for over 25 yrs, and held positions of a Correctional Officer I, II, III [Captain], the Chief of Security, the Program Director of the Mental Health Treatment Center, and both the Associate Warden and Deputy Warden of Administration & Operations."

Discourses "separate particular objects of concern from others" in reality (Scott & Marshall, 2009, p. 182). In Toersbijns' article, the object of concern that is highlighted is the prisoner's identity. His effort exemplifies the dividing practices of a discourse. It separates the prisoner from "the community." His discourse makes strong truth claims—disparaging the media and fictional versions of the criminal—to position the author and other officers as those who have the right to make pronouncements about others. Discourses identify sources of concern that require resolution; in this case the text is a petition to the correctional audience to grant more power and authority to officers to impose greater institutional order. With an apology to readers, I quote his article titled "Predacious Environments" at length. (Grammatical and spelling errors are in the original text.)

Prisons have spawned many different types of predacious species from within. Many of our incarcerated prisoners are eventually released and learn to wander among those in the communities while mankind has no idea what has happened to them while they were incarcerated within the predacious environments that exist inside penitentiaries. Society should disregard television, movie and other sources as they are likely to be folklore created falsehoods and fictions that are filled with numerous contradictions and lies. Such are the conditions that exist within the walls of concrete and steel and where sunlight has to struggle around so much darkness. Two species are never exactly the same. Each have their own unique qualities and predatory behaviors. Officers are aware that what works for one may not work for another. Some are more venomous than others and although some don't appear to use venom to subdue their prey, it does not mean they aren't capable of inflicting the kind of pain and harm as those that openly display their powers. There are many patterns of behaviors that must be taken into consideration. These range from mastering the art of mental manipulation to pure physical bullying at times by blunt force and other times by coercive persuasion. Regardless of will or mind, they all fall victim to predacious behaviors and become predatory themselves. Most follow their prey from the shadows anticipating an opportunity to strike or advance their purpose another step closer to the ultimate kill or objective. Their patterns are indicative of the subtle movements that can strike silently and swiftly like a Cobra or crush you like the jaws of a Great White pummeling you to your demise. Either way, you will experience excruciating pain if not death. Time has revealed the different methods of assassinations used inside the prisons. Mankind has not yet fully understood the impact or the dangers as they have willfully ignored the warnings on the walls for decades. Neglect of funding and staffing has exasperated the situation. Politicians have long ignored the status quo that is creating a toxic and harsh condition inside the penitentiaries and seek no oversight or accountability. Since filling up these prisons with violent men or women, individuals must adapt and survive by breaking away from society's rules. The way we think mankind ought to behave while incarcerated has been altered by the venoms around them. Metaphorically chained to the walls for their crimes committed and **castaways they are no longer considered humans** [emphasis mine] but rather, predacious creatures that prey on others to survive. Perhaps the most ultimate paradox is how these monsters are created and when released walk among the most common members of our families and society. Expecting rehabilitation they are thrown in with the worst of the worst to become not only more criminal in their minds and intent but predatory enough to engage in new behaviors not sought before they were imprisoned. Such is the world where only the strong survive and reap the

goods that are available within the walls and make a living off others selling drugs, bartering goods or getting high or stoned. It is no wonder that gangs are prospering off the basic needs of others. It has become a capitalistic venture of supply and demand. Correctional officers have learned how to understand this complex evolution and revolution of these incarcerated persons. They have increased their knowledge how to deal with these kinds of predators although violence against them has increased dramatically and their behaviors have been bizarre to say the least. Officers can offer insights but are often kept quiet due to the code of silence. Needless to say this fosters more myths and folklores as the truth is rarely told and the questions never asked. It's time to open up the box and reveal just how bad our prisons have become in the last twenty years and how this complex situation can be redeemed and in contrast to any romantic notions of the prisoner as rebel that the public might have (and some educators share) altered back to restore human dignity and an enigma kind of lawful order (12/23/2013, n.p).

“Us vs. Them”

Discourses serve many functions. They are particularly powerful when they parse, for example, the sane from the mad, males from female, and normal (or acceptable behavior), from abnormal behavior. Identities for both prisoners and officers are enclosed and stabilized by institutional scripts or discourses that leave little room for meaningful dialogic encounters where reciprocal and transformative influences occur (Goffman, 1959), or for the “kind of process theater” to collaborate “with other actors to improvise scenes in which our characters mesh” (Adler & Rodman, 2012, p. 83).

Both officers and prisoners are burdened by a “social identity” that limits their performances of self to “membership of and identification with social categories, e.g. race, gender, religion, occupation, and which are made salient in contexts where those social categories assume importance” (Jary & Jary, 1995, p. 609). Both officer and prisoner cultures “place a high value on group cohesion among themselves, while at the same time, viewing the ‘other’ as an opponent or rival” (Carceral, 2004, p. 123). These cultures are undergirded by social norms of in-group solidarity “versus all outside groups” (Carceral, 2004, p. 123.) The officer culture for example, is grounded in norms such as “never make a fellow officer look bad in front of inmates; always support an officer in a dispute with an inmate; always support officer sanctions against inmates. . . maintain officer solidarity versus all outside groups. . .” (p. 123). These social norms deny meaningful interactions where alternate identities are considered.

In their adherence to cultural norms of their in-group, prisoners and officers build identities that are defined, in part, by the difference from the other so that each “. . . grouping tends to conceive of the other in terms of narrow hostile stereotypes, staff often seeing inmates as

bitter, secretive, and untrustworthy, while inmates often see staff as condescending, highhanded, and mean. Staff tends to feel superior and righteous; inmates tend, in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy and guilty" (Goffman, 1961/1970, p. 7).

The keepers and the kept are at constant war with one another, so it is unlikely there is much performative space for either group to (re)negotiate identities. Both groups learn to keep their social distance or feelings of "aloofness and unapproachability" towards others in socially stratified institutions and societies (Jary & Jary, 1995, p. 608). Prisoners dehumanize officers and make them into objects of fury and contempt (Dube, 2002), while officers position prisoners within discourses and practices that dehumanize and stereotype. Both prisoners and officers are trapped in a cynical interactional game with roles encumbered by the institutional dynamic of power, surveillance and control so that trust is very scarce. When prisoners attempt to break out of stereotyped roles, officers respond with wariness and skepticism, viewing their efforts as further evidence that prisoners are manipulative, strategic game-players (Allen & Bosta, 2002). Officers are quick to remind educators that their "students" "real" behavior is evident in the cell blocks; in schools, teachers just are duped by prisoners.

Bedore's (9/23/2013) blog: "Us vs. Them & Surviving Violent Encounters," offers evidence of the limits of interactions between officers and prisoners. A controversial topic must first be examined. It is what has been termed the "Us versus Them" perception toward staff and inmates. It is a question that often times comes up in recruitment interviews more or less to determine a candidate's ability to be impartial and non judgmental toward the evils some offenders might have done to society that resulted in their incarceration. 'Uh I don't think there is any difference between us and them', is what the interviewer is basically looking for in order for the candidate to get favorable results in the job interview. That's fine I guess for demonstrating the ability to become a professional minded correctional officer in a job interview, but that's where this socially accepted naivety must take a sharp impasse in the learning curve of prison survival. Once you find yourself working, things require an adjustment in order for officers to survive. The context of us versus them must seriously take on some reconsideration."

Most of us can hardly imagine the difficulties that prisoners (and indeed officers), encounter when trying to perform different identities. It goes without saying that that prisons are low-trust environments and officers unreceptive "audiences"—stingy with their applause for just about everyone who sets foot in prison. The scripts of keeper and kept have been well rehearsed over the years, so performances are stale and brittle. Prisoners are typecast, their identities spoiled in advance, the course of the interaction limited and prescribed, so that few opportunities exist for the prisoner to present, proclaim or reclaim different identities.

Fluid negotiations and presentations of self are restricted, circumscribed conceptually, bureaucratically and interactively.

Concluding Remarks: Identities, Education and Reentry

Successful or unsuccessful performances are collaborative activities between actors and audiences. Successful performances occur when audiences understand, appreciate and accept the performance as credible. Unsuccessful performances occur when actors present identities that are novel, inappropriate or improbable for the person, audience, and/or setting, or for roles that are incompatible for the well-known scripts associated with the occasion (Goffman, 1959). Someone trying to perform stand-up comedy at a funeral is a good example of audiences and roles that do not mesh (and how the absurd creeps into everyday life). Enclosed by institutional discourses, prisoners and officers have few opportunities to negotiate novel, alternate identities in interactions.

The critical concept of performative spaces needs further application to appreciate how educators are transforming prisoner identities into prosocial ones, and/or how this identity work facilitates entry. Some applied research would be useful to describe in more detail the identity conversations between teachers and students: How, when, where do they occur? How often, with what effects? Who initiates the conversation, and who terminates the sequence—for what reason? Other pedagogical questions arise once we focus on identity-formation in prison schools. Questions such as how does prison education pedagogy position educators and students so that some identities are circumscribed or enclosed, while others flourish? Is the teacher a sage on stage, or a facilitator who empowers students by sharing responsibility for learning? What evaluation schema are employed in the classroom and how do these determinations of important "knowledge to be known," contribute to the recognition, or not, of students—of their cultural identities, heritage and their contributions to western culture? Do the content, method and evaluative schema reflect the "in-betweenness" (Wilson, 2005) of the prisoner who is also a student, of the prison school on the border of the prison . . . and so on?

The link between education and lower recidivism rates may have something to do with the fact that teachers intuitively and decisively resist the narrowing effects of prison on prisoner identities. They challenge the dehumanizing effects of stigma embedded in prison discourses and practices, evident in the officer's discourses; for example, since after all, most believe that prisoners are people too (Warner, 1998; Scudder, 1952/1968). In part two of this paper, I explore the identity work of teachers in more detail, as they offer up various identities to students for negotiation. I consider in more detail the issue of prisoner reentry, drawing upon the criminological literature and its relationship to the concept of possible selves. I argue that educators play the critical function of the boundary spanner

(Pettus, 2006), and thus facilitate prisoner reentry. I also argue that prison school borderland cultures between officers and prisoners facilitate the practice of multiple identities.

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