

Diogenes Still Can't Find His Honest Man

Jon Marc Taylor

When the editors of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP)* described the revived “reply/interchange” section, renamed “Dialogues” and requested a submission, I was honoured and intrigued. Honoured to be sought for my opinion – something a prisoner is rarely asked for – and intrigued to be able to engage in academic comment and analysis within the academy – something a convict is definitely never asked to do. In preparation the editors sent the prolific Loïc Wacquant’s (2002) special issue introductory piece, “The curious eclipse of prison ethnography in the age of mass incarceration”, seeking my reaction to the author’s recommendation for jail tourism as a means of bridging the void of ethnographic research. Research moreover, Wacquant alleges, that has been absent in the penal milieu for the past thirty years. “A survey of the recent sociology and anthropology of carceral institutions”, he writes (p. 371), “shows that field studies depicting the everyday world of prisoners in America have gone into eclipse just when they were most needed on both scientific and political grounds following the turn toward the penal management of poverty and the correlative return of the prison to the forefront of the society scene”.

Having personally been incarcerated the previous thirty years in three various prisons for a tripartite of design eras in two different states¹, I have observed occasional “tours” of the human equivalent akin to the drive thru wildlife animal parks. It is not these generally negative anecdotal experiences though, shaping my opinion of the viability of jail tours as realistic ethnographic excursions that I wish to render comment. My critique, rather, focuses on Wacquant’s apparent obliviousness of the very ethnographic quality studies he so laments having dissipated at the very time of unprecedented growth of the use of incarceration in the United States.

One of the many blessings in my life has been the opportunities, means and motivation to pursue higher education while incarcerated. In fact, for nearly as long as I have been doing time, I have been “doing school” as well.² Without realizing it at the time, I became a Convict Criminologist as eruditely defined and passionately promoted by Richards and Ross (2003).³ In reflexive humility, I am extensively published, my work referenced by others and recognized with writing honours.⁴ It is by virtue of these broad brushed qualifications with which I wish to make my nuanced observations of Wacquant’s much needed clarion call on the paucity to near-complete absence of ethnographic writings – provided some commonly overlooked

exceptions – from the American gulag archipelago during the latter half of the twentieth century.⁵

REVIEW OF THE PREMISE

To begin with, Wacquant's (2002, p. 385) millennial accusation of the overall academy's failure to produce "observational studies depicting the everyday world of inmates all but vanished as the United States was settling into mass incarceration" is not only reductionistically redundant but a decade tardy as well. In a 1995 *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* article, the author and co-researcher Richard Tewksbury (p. 119), surveyed similar and more holistic complaints of criminal justice and criminological (CJC) studies: "These criticism, justified or not, have ranged from qualitatively deficient CJC curriculums (Korn, 1992) to selective exclusion of controversial or minority issues (Barak, 1991) to obfuscation of current knowledge (Bayley, 1991) to lack of relevant research (Wallace, 1991)". Even a decade earlier to these complaints, Conrad (1982) and Palmer (1983) commented on the mediocre to questionable methodological quality of much of CJC research (Berry, 1992).

Moreover, it was Taylor and Tewksbury (1995) who also noted a litany of similar observations, from the 1967 Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration to the infamous Martinson (1974) to the critical DiIulio (1991), calling for more quantity and quality of research in prisons. Thus, Wacquant's highlighting of the morbid, if not near non-existent, state of penal research was a little late and surprisingly parochial in its scope.

Parochial in the sense that while indeed citing the traditional iconic ethnographic works such as Abbott (1978), Clemmer (1940), Conover (2000), Goffman (1961), Irwin (1970), Rideau and Wikberg (1990), Sykes (1958) and Wynn (2002), the vast majority of the article's bibliography was composed of texts with few (4 out of 74 citations) CJC-centric, conventionally the source for more abundant and up-to-date research, journal articles.⁶ Additionally, none of the articles were from journals that historically report on the paradigm and practicum of American penology,⁷ and more specifically the very publication that illuminates what the ethnographic lamenter is longing for – the *JPP*. Nor were any of the contemporary and prolific convict criminologists (e.g. Gaucher, 1991), prisoner ethnographers

(e.g. Huckelbury, 1999) or imprisoned writers (e.g. McMaster 1999a) of the past thirty years referenced by their milieu-centric articles.⁸

The absence of the *JPP* from Wacquant's (2002) research, by the way, is simply an inexplicable omission by the penological ethnographic champion. Founded by Canadian academics in 1988, as of this writing, the peer-reviewed and edited journal has published 27 issues averaging 100 pages a piece, and is presently published by the University of Ottawa Press (Piché, 2008).⁹ The journal was created as a means for the accounts and analysis of prisoners "to bring the knowledge and experience of the incarcerated to bear upon... academic arguments and concerns, and to inform public discourse about the current state of carceral institutions" (Gaucher, 1988, p. 54). With its growth, the *JPP* has been regularly used in university courses, cited in academic works and reprinted in books, including its own anthology (Gaucher, 2002).

From the beginning, as founding Editorial Board member Howard Davidson (1988/89) comments in the second issue, the emphasis is:

...on publishing new kind of research: research which is not about something happening 'out there' but which is a closer look at 'where we are'. Much has and will continue to be written about crime and punishment from a distance. What is needed is that 'insight and analysis of people for whom imprisonment is or has been the reality of their daily existence'.

A decade and a half later, Gaucher (2002, p. 10) writing in the *JPP* anthology concluded that "[c]ollectively these essays represent an *ethnography* of the prison-industrial complex in North America in the 1990s" (emphasis added). In other words, exactly what Wacquant (2002) was looking for. Perhaps the oil in the anthropological lamp required replenishment or the light simply needed to be shined in another direction.

BY WAY OF EXAMPLE

Many from the public to academia continue to ponder – some not so politely – the value to verity of prisoner ethnography. Even with Wacquant's (2002, p. 371) chronicled obliviousness of the *JPP* and its contribution to the common body of knowledge, he called for the reinvigoration and internationalization¹⁰ of the ethnography of the "carceral universe understood both as microcosm

endowed with its own political material and symbolic tropism and vector of social forces, political nexi, and cultural processes that traverse its walls”.

To bolster the authenticity of *JPP* as just such an ethnographic endeavour, Gaucher (2002, p. 25) concluded in his extensive survey introducing the journal’s anthology with the observation that “our contributors have kept me connected to the current realities of prison life and aware of vital issues as they arose, often long before (if ever) they surfaced in the mass media or were addressed [in other] academic journals”. By way of example, what follows are excerpts from Gaucher’s introduction citing my own contributions in support of his analysis, as fulfillment of Wacquant’s ethnographic social-political-cultural nexi. These citations are categorized by the anthology’s various topic headings, with the extended excerpts providing examples of the specific analysis, observations and insights that Wacquant decries as mission from the common body of knowledge.

Control of the Dangerous Classes¹¹

...prisoners address the growth and development of the crime-control industry, and identify the marginalized as its preferred targets / designated criminals. In doing so, they provide ample evidence of the health of its entrenched biases and discriminations. Jon Marc Taylor analyzes “The Resurrection of the ‘Dangerous Classes’”, a product of the shift from social welfare to punitive criminal justice state policy as an industrialized crime-control response to threats to capitalist social order posed by a growing surplus labour group composed of the marginalized and disenfranchised (Gaucher, 2002, p. 13).

Resistance Strategies for Survival

...Experienced long-term prisoners understand the futility of anti-institutional violence and, wherever possible, try to avoid the prison’s long-term repressive response to it. The growing disorder and instability of the maximum-security Indiana State Reformatory and the open combat between prisoner and guard gangs that characterized the facility in 1991 provide context for Jon Marc Taylor’s “The Unity Walk”. In his essay he analyzes prisoners’ attempts to transform the situation that is ripening towards rebellion into a peaceful and socially responsible demonstration

of prisoners' grievances and solidarity. In Taylor's account, the role and calming influence of older convicts (many of whom had educated themselves in prison) created the consensus needed to produce a responsible and non-violent response to increasing repression. The institutional response to their efforts – defining the older, moderate prisoners trying to cool out the situation as “criminal predators” and subsequently segregating and isolating them – suggests that institutional authorities have an interest in maintaining a threatening and violent prison atmosphere (Gaucher, 2002, p. 19).

Talking Back: Counter-inscribing the Prison-Industrial Complex

...In “The American Correctional Association: A Conspiracy of Silence”, Reed and Denisovich [¹²] attack “the fraudulent” and “profitable” process of accreditation of prison institutions provided by the ACA. The accreditation of the penitentiary in Lucasville, Ohio, shortly before a major riot in that institution (see Perotti, Part V) forms the backdrop for their analysis. The authors explore that connecting lines of interest of the ACA executive and locate them as major players in the prison-industrial complex in the U.S.A. They note that their careers and their businesses are advanced by this industrial association (Gaucher, 2002, p. 22).

... Jon Marc Taylor, who in the 1990s established himself as an authority on prison education issues in the U.S.A., analyzes the passage of legislation eliminating Pell Grant support for prisoners' pursuit of higher education, and warns of the ramifications for prisoners and society. Taylor counters the rationales that justified these cuts by establishing the extent of educational need among prisoners, and the past success and future promise indicated by academic research that has assessed the effects of college education on post-release reintegration. In opposing these misguided and counter-productive cuts, he reveals the mean-spirited mindset of those on the American right who advocate the “get tough on crime” ideology that dominated the decade (Gaucher, 2002, p. 22).

In a subsequent essay, “Where Have All the Superpredators Gone?” Taylor deconstructs the decade-long moral panic over youth crime. In his analysis of the pronouncements of the “foreboding prognosticators”, the “prolifically vocal triumvirate of the ‘lock ‘em up and through away

the key' school of criminology" (professors J.A. Fox, J.Q. Wilson, and J.J. DiIulio), he notes that the "impeding tidal wave of dangerousness, violent *superpredators* terrorizing an unprepared nation", which was predicted in 1994, had failed the test of time. Fox defined this addition to the "dangerous classes" as "the young and ruthless". Taylor notes that though the evidence indicates a steady decrease in youth involvement in violent crime since 1993, the moral panic still served to justify increasingly repressive legislation, higher rates of transfers of youth to adult court, and higher rates of imprisonment... Taylor's example also illustrates that moral panics constructed to forward repressive political agendas of the punitive right continue to have serious impacts on public discourse and legislation, regardless of how groundless the fears generated may be (Gaucher, 2002, pp. 22-23).

THE VALIDITY OF THE MODEL

"[G]iven the scientific and civil salience of [the] institution", Wacquant (2002, p. 386) set forth to present the special issue of *Ethnography* on "Dissecting the Prison". The goals of which were to reinvigorate field studies, highlight the microcosm of the setting, provide a holistic template of the vectoring forces of society and to internationalize the ethnographic discussion. Given this present response so far, I will contend that not only has traditional penological research continued – while concurring that methodological problems always existed and a degree of retreat occurred due primarily to increasing systemic restrictions – the quality and quantity of the ethnographic work by prisoners, however, had proliferated beyond where it had ever been by either barometer. These contributions to the overall discourse are due in large measure to the vehicle of the *JPP*, but also with the support, encouragement and partnerships with the same academics and their journals. A progeny of this evolution is the previously mentioned Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences recognized New School of Convict Criminology (Richards and Ross, 2001).

A fundamental advancement in practicum leading up to formation of convict criminology was the exact same paucity Wacquant lamented; except the history of this 'awakening' predates this debate. Zunin and Barr (1970) emphasizing the most understudied facet of criminal justice being the prison, proposed facilitation of such research by suggesting that states should build

their future prisons on college campuses “right smack in between the law school, medical school and social sciences building; next to the campus chapel”. Two decades later, Korn (1992, p. 24) postulated that the governing principle in the transformation of criminal justice education and understanding “must occur simultaneously and within the heart of the problem: the prison itself”. And yet contemporary academics even then (Peak, 1985; Unnithan, 1986) cited numerous hindrances to correctional research.

From this position the author and Tewksbury (1995, p. 122) advanced in our article, “From the Inside Out and Outside In: Team Research in the Correctional Setting”, a modulate though practical strategy.¹³

As partial solution to the problems of research in the rich correctional setting, we propose a marriage of resources so far largely untapped, that can produce a synergistic result beyond the knowledge gained from, and value of, the basic research enterprise. We suggest that a partial remedy to the myriad of correctional research difficulties today can be addressed by a team research approach, combining qualified offenders working from the inside with professional researchers collaborating with a view from the outside in. The team approach allows the strengths of both parties (i.e., inmates’ knowledge of institutional procedures, mores and values and the researchers’ training in methodologies, access to resources, and professional standing, etc.) to be combined and yield data that most likely could/would be circumvented, corrupted or co-opted using traditional approaches.

Lockwood (1991, p. 199) noted that “when prisoners become advanced students in the behavioral sciences, they themselves can carry out research on the topics such as sociology, and psychology of the prison and the causes of recidivism”. His observation is well substantiated not only by the author’s vitae, but the already noted library of *JPP*, as well as a host of other prisoner writers, academically trained or not. As Gregory J. McMaster (1999b, p. 46) scribes about “ink slingers” within the keep, they are ethnographers too. “Even when prison writers attempt to expound the nuances and intricacies of their caged existence it is as if they are on the outside looking in, narrating the emotions and experiences of someone else” (ibid).

The inside-outside team research suggested and conducted by Taylor and Tewksbury (1995) is also found in the earlier work of Schmid and Jones

(1989; 1991; 1993). In studying the prison adaptation strategies of prisoners and other correctional culture issues, Jones, as the internal researcher/student and Schmid, as the external researcher/instructor, provide insightful and academically sound analyses of prison structure and processes.

Taylor and Tewksbury (1995, p. 125) cite an example that is particularly cogent to this critique.¹⁴ They note that Thomas *et al.*'s (1980) analysis of Jacobs's (1977) classic *Statesville*, in which the reviewers were primarily college students incarcerated at the very same prison, combined the inside perspective of the prisoners with the outside perspective of sociology students under the direction of their instructor. While overall admiring the work, these critics pointed out, among other issues, Jacobs' claim of "insider status" was not only flawed but did not adhere to established methodological definition. As such the evaluators noted the problem of traditional social research studying sub-populations, cogently arguing that

...by giving us little more than a picture of the appearance of the world, we receive a partial, one-sided and distorted view of prisons that simply perpetrates misunderstanding, false images and ignorance of the source of both the structure of institutions and the philosophy underlying them as a component in the reproduction of social control (Thomas *et al.*, 1980, p. 49).

Such observations tend to validate Bohm's (1993), along with Reppucci and Clingempell's (1978, p. 737) views that "the subject should be enrolled as 'informant' and active participant in the exploration of his/her behavior".

This leads me back to my overarching thesis on Wacquant's ethnographical requiem – that if not with the best of intentions – of a calculated straw man argument, his article's preparatory research was woefully insufficient, if not professionally clumsy. Besides the plethora of specific citations and general references already made herein, he somehow overlooked one of the most prolific imprisoned intellectuals and social commentators today, Mumia Abu-Jamal (1996; 1997; 2000; 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2009). Abu Jamal is arguably the most internationally famous and nationally infamous American prisoner, whose voice has literally been routinely heard on the radio, as a commencement speaker, in an HBO documentary, and as a regular columnist for the German newspaper *Jungle Welt*. How in a critique of penal ethnography, even if its primarily by book citation, is he not cited?¹⁵

DISCUSSION

“For the paramount priority of the ethnography of prison today”, Wacquant (2002, p. 386) declares, “is without contest to *just do it*” (original emphasis). *Doing it* is what I think I have been writing about. True, none of the references cited in this rebuttal have been from anthropological or sociological journals, though what has been referenced in support of my thesis have been distinctly vetted to be from publications prior to and from the era of Wacquant’s article. It is, however, these divergent sources of academic journals, representing complimentary though distinct endeavours of academy, where I believe the crux of the problem lies: parochialism, perhaps with a dash of superciliousness sprinkled on top for didactic panache.

There is little doubt in my mind that Professor Loïc Wacquant is an esteemed and talented academic. With decades of state-imbued insidious institutionalization and convict-inculcated hesitancy to step out of my comfort zone and aggressively challenge whom society considers my “betters”, as I reread Wacquant’s essay and thought of what I believe to be the inadvertent and unknowing slight to the arduous work of decades of convict criminologists, prisoner ethnographers and prison journal writers, the more my intellectual hackles were raised.

As I have ventured into the realm of the academy, I have been exposed to glimpses and views of the all-too-human failings of departmental politics, professional jealousies and field of study competitive arrogance over their academic colleagues. And I think this is the impetus for the parochialism of the problem herein. The more focused study of criminology and criminal justice have (d)evolved from sociology and political science, while the praxis of ethnography is a sociological school – which all social sciences utilize to a degree – and a fundamental tool of cultural anthropologists. Thus, when one refers to ethnography the initial assumption is of anthropological and sociological field studies. Keep in mind that these again are broad brush strokes of generalized description that lightly sketch the lay of the Land of Academia.

The strict concentration of study, however, was the opposite contextualization of my enlightening and life-invigorating experience as a student. What I gradually discerned as an undergraduate was the design behind the seemingly divergent liberal arts curriculum.

...Literature classes resounded with examples from history, psychology, even anthropology. In one poignant memory, I recall a Russian literature class where the striking realization dawned on me that all imprisoned men, no matter what dungeon may be called in the society's popular lexicon, shared a brotherhood in the all-too-similar experiences of survival in the gulag.

In other cases, geography, political science, and art history courses blended with the cross-pollination of wide-ranging studies. On more than one occasion, coalescing ideas from disparate sources, a student or students built erudite rationalizations challenging the conventional prescripts presented in class. Lively, often raucous debates resulted, sometimes including the professor, fueling self-empowerment and self-discovery. Once, during a lecture on Picasso's work *Guernica*, the students pushed beyond the limited confines of the artist's expressive choice of mode and medium being presented by the lecturer, and expounded upon the painter's insight in presaging the horrors of the London Blitz, the bombings of Hamburg and Dresden, and the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – all to the professor's consternated delight. What I realized from all the dynamic experiences was that the varying schools of thought, philosophies, and subjects approached from differing perspectives taught the essence of what a college education is all about: how to question; how to think. (Taylor, 1994a, p. 127).

What I learned of the professionalism of the academy is the opposite of holistic, cross-cultural intellectual learning. Specialization of each field instead tends to cloister the research. Consilience¹⁶ among the big fields is a contemplative effort, not a reflexive discovery. Even cross-pollination of criminology and criminal justice studies can be more of happenstance, with theorists of the former condescendingly considering teachers of the latter mere practitioners of bureaucracy. It may not be a complete paradigm shift for the enveloping field of sociological studies to think holistically within its branches, but such inclusive research accumulation – at least when it comes to publishing their findings – is more the exception than the norm.

This, then, is what I theorize. Loïc Wacquant, the sociologist, succumbed to the lamentable, though all-too-common stove piping of the academies and basically failed to extend his research into the fields of criminology and criminal justice publications wherein he would have discovered a wellspring

of ethnographic research. Then, again, if he had, his thesis would have had to be rewritten and perhaps called for the whole special issue's theme to be scrapped. To disassemble such a professional opportunity championing an intellectual call to arms to bravely assail the ramparts of the prison-industrial complex would have taken academic courage to pass on lifting one's self-knighted gauntlet upon the steed of valiant ethnography sallying forth into the Borneo of Statesvilles. This would have been a truly courageous, self-sacrificing act. This also would be an essentially anonymous immolation that only he, as the journal's editor, would have been cognizant of when assembling his introduction.

All of this is but mere speculation, discernment of what was advocated by Wacquant justified by his seemingly narrow reading. Yet there is one piece of evidence uncovered by my own extremely limited, literally structurally confined research having no access to the world-wide-web or even the stacks of a university library. It is of an article already previously referenced. Schmid and Jones' (1993) piece "Ambivalent Actions: Prison Adaptation Strategies for First-time, Short-term Inmates", is clearly an example of ethnographic work. The proverbial smoking gun of this evidence, moreover, is the article's publication in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.

In my opinion, this is a publication that definitely should have been even within Wacquant's apparently limited scope of preparatory research. The significance of this article in this rebuttal is not only its example of the inside-outside team research methodology, but the key it provides opening up further avenues of research that would have exposed the whole world of prisoner ethnography, and the attendant ongoing criminological and criminal justice studies of the carceral world of the late twentieth century American penology.

This revelation I cannot explain. Was it an oversight? Was the thesis research itself perfunctory, with the professor already knowing his theme, not wanting to confuse the situation with contradictions? Was it purposeful omission in commission of straw man construction?

CONCLUSION

What I know may surprise the reader. I concur with the professor. More research needs to be conducted in our cloistered communities. More perspectives need to be explored by more disciplines in our death-fenced

compounds. Many factors contributed to the academy's overall retreat from penology during this era. Anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and a host of other fields need to rejoin those relatively few criminologists, criminal justice academes and correctional educators that remained behind and continued to creatively infiltrate the king's keep. To remove the millstone of the corrections behemoth from around the body politic of the American public will require concerted socio-political effort supported by the acumen provided by the academy.

What I also know is that I feel slighted by Wacquant's omission of the whole field of study briefly outlined in this article. I invested the effort and gambled the potential ramifications of my critical discourse to stand up for my fellow prisoners who endure the tribulations of incarceration and risk the – sometimes literally physically dangerous – consequences of their writings, and my brethren academics who engage in many struggles above and beyond the call of standard research as well to carry the lamp illuminating the gulag archipelago of the largest penal system in the history of the world.

What we do is important. What we contribute is impressive. What is needed is a variation of what Wacquant (2002, p. 371) "concludes by suggesting that getting 'in... [but not out]... of the belly of the beast' offers a unique vantage point from which to contribute to the comparative ethnography of the state in the age of triumphant neoliberalism".

On the other hand, I could be full of it. It would not be the first time. The academic literary deconstructionism presented here could just be so much of my own sturm and drang. Yet, over the years I have grown to be more right than wrong. It is amazing the disassociative distance provided by incarceration amidst the very society enlightening the perception of the interned. In too many instances to readily reprise, I have called what is coming down the pike days, weeks, months if not years ahead of the media arbitrators, commentators and debating pundits.¹⁷ All deduced nonetheless from the venue of a Midwestern, maximum-security prison cell analyzing the data available to the average informed citizen.¹⁸

In other words, turning the tables by conducting ethnographic studies of the larger society once a part but now removed (i.e. an exile in their own land), while the informative stimulus of a myriad of forms of media allows the ensconced social scientist to watch the world flow by in all its lunacy, hypocrisy and cruelty, as well as with its counterpoints of rationality,

justice and agape, can produce discerning and illuminating cultural insights. Perhaps this critique is another of those more focused instances?

ENDNOTES

- * Diogenes (412-323 BC), a Greek philosopher of the Cynic School, did not believe that a good birth, riches and honour helped people lead virtuous lives. He is best known to history as a man carrying a lamp in daylight seeking an honest man. It is quite likely an apocryphal story, though, perhaps apropos to Wacquant's mythical quest as well.
- ¹ Not in chronological order of my personal odyssey, I have been ensconced in the Missouri State Prison – initially designed and built in the 1830s, the Indiana State Reformatory – built in the 1920s, now rechristened the Pendleton Correctional Center, and the Crossroads Correctional Center – built in the 1990s. As the adage of form begets function, the design philosophy of penal institutions influences their operations and thus the particular milieu of each. In this example, and in rough sketch, I have been through progressively the physical manifestations of the Auburn style, reformatory system and warehouse operation.
- ² Enrolling in my first quarter in the fall of 1982 via Ball State University's on-site extension program at the Indiana State Reformatory, in addition to consecutively attending via distance education five other universities, I have progressed from freshman to Doctor of Philosophy. Altogether, I have accumulated nearly 250 semester credit hours, with in-press preparations to commence a graduate degree in criminal justice studies.
- ³ Reprising their earlier article in *Social Justice*, Richards and Ross (2001) outline the development of the New School of Convict Criminology. In order to appreciate the context of Convict Criminology, it is necessary to understand the steps taken to arrive at this juncture. Four interrelated movements, factors and methodologies led to the birth of Convict Criminology: theoretical developments in criminology, the failure of prisons, *the authenticity of insider perspectives*, and *the centrality of ethnography* (Richards and Ross, 2004 – emphasis added).
- ⁴ Sampling among the citations of my publications: The Office of Correctional Education U.S. Department of Education, "The Impact of Correctional Education on Recidivism Excerpts/Abstracts"; various bibliographical article listings in the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Corrections Compendium*, *Social Justice*, and the complete article reprinting in the *Congressional Record* to reference a few. Writing honours include consecutive Runner-Up and First Place awards in the student essay contest by the American Society for Public Administration, Section of Criminal Justice Administration; *The Nation*/I.F. Stone Award for Student Journalism & Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award on the Problems of the Disadvantaged (aka: "the Poor People's Pulitzer"); with multiple PEN American Center Writing Awards for Prisoners among others. A range of my publications is set forth in this article's bibliography as well.
- ⁵ These curriculum and publication vitae references are not cited out of vainglory, but rather as well-worn battle scars from the *debate de la politique pénitentiaire*. As the

insightful Victor Hassine (1992, p. 40) has written, “[b]ecause common criminals lack the moral high ground it is difficult for us to have our voices heard”. Over the years, I have had a criminal justice professor laugh in my face because of the presumed worthlessness of my opinion formed from prisoner experience, various editors ignore or criticize the validity of my submissions – that were all eventually published elsewhere, sometimes in more esteemed publications such as *The New York Times* – based solely on my convict status, and have had innumerable scathing responses of the “how dare he” type “because he is nothing but a felon!” rebuttals to a U.S. Congressman (Gordon, 1995) dismissing my arguments simply because I was required to wear a registration number on my chest. The voice of the marginalized and oppressed is rarely heard in the great debate, and when it is, as Gregory J. McMaster (1999b, p. 49) observes, “[o]ur credibility is questioned through the most basic character assassination. Who are you going to believe”, a convict or common perception? It is for the purpose of establishing my bona fides with which I set forth these informed – literally from the inside out – qualifications to critique another academic.

⁶ This is Hunt *et al.* (1993) in *Social Problems*; Liebling (1999) in *Theoretical Criminology*; Wacquant (2001) in *Punishment & Society*; as well as Zimring and Hawkins (1994) in *British Journal of Criminology*.

⁷ Generally these would include anything with “Criminal Justice” or “Criminology” or some related derivation in the title, and some more specifically by example *Corrections Compendium*, *Crime and Social Justice*, *Criminal Justice Review*, *The Criminologist*, *Critical Criminology*, *Journal of Correctional Education*, *Journal of Crime and Justice*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Social Justice*, and *The Prison Journal* – which was founded by Benjamin Franklin, and in one form or another is the oldest criminal justice journal in the Americas – to cite some of the journals the author, as a convict criminologist, is more familiar with referencing and conversely those strikingly absent from Wacquant’s critique.

⁸ While Burton-Rose, Pens and Wright (1998), Hassine (1993), Irwin (1970; 1984), Rideau and Wikberg (1990) were cited by Wacquant (2002), and all had been or were incarcerated at the time of their writings, these again, however, are texts, and arguably not the more likely frontier of research as published in journals. Even when illuminating work particularly substantive to the study is mentioned, it’s all but dismissed. Ironically one prisoner ethnography of the first quality, Victor Hassine (1993) is listed in Wacquant’s (2002) bibliography, but beyond a mere citation, the author’s observations as well as the whole field of prisoner ethnography, is ignored. In Bruckert’s (1999, p. 132) review of *Life Without Parole: Living in Prison Today*, she writes that Hassine’s work “is an important and timely contribution to prison literature, providing us with an insightful *ethnographic account of modern prisons*” (emphasis added). The review goes on to explain the unique insight the author brought to his observations. Hassine, middle class and with a degree in law, was not a typical prisoner and it was perhaps his particular location as an ‘outsider within’ that allowed him to seize perceptions that might escape more acculturated individuals. The result is a rich and detailed account punctuated with illustrative stories and enlivened with people that allow us to vicariously share Hassine’s journey

of discovery as he sought to survive and make sense of his new environment.

- ⁹ *JPP*'s previous publisher was Canadian Scholars' Press, with the journal bouncing back and forth across the Great White North's academic presses mainly due to financial reasons.
- ¹⁰ Over the years, *JPP* published extensive articles, and sometimes whole special topic issues, on Australian, Canadian, First Nation, Irish Republican, Japanese, Nigerian and Palestinian prisons and prisoners. By any measure this meets Wacquant's call for international carceral ethnographic analysis – and may quite well exceed such work published by any other journal in North America.
- ¹¹ The irony of this encompassing argument is that if Wacquant had executed an affective keyword search for “dangerous classes” – a term he specifically emphasized in his article, (see p. 381) – this article should have come up listing *JPP* as the source and thus could have made all this *sturm und drang* moot.
- ¹² Ivan Denisovich is my carceral nom de plume. Given the incendiary exposé challenging the legitimacy of the millions of taxpayer dollars purchasing essentially meaningless certifications and as I was serving time in a state where one of the corrections department's top ranking officials also held executive positions with the ACA, poking the dragon in the eye with my register name did not seem to be a prudent thing to do. Thus, the nom de plume. Now, I no longer give a damn. More importantly, or disgracefully depending on one's perspective, this article is still the seminal investigative piece on the ACA accreditation scandal. Something the mainstream media has yet to cover in fifteen years.
- ¹³ I wish to thank my co-researcher, author and friend, professor Richard Tewksbury of the School of Justice Administration at the University of Louisville, for the liberal citations from our joint work.
- ¹⁴ Persuasive in the sense that while Wacquant (2002) listed Jacobs' (1977) work in his bibliography, he failed to cite the Thomas *et al.* (1980) piece published only three years later, which critiqued the ethnographical study by the very subjects the iconic text studied. Curious. Then, again, the article was published in another of those journals with “crime” and “justice” in the title.
- ¹⁵ The Professor Emerita of History of Consciousness at the University of California, Angela Davis, once on the F.B.I.'s “Ten Most Wanted List” and popularizer of the “prison-industrial complex” concept, provided the introduction for Abu-Jamal's (2009) most recent book, *Jailhouse Lawyers*. Her comments, though written years after Wacquant's essay, are still of themes Mumia has consistently expounded upon and those salient to this thesis discourse. These excerpts make it even more inexplicable as to why Abu-Jamal's contributions to penal ethnography were not even cited. Davis (2009) writes: “One of the most important intellectuals of our time, Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent more than twenty-five years behind bars, the majority of them on death row... [H]e has used his abundant talents as a thinker and writer to expand our knowledge of the hidden world of jails, prisons, and death houses in which he has spent the last decades of his life... I have been especially impressed by the way his ideas have helped to link critiques of the death penalty with broader challenges to the expanding prison-industrial complex. He has been particularly helpful to those of us – activists and scholars alike – who seek to associate death penalty abolitionism with prison abolitionism... Mumia reminds us that what is now

known as “prison law” was pioneered by prisoners themselves... Thus he connects the 1996 passage of the PRLA [Prison Reform Litigation Act] under the Clinton Administration to the disestablishment of the welfare system, locating both of these developments within the context of *rising neoliberalism* [an added emphasis that is of particular topical concern to Wacquant’s overall thesis as well]... He allows us to reflect upon the fact that transformational possibilities often emerge from where we least expect them”.

¹⁶ Consilience: the unity of knowledge. As the inestimable E.O. Wilson (1999, p. 326) engagingly postulates, “[t]he search for consilience might seem at first to imprison creativity. The opposite is true. A united system of knowledge is the surest means of identifying the still unexplored domains of reality. It provides a clear map of what is known, and it frames the most productive questions for future inquiry”.

¹⁷ In a recent documented instance, as a member of the institution’s NAACP (#4003) branch, I steered a resolution to national ratification calling on the state’s legislatures to form task forces on long-term prisoners studying ways to alleviate needless overcrowding of their system. As part of the lobbying process, I produced an 18-page pamphlet, titled “Slammer State”, chronicling the situation in situ via the State of Missouri. In outlining the causes of the correctional crisis, one I cited was “the lack of [legislative] institutional memory, the consequences of term limits that has eviscerated the political consequences, that now plagues the Show-Me-State” (Taylor, 2006, p. 11). Three years later, the *Kansas City Star*’s political reporter ran near back to back pieces citing an in-state university political science professor that “there is a ‘looser’ atmosphere in the Capitol these days. He blamed the implementation of term limits” (Kraske, 2009a) and a state representative commenting that “the problem with term limits is their unintended consequences” (Kraske, 2009b). As a diligent reader to the paper, these were the first issue-specific analyses of the consequences of term limits I had come across since the passage of the legislation years earlier. So surprising where these discernable examples, I noted them on my manuscript copy of the pamphlet.

¹⁸ From the margin notations made a decade ago while reading Huckelbury’s (1999, p. 35) article, “Writing on the Walls: It Isn’t Just Graffiti”, commenting on the author’s reversed inside-outside observational dialectic theme, I scribed: “Ethnography requires personal dissociation with the milieu being observed. Then aren’t prisoners by their isolation from mainstream culture, but once being a part of said culture, well positioned to offer ethnographic critiques of the society?” As further exemplified in this essay, I think so.

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