

**The Big House in a Small Town:
Prisons, Communities, and Economics in Rural America**

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In studying this subject we must be content if we attain as high a degree of certainty as the matter of it admits...It is a mark of the educated man and a proof of his culture that in every subject he looks for only so much precision as its nature permits.

Aristotle
Nicomachean Ethics

INTRODUCTION:

In discussing criticisms of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Elinor Ostrum states that “Colleagues in political science have frequently chided us for the many studies we have conducted on ‘dull, unimportant local problems.’”¹ It is exactly one of these so called “dull, unimportant local problems”- the impact of a prison on a local community- that is at the heart of this paper. This paper is about the nuts and bolts of local politics, something not studied enough in our discipline. As Ostrum further points out, “[i]f one confines political science to the study of national elections, national legislative behavior, and the politics of the presidency, we are missing a great deal at both a local and international level.” Much like his criticism that studies of judicial behavior primarily focus on the Supreme Court (which only hears about 1% of those cases that are appealed to it), we must heed Martin Shapiro’s advice in the seminal work *Courts* and go broader and deeper in all areas of political science. It is in this spirit that this study was undertaken. How a prison impacts a local community is one of those areas which should not be missed and needs to be studied in a broad and deep way.

We are fast approaching the point where 1% of our population is in custody² and the number of people incarcerated has more than quadrupled since 1980, leaving both the states and the federal government desperate for more prison beds.³ A study by the Urban Institute found that in the last quarter of the 20th century, “The rise in the number of prisons has been extraordinary...state prison systems grew from 592 prisons to 1023 prisons.”⁴ Many of these prisons have been built in communities that historically have not had them. The Urban Institute’s study of ten states found that the number of counties with at least one prison had increased from 13 percent of counties in 1979 to 31 percent of counties in 2000.⁵ The spread of prisons and booming prison population makes what was once a highly localized issue, more national in character.

This prison building boom in the 1980’s and 1990’s has given birth to an interesting phenomenon; whereas towns used to fight against having a prison located in their community, they are now fighting to land one. Considered foremost on the list of NIMBY’s (not in my backyard) or LULU’s (local unwanted land use) just fifteen years ago, towns are now lobbying to have states, private corporations and the federal government put new correctional institutions in their communities. Rural communities

¹ P.S. January 2006 p. 9

² According to the Bureau of Justice statistics, 2,166,260 people were incarcerated at the end of 2001, about 1 in every 143 people or about 0.7% of the total population. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/p02.pdf>. If one includes those on probation and parole, 1 in every 32 adults or 3.1% of the population is under some form of criminal justice custody. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/press/ppus02pr.htm>.

³ In 1980, the total prison and jail population combined was 503,586
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/tables/corr2tab.htm>.

⁴ Lawrence and Travis, p. 8

⁵ Their study looked at the ten states with the largest growth in the numbers of prisons in the 80’s and 90’s.

look at prisons as a sound economic development strategy; a stable recession-proof industry that promises secure jobs and a new economic base. Because of this, States can now be more discriminating in deciding where they will locate the prison, leading to bidding wars between towns who offer substantial incentive packages for the privilege of becoming home to society's outcasts.

But the effect of prisons on a community is broad, effecting governmental and social relations in addition to economic ones. Erving Goffman has called prisons a "total institution," meaning that in sociological terms, they function as a world onto their own (Goffman 1961). They may be total, but they do not exist in a vacuum. They are on land within a municipality and how these two seemingly independent entities work-or don't work- together has large repercussions for the people who work in the facility as well as the overall community. In gauging the effects of a prison on a community, one can look at hard economic or survey data, but I have chosen to use a more qualitative method, that of the ethnography.

In 1991 *The Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* dedicated an entire year to the problems involved with community opposition to prison siting and in 1992, *Crime and Delinquency* devoted an entire issue to the same problem. But now, all of that has changed and the NIMBY model is no longer dominant as towns now go to extraordinary lengths to land a prison. After the end of the oil boom left their economy in shambles, Hinton, Oklahoma actually borrowed \$19 million from American Express to build a prison and then hired a private prison firm to run it. In Tamms, Illinois, the staunchly democratic town has a billboard thanking Republican Governor Ryan for putting the states newest supermax prison there.⁶ In Stone Gap, Virginia the town paid the local community college to start a guard-training program and sent 500 people to Richmond for the committee hearings on the siting to help them land one of the states two new supermaxes.

Places as disparate as Lovelock, Nevada, a former ranching town, and Corcoran California, a former agricultural stronghold, have turned to prisons as the solution to their economic woes. From the town's standpoint, it's a growth industry that is recession proof and will give them a number of decent paying jobs as well as some ancillary industrial growth. The town's may or may not realize actual growth, but there is much more to the story. Understanding what actually happens during and after the siting is at the core of this paper.

This paper focuses on two towns, Beeville, Texas and Florence Colorado. Both are small rural communities who began the lobbying process in the late 1980's. Beeville had fallen on hard economic times with the decline of the Texas oil boom and Florence, though never an economic hot spot, lost a significant number of jobs and residents with the decline of the mining industry. Both communities lobbied hard land a facility, Beeville from the Texas Department of Corrections and Florence from the Federal Bureau of Prisons and both have since become the site of multiple facilities. They are both good examples of the new rural prison towns that have cropped up in the past 25 years.

Prison Impact Studies:

⁶ This was before then governor Ryan was indicted and commuted every death row inmates' sentence to life.

There has been some interest in the effects a prison has on communities and a smattering of studies on the topic through the years. Most are highly focused studies, looking only at one issue or one community. The studies can be roughly grouped into three categories. The first group concerns itself with classic prison NIMBY concerns, and as such look at communities' perceptions of the effects of the prisons in their midst. These studies sometimes discuss the economic effects, but do so asking the old style questions (such as the effect of a prison on land values).

The second category is almost non-existent, but does exist. These studies are more broad-based, looking at one community over a whole series of issues or, in the case of one study, a more in-depth comparison of two communities in the same state. These studies begin to struggle with the issues in a more comprehensive manner and give us a fuller picture of the impact of a prison on a small rural community. In the third category, we see the recognition of the change and they have begun to recognize that given the new reality, new questions need to be asked. These studies focus on the types of gains that prisons promise and local communities hope to get rather than the negatives that locals fear from a prison.

Studies of social perceptions in new prison towns are not common, but do exist (Maxim 1983, Krause 1991, Farrington 1992, McShane and Williams 1992, Carlson 1992, Swanson 1993, Boester 2000). These studies look at how the community views the effects of the prison on the town and often use survey to show how the perceptions compare with reality. These surveys tend to ask questions very much in the NIMBY tradition; questions about perceptions of crime rates, safety and land values. Some deal with the perception of the effects of outsiders on the new community. Most of them show that the perceptions and fears that residents have often do not match what is really happening in their towns. Fear of escapes and riots are common, but the studies often show two overarching fears; the influx of new people in the community and how the outside world will perceive the town after the prisons are opened. The first fear has two subsets; the fear of inmate families moving to the area to be closer to the inmates and the effect that correctional officers will have on the community. Although no studies show a significant amount of inmate families moving to the communities, this fear of the "outsider" is still prevalent.⁷ Interestingly, it is often the Corrections Officers who move to a community to work in the prison that become the real outsiders, not the inmates or their families.

The second major fear- that the town will be universally viewed as a prison town- is perhaps the biggest downside to using prisons as an economic development strategy as far as many citizens are concerned. These towns are often ambivalent about the prospect of becoming a "prison town."⁸ Locals feel that it will be harder to bring in other

⁷ Most states have several prisons in different areas of the state and will move inmates almost at will, making moving to the area where a relative is incarcerated somewhat futile, as they could be moved at any time. A former top official in the Colorado DOC told me that they refer to this practice of moving inmates before they can become settled as "doing life on a bus."

⁸ As an odd side note, as a part of its curriculum, Head Start teaches about the major industry in the county. In both counties that I studied, Head Start teaches kids about industries other than the prisons despite the fact that the corrections industry is by far the largest employer in both places.

businesses to diversify the economy, but understand that there were few other options available to them.⁹

Although these studies bring up some interesting concerns, they seem stuck in another time. Although local residents have concerns about the impact of prisons on their communities, we need to turn these sorts of questions around in this new reality. These questions assume that the residents have perceptions about NIMBY concerns, but NIMBY assumes public disapproval. Expectations have changed and the questions need to mirror the kinds of expectations communities now have. Instead of seeking to find out if the negative concerns have come to pass, we need to find out if the positive expectations have been realized.

There were also a small number of economic studies done in the past which still have some relevance. They tended to focus on property values and per capita income, - the classic NIMBY concerns. (Lofting and Parks 1986, Abrams and Lyons 1987, Seidel and Chastain 1988, Parks 1990, Harris and Stoddard 1993, Avidon 1998, Burke 2001). These studies have a bit of a mixed bag of results, but most have found some modest boost in the economy for prison towns.¹⁰

The second category are those few studies that try to look at this issue from every angle. Two studies stand out since they cover many different aspects of prison impact, Katherine Carlson's 1990 study of Clallam Bay, Washington and Jeanne Theis's 1998 dissertation on Potosi, Missouri (Carlson 1990, Theis 1998). Both studies use multiple methodologies, giving a fuller picture of the overall effects of a prison on a community. Carlson especially avoids many methodological problems by beginning her study during the siting process and gauging both what the community thought the effect would be and what it actually was. Carlson study is dated by the new realities in prison siting since Clallam Bay had opposed the prison, in part, and certainly did not give the state the types of incentives that towns now offer. Also, having only one case gives us little in the way of comparison to other communities.

What Carlson does well is to begin to lead us in the proper direction. Mary Theis begins to pick up where she left off. Theis's work on Potosi is more recent and covers a town that did lobby the state of Missouri to locate their new supermax prison there. Theis uses multiple methodologies, using hard economic and social data mixed in with survey data with a few follow up interviews with members of the community. She found that Potosi had not reaped the economic benefit they had hoped for since poverty levels rose in the county since the prison opened (Theis, 1998, 106).¹¹ She also found that there was a rise in the crime rate, although she doesn't control for crimes committed inside the prison (149). But perhaps her most interesting findings are in her survey data, which show concerns among residents about inmate families moving to the area, despite evidence that this hasn't occurred (162) or released inmates remaining in the community, despite Missouri's policy of releasing offenders back to the community in which they

⁹ The former mayor of Cañon City, Colorado put it to me this way, "We don't have enough water to bring in a brewery and IBM ain't exactly knocking on the door. What else were we supposed to do?"

¹⁰ There seems to be a lot of disagreement among economists as to how to measure local economic growth in a way that distinguishes it from the economy both statewide and nationally. In fact, several scholars (Fiecock-get cite) argue that this is impossible to do.

¹¹ Her conclusion is odd, however, since unemployment rates were better than the state as a whole and per capita income rose steadily in the county, even when it remained stable statewide.

were sentenced (172). She failed to ask about the perceived effect of correctional officers and their families on the community, so we know nothing about this.

Although Theis's study is of a town that fits the new prison town model, she falls back on a classic NIMBY-type study, focusing on issues that past studies have shown to be problematic in siting correctional facilities. Although some of these concerns are still valid, the game has changed. Prisons are no longer a NIMBY for communities, but often are just like any other industrial economic development strategy, the social impact of which goes deeper than survey data can begin to understand.

Of late several conference papers, dissertations and institute reports have been written on the economic impact of prisons on communities and have begun to see that there is a new reality in the prison siting game. They attempt to see if prisons live up to their promise, whether focusing on sales tax revenue (BOE 2000, Chuang 1998), jobs (Huling 2002, King, Mauer and Huling 2003, Besser and Hanson 2003, Hooks et al 2004), political clout (Wood, 2003, Wagner, 2002) or a somewhat more general look at winners and losers in this game. Like the earlier studies, the results seem to be mixed. One report, contracted by the California Department of Corrections shows evidence that, at least in California, those communities that benefit most are smaller (under 15,000 population) and very rural (more than 100 miles from the nearest metropolitan area).¹² It is the only study done that shows a significant economic impact of prisons on a town.

Most of the studies seem to show some small economic benefit, depending on what factors they are specifically looking at. One study, however, finds that just the opposite is true. Hooks et. al. undertook a study of employment and carceral expansion in counties across the U.S. (Hooks et. al. 2004). The paper is a longitudinal study of both old and new prison communities and seeks to understand the impact on growth using public, private and total employment growth. They find that prisons do not stimulate overall growth, and, in fact, they actually impede it (49-50). They also point to the mounting evidence that in general, state and local initiatives rarely have a significant impact on growth (51).

Despite evidence to the contrary, towns continue to hold out hope that prison will be their economic salvation. As odd as it may seem, we need to begin to understand that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is to Beeville Texas what Microsoft is to Redmond Washington- It is the biggest employer in town as well as the town's economic heart and soul. As such, it is important to find out what exactly is different about having a prison serve in this capacity. It seems doubtful that IBM asks to borrow the town of Poughkeepsie's drug dogs or use its riot gear when employees get out of hand, but prison towns do get these types of calls from the institutions in their midst. Additionally, the sales force is unlikely to flood the local courts with civil suits and corporate employees don't usually form gangs to take out reprisals on the customers. But these are just the types of problems that the new prison town has to deal with and the relationship between the prison and the local community determines how smoothly incidents like the one described above are worked out.

Moving In, Walking, and Talking: Gathering Information

¹² <http://www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/prisonimpactstudy.pdf>

Warden Joe Gunja is a tall, thin man whose glasses seem reluctant to intrude on his chiseled, soldier's features. He was a military policeman before becoming a corrections officer (CO) at the United States Penitentiary (USP) at Leavenworth. He worked his way up through the federal corrections system, did two more "tours" at Leavenworth, moved through Texas and was promoted to his first Warden position in Cumberland, Maryland. He arrived at USP-Florence after the so-called "cowboy scandal" in which a group of corrections officers, calling themselves The Cowboys, was indicted for abusing inmates. Gunja is a fixer; a man brought in to clean up problems in a facility. Soon after our interview he was promoted to a regional directorship for the Bureau of Prisons.

When we discussed the economic impact the prison had on the local community, I thought perhaps he would mention unemployment rates, the number of new residents in the town where his prison is situated, or something along those lines, but I was mistaken. "[T]hat Texaco on the corner of highways 67 and 115 must make a killing. I stop there all of the time on my way home," is the only reference he made (J. Gunja, personal communication, July, 2003). Other than that, he sees little change brought by the prison. He says that very few prison employees live in Florence and the prison does not buy many goods from local businesses.

In talking to the director of the local chamber of commerce, Darrel Lindsay, one gets a completely different perspective. Lindsey says that the Federal Correctional Complex at Florence

literally revived a town that was doomed to be a ghost town. We had 2700 people here when the prison decided to come. Our population has doubled. Our water and sewer plants were given badly needed upgrades; probably ten new businesses opened and four new subdivisions have been or are being built. Thirty-eight percent of the federal employees live in Fremont County. And with the new Summa subdivision and golf course, we expect that number to go up. It's almost like it's too good to be true (D. Lindsay, personal communication, July, 2003).

From Darrel Lindsay's perspective the prisons are almost too good to be true. He, perhaps more than anyone in town has benefited from them. Two of his children work for the Bureau of Prisons and he has appeared on the TLC television network when they came to town to do a special on the prisons there.

The incongruity is understandable, because both men are correct. Lindsay is correct in pointing out the population gains and the new businesses in the community, but these growth indicators could just as easily be attributed to the push the community has made to become a tourist destination (most of the new businesses are kitschy antique stores). Gunja is correct in pointing out that the Texaco station does seem to be thriving due to commuter traffic, and that most prison employees do not live in Florence proper.

I encounter a similar problem when I ask the Warden how he feels about the locals and their view of Bureau of Prisons employees. I tell him that many community members discuss the federal employees as being generally clannish and unfriendly. Warden Gunja claims he has had the opposite experience: He doesn't feel fully welcomed in the community, and his son feels like people were very wary of him when he started in the local high school.

Both men are looking at a similar issue from different perspectives, that of a Warden of a large federal prison and that of a local business leader. Both perspectives are important and getting this variety of subjective perspectives is what drives the findings in this book. This book seeks to understand this new phenomenon in order to discover some of the issues that arise through participant observation. There is a long and rich history of this type of “soaking and poking” in Political Science and this work is no different.¹³ This research “on the ground” led to the more formal interviews with governmental leaders, prison officials and police personnel.

This section will outline the methodology and framework used in this book. In it, I briefly outline some of the major epistemological debates in qualitative research and justify my use of participant-observation to understand the issues in these two post-NIMBY prison towns. This book is, at its core, a work of legal ethnography, where the researcher looks at the relationship between legal institutions and the community in which they reside by immersing himself in the culture of that community and I will discuss the steps I took to do so. In that discussion will be a brief history of the legal ethnography. I argue that this study can be distinguished from other legal ethnographies in its broadening of the classic understanding of the law to include criminal justice institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD:

In their seminal work, *Designing Social Inquiry*, King, Keohane and Verba outline how they believe qualitative research must change in order to live up to the methodological rigor they desire (1994). Their basic argument is that qualitative research needs to become more like quantitative research, with its dependence on the scientific method and hypothesis testing.¹⁴ Their argument, although meticulous and important, questions much of what is best about qualitative research in the first place. As Gerardo Munck points out: “Qualitative methodologists ... point to opportunities to move beyond strict hypothesis testing by engaging in an ongoing refinement of concepts, the iterated fine tuning of hypotheses, and the use of specifically targeted case studies that appear likely to suggest new hypotheses and theoretical ideas (in Brady and Collier eds. (2004), p. 119).” This process of exploratory qualitative research, leading to hypothesis and theory generation adds to our understanding of issues that either have not been the subject of much academic interest or discuss an issue that has fundamentally changed in some way.

The topic of this study is of the second kind. Despite the fact that the literature recognizes a fundamental shift from “prisons as NIMBY” (Not In My Backyard) to “prisons as economic savior,” recent studies still fall back on the same hypotheses and theories as before, mainly by narrowly focusing on economic indicators or survey data on social perceptions (Huling, 2002; King, Mauer and Huling, 2003; Wood, 2003, Besser and Hanson, 2003; Hooks et. al. 2004). They serve an important function in studying

¹³ In his seminal work *Home Styles*, Richard Fenno argued that, “[r]esearch based on participant observation is likely to have an exploratory emphasis (1977, p.)” This work draws on a long tradition in political science that, although most famously done by Fenno has many denizens especially those who study law, courts and criminal justice (see Casper, 1972; Heumann, 1977; Wilson, 1968; Engel, 1986, 1994; Lin 2000).

¹⁴ See Collier and Brady, *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (2004) for a more complete summary and critique of the DSI.

economic indicators and citizen attitudes, but miss some fundamental changes that have occurred on the ground. Even when those studies include more qualitative elements seem to fall back on interview questions informed more by works of the past than issues of the present (Theis 1998; Belk 2006).

Interpretive socio-legal studies like this one do not fit comfortably into a single departmental or subfield oriented models, but embrace the interdisciplinarity of groups such as the Law and Society Association and others in the growing “Law and...” movement. As Renalto Rosoldo argues, “Interdisciplinarity ... often embodies research agendas and intellectual currents at odds with work done within conventional discipline-based paradigms of research (in Scott and Keats, eds. (2001), p. 67).” An ethnographic study, undertaken by a political scientist on a subject that has been mainly the province of the criminology world, is just that type of work.

Legal ethnographies, specifically, attempt to understand the culture of the community’s relationship with some aspect of law through the perspective presented by the actors themselves. Ethnographic work is interested in collecting a different type of data than other methodologies for a different purpose. As John Flood argues,

This is not to say that ethnography cannot produce systematic results, but it is not overly concerned with questions of validity and reliability in the conventional way, say, that quantitative approaches are. The research process for ethnography is different from others: it is tentative, multi-textured, open-ended and discursive. It starts from a point of learning and enquiry that recognises we know little rather than supposing a state of knowledge which is subject to *ex post facto* ratification (in Banker and Travers, eds. (2005), p. 34).

This research recognizes that there is a “state of knowledge” about these new prison towns, while arguing that the state of knowledge is incomplete. Other than the economic impact studies, we indeed “know little” about this subject, making it ripe for a more interpretive research method and “thick description” in order to add to our base of knowledge for future work (Geertz, 1977).

The distinction between “classic” ethnographic work, like that of Geertz, and “legal” ethnographic work is mainly a question of focus. While cultural ethnographic work tends to be more generalized,¹⁵ the legal ethnography has a more specified purpose. This mode of research is certainly not a new undertaking (Malinowski, 1926; Llewelyn and Hoebel, 1941; Bohannan, 1957; Gluckman, 1955, 1965), but in its early incarnation, most legal anthropologists kept their focus abroad. This began to change in the 80’s and 90’s, with the rise of the Law and Society movement, which allowed for legal scholars to look for new ways to understand the effects of law on communities and cultures and a forum in which to discuss different methodological strategies. During this time, several scholars conducted ethnographic studies in the United States (Merry, 1990; Conley and

¹⁵ Much of recent ethnographic work tends to be more focused than the more grand ethnographies of the past, so perhaps legal ethnographies are just a further sectioning off of knowledge. This seems to be the general trend in the social sciences and humanities as a whole, with the larger more broadly minded studies of the 70’s being replaced by more and more specificity and specialty.

O'Barr, 1990; Engel, 1984; Yngvesson, 1993; Greenhouse, 1986; Nader, 1993). However, the focus of the field remained abroad (Moore, 2001).

Legal ethnographies generally, especially those done in this county, study the individual or the community's relationship to "the law." They attempt to understand how people, through their own lens and narrative descriptions, use (or even view) the law in their lives. In this research, however, "the law" is fairly narrowly defined and usually related to courts (O'Barr and Connely, 1990; Nader, 1993; Greenhouse, Engel and Yngvesson, 1994). Although no scholars explicitly argue that the civil legal system is an exhaustive notion of what law entails, their specific focus implicitly ignores other legal institutions and their relationship to the community. As Greenhouse argues, "along with other legal ethnographers, we felt compelled to reorient our comparative questions around specific problematic aspects of the state of norms and institutions in everyday life (p. 9)." In theory, this may well be true, but the focus of most legal ethnographers remains in the civil courts and on civil litigation. The institutions involved in the criminal justice system, especially cops and corrections, if you'll excuse the alliteration, are also legal institutions. The last of these, corrections, is rarely treated as a legal institution, and even more rarely as a political one.¹⁶ I argue that it is both.

By looking at prisons as a political institution, we can look at institutional relationships, rather than treating prisons as what Erving Goffman has termed a "total institution (1961)," a closed society that needs little from the institutions that surround it. Although this may have been true in the past, the shifting nature of prisons in our society as well as the booming prison population has brought prisons more into the light of day. They have become political entities and have developed institutional relationships (Bright, 1996).

In recognizing this shift, this work begins to give a more complete understanding of the new prison towns by looking into areas that other scholars have overlooked. It is exploratory and seeks to go beyond what can be understood by surveys or interview data alone. However, there is significant interview data in my research. I conducted 62 formal interviews with local governmental officials and prison managers as well as local business and educational leaders. But this research went beyond just the formal interview process. I conducted over 100 informal interviews with community residents and prison employees. I attended city council meetings, community relations board meetings and local economic development corporation meetings. I spent time in six local prisons. I essentially sought to immerse myself in the two towns in my study.

In order to facilitate this immersion into the community, I purchased a 19-foot travel-trailer which became my home for over a year. I spent six months living in a trailer park on the outskirts of Beeville and eight months over two summers living in Florence. This experience gave me insights and experiences that I might not have enjoyed had I stayed in a hotel or just visited in short stints. As I walked my dog through the trailer park and town, I would start conversations with local community members and these informal "interviews" led to a wealth of information. The respondents invariably asked what I was doing in their community, which I used as my opening to begin to ask questions. I would answer that I was studying the relationship between the prison and the

¹⁶ Charles Bright's, *The Power to Punish* (1996) is one exception to this. There has been ethnographic work done inside prisons (Sykes, 1958; Jacobs, 1977; Fleischer, 1986), but of these works, only Jacobs sees the importance of linking the prison with the outside world.

town, but I quickly learned that the terms “book” or even “thesis” were met with blank stares, so I switched to stating that I was writing a book about the subject.¹⁷

This opener led in many different directions. I always brought up three issues: first, the effect the prison has had, second, the relationship between the town and prison and third, what specifically had changed, but otherwise was willing to let the conversations wander in a variety of directions. I never took notes during these sessions for one major reason: I very quickly noticed how nervous it made people. My goal was to make these meetings as informal as possible and note taking was not conducive to this. Given this, I directly quote very few people with whom I had informal interviews.¹⁸ I feel that what was lost by this method is far outweighed by the amount of “insider” information I was given along the way, whether it was the teen that showed me how to pick out the trailers where methamphetamines were being cooked by feeling for heat or the ex-inmate who told me about living under supermax conditions in a Texas prison. Although information like this may appear to be tangential to my study, allowing the residents of these communities to let me into their lives in whatever way they wished helped me to gain a better understanding of life there.

In this spirit, I spent endless mornings in local coffee shops and spent afternoons in the mayor of Beeville’s barber shop. I watched the Saturday night ritual of “cruising” in Florence and talked to the teenagers who drove endlessly around Main Street that night. I had a parolee point out what businesses he claimed were selling drugs out of the back door and even taught a class at a local community college. I spent several days shadowing the Bee County Sheriff as he went about his routine. In other words, I tried to understand the fabric of these towns and, as much as possible, become an insider.

This process is not simple or easy. As John Flood argues, “[E]thnography presents a unique set of problems for the researcher, in part because it is a messy process. There are problems of entry, developing trust and empathy, recording interaction, and making sense of ethnographic data (p. 40).” In my research, “problems of entry” were solved by an informal strategy. For example, gaining access to prisons is not an easy task¹⁹ and I went through informal channels, rather than formal ones, using people I met and interviewed along the way to gain access to prison officials.²⁰ I was surprised by how much access I was given at times and how easy it was, especially in Texas.²¹ I found that, for me, introducing myself to local officials and community members in person at

¹⁷ We’ll hope this turns out to be true

¹⁸ Several scholars have discussed the accuracy of their notes when taken after an interview and their use of quotations despite the time lag between comments being made and recorded (Fenno, 1977; Lin, 2000). I was not as comfortable with my own memory, so I chose not to use direct quotations in many cases.

¹⁹ For various descriptions of how scholars get access to prison systems, see DiIulio 1986, Jacobs 1977, Fleischer 1989, Lin 2000

²⁰ At one point, I tried to go through official channels to gain access to prison employees in Arizona. I wasn’t denied access, per se, but was completely ignored, even when I showed up at the Arizona’s Department of Corrections in Phoenix.

²¹ I believe that Texas’s historical battles with the courts helped me in this regard, since monitors often inspected the units. I was told by several corrections officers that they had elaborate warning system in order to notify each other of these monitors presence. They used a series of code words on the two way radios all officers carry to warn of their arrival in a specific area. They use a similar system to warn each other of an approaching prison administrator. I can only assume that they warned each other when I was coming as well.

meetings or even in coffee shops was more effective than any other way of gaining access.

I followed a similar procedure in each community to begin the process. Before I “hit the road” I gathered as much information as I could about the local prisons, but tried to learn very little about the town itself beyond the basics of how they fit into my study. I wanted, as much as possible, to learn about the town from the people who lived there. My first stop, after setting up at the trailer park, was the local library.²² Neither town’s local newspaper was easily accessible from elsewhere, so this was my first priority; to put together a history of the prisons in town from a local perspective and the process through which they were sited.²³ I used these newspapers as my first glimpse into the history I would later get from the people in the town.

My second stop was the local community college. In Florence, I did this solely to get internet access (my trailer was not exactly wired for e-mail), but found that the employees there were a good resource. After that I went about getting to know the community and its residents. I spent several weeks in each community “soaking and poking” without starting any formal interviews. I wanted to get their perspective before speaking to anyone in a position of power. I wanted the citizens to help me develop my interview questions and try and ask about those issues that concerned them as insiders, not the questions that I thought were important coming in from the outside. I continued to check myself with community residents throughout the process and get feedback on my interviews with community elites.

It was here that the paths diverged. In any attempt to gain access to elites, even in a small town, the road can often be made easier through the help of someone on the inside. I was fortunate enough to find such a person in both communities. In Florence it was the college president who was my “in” to the prisons and community leaders. In Beeville, it was the prison prosecutor who did so. Both people let me do an enormous amount of “hanging around”, as Fenno puts it.²⁴ They would introduce me to everyone we met and also made phone calls on my behalf. In both towns, those people I did not meet in this manner, I met them at city council meetings and in Beeville, at the county commissioner’s court. There were very few outsiders at these meetings, so it was not difficult to get attention and introduce myself afterwards.

My formal interviews were structured around several questions that I asked every interviewee.²⁵ From there, I let the conversation flow. I wanted to have systematic answers to certain questions, but was willing to allow for a fair amount of wandering. For the most part, this was not a problem. Before I would ask my first formal questions, I always warmed up my respondents by asking about their work. When I did not do this, I often got very brief answers to the questions that I were answered in detail by others. I

²² Florence’s library is very limited, both in resources and in the hours it was open, so I instead used the library facilities in next door Canon City, where they have a wonderful local history office. The women who work in the basement office were helpful beyond my wildest dreams, since they spent much of their time cutting and sorting articles from the local papers and filing them by topic.

²³ In using local newspapers, rather than regional ones I feel that I was able to discern a more “local” view of the process.

²⁴ See the introduction to *Home Style* for the importance of “hanging around,” especially in the early stages of this type of research.

²⁵ See Appendix A

wanted to build rapport before asking the more important questions.²⁶ For the most part this worked and 30 minute appointments rarely lasted less than an hour and often lasted longer.²⁷

With town officials, I always let them tell me their version of how the prisons came to town. This could sometimes be very repetitive, but the subtle differences in the stories, or even those details emphasized by one person over another were important in the social history discussed in the next section. I tried my best to always act like this was the first time I had heard the story.²⁸

I made an attempt to interview all local elected officials. For the most part, I did so, and those that I did not interview were the result of scheduling conflicts, rather than a refusal on their part to speak to me. I interviewed both town's current city managers as well as a few former ones. I also interviewed the heads of both local chambers of commerce as well as police chiefs, sheriffs and as many of their underlings as they would allow.

Some respondents who were formally interviewed in one place were not necessarily in the other. For example, I spoke to the Superintendent of the Beeville school system, who referred me to a principle of the elementary school where many children of Corrections officers went. She was extremely helpful in discussing some of the issues involved with this influx of children to the school system. Given how few Corrections Officers actually live in Florence or have children who attend the schools there, this hardly seemed a necessary interview to conduct there.

There were also other community leaders that had no equivalent person from one place to the other, for example the special prison prosecutor. There is no prison prosecutor in Florence and even the district attorney was of little help with prison prosecutions, since they were held in Federal Court. I also spoke with several local judges in Beeville, but did not try to interview the federal judges who were responsible for Florence, since they were located a distance away in Pueblo. Overall, there were very few interviews that I wish I had conducted that I did not and few community leaders who did not give graciously of their time.

On the prison's side, I attempted to interview all of the top officials in both states. This was a far easier task in Texas than in Colorado. Every person I contacted in Texas was willing to meet with me (including several former wardens and one warden who had moved to a facility in Huntsville, Texas) and was rarely made to feel like I was intruding on an interviewee's time. I spoke to the current wardens and assistant wardens of all three facilities in Beeville as well as several Majors, the highest uniformed officers in the

²⁶ For the importance of building rapport, see Fenno, p. 263-274.

²⁷ This didn't always happen, however. Several respondents, especially prison employees, remained guarded throughout my interview and couldn't wait to get me out of their offices. I would sometimes fall back on some form of "I'm not a reporter here...I'm not trying to make you look stupid," with mixed results

²⁸ I also tried my best to play what Ray Charles referred to as "country dumb," often using stories of my childhood in rural Maine to warm up the conversations. In her article on elite interviewing, Beth Leech makes the argument that one never wants to try and come off as smarter than the interviewee (PS?). In rural communities, there also seemed to be a distrust of my being from what they considered an elite eastern university (I'm pretty sure by the reaction I got to stating that I was a student at Rutgers, that most people had Rutgers confused with Princeton). I found that by mentioning that I grew up in a small town Northern Maine helped with this.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Even the regional director of the TDCJ and director of institutions for all of Texas met with me.

This process was not as easy in Colorado. Several wardens granted me interviews after I met them and introduced myself at a local economic development corporation luncheon, but several others either refused outright or ducked my calls after I met them. Even so, I interviewed seven top administrators for the BOP formally and spoke to several others informally at various meetings.

During the interview process, I realized very quickly that I got much more detailed answers if I began by discussing the job of being a warden or prison administrator, rather than beginning with my formal questions. Several administrators wanted to conduct their interviews on the run, giving me a tour of the facility while answering my questions. Although this sometimes led to some interesting incidents, it also led to a much freer flowing conversation.²⁹ In every case but one, these very busy individuals went well beyond the time that they scheduled for me. One warden came to speak to my class at the local community college about corrections work, complete with a number of inmate knives or shanks and homemade tattoo machines.

Most of my interview questions and theories came from the in-depth conversations I had with community residents, very few of whom are cited in this study. They gave me the canvas on which my other respondents painted. Often times, it was in these encounters and conversations where I first heard about issues that I discussed at length with prison officials and community leaders. Without the groundwork, these issues never would have come to the surface and I would not have known their importance.

CONCLUSION:

Exploratory research as a whole is a useful tool in beginning to understand issues and questions when the current state of knowledge is limited. The relationship between prisons and communities is one of these areas of interest. Despite some work in the field, little is known about what these communities can expect to get from these institutions on which they have hung their economic future. These expectations include the economic effects, but the relationship that is developed between the local governmental institutions and the prisons is important as well.

This section discussed the method used in this paper to expand our knowledge in this field. Like many ethnographic works, it is exploratory. The design involved studying two communities for a substantial period of time in order to learn the central themes that surface in these new prison towns. The preliminary stages of the research were mainly informal interviews with community residents. I then conducted formal interviews with community and prison leaders about the subjects discussed in the first stage in this research. Using this methodology I was able to uncover many issues that were not

²⁹ Two incidents in particular are worth repeating. During one tour/interview, the warden I was interviewing introduced me to an inmate, something no one else did. After meeting this inmate, the Warden told me that he had first met this man over 20 years earlier when he was a corrections officer in Texas. He was now a warden in a federal facility and had run into this man in his prison, some 1000 miles away from their first meeting. A second incident occurred when I was invited to lunch by a different warden. I've read many prison memoirs and a common theme in these books is that inmates will often violate the food served in the staff dining hall with various bodily fluids. I wanted to refuse this gesture, but felt that I could not without ruining my rapport with this man, so with great trepidation, I ate hot dogs and fries in the staff cafeteria. To date, I have not shown any signs of illness.

previously discussed in the research on prison towns. Before discussing these findings, however, we must first get a better understanding of the towns themselves. The following section paints such a picture by detailing the history and geography of Florence and Beeville.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

“[C]ommunity” not only conceptually distinguishes the past from the present but also authentic members of the community from a host of “others” whose presence is perceived to be undermining in any number of ways.

Greenhouse, *Law and Community in Three American Town*

As I drove west on highway 50 into Fremont County, Colorado at 8pm on June 8th, 2003, I was not expecting to see much. I figured that I would find a home for the night and explore the area the next day. But in the distance, I saw the unmistakable orange glow of the “night” lights of a rather large prison complex. This was my first time actually seeing the lights of ADX Florence, the so-called “Alcatraz of the Rockies,” the Federal Government’s only supermax prison. This is where it houses “the worst of the worst” inmates under 23 hour-a-day lockdown. At least I assumed it was ADX Florence. Actually, I was not sure which of the 13 prisons that Fremont County houses that I was seeing. My assumption had been that I might catch a glimpse of the ADX or from the road, but it could not have been more than a few more seconds before I saw another orange glow. And then another. And then another. And then a billboard for the Colorado Territorial Prison Museum. It might as well have said “Welcome to Prisons town USA.”

Florence, Colorado is located where the high eastern plains of Colorado meet the “foothills” of the Rocky Mountains in Central Colorado (see figure one). “Foothills” is a relative term here, since these hills are over 9000 feet high, rising 4000 feet from the Colorado Plateau below. They are, however, foothills when compared to the 13,000 and 14,000-foot peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the south and west. Florence has only two stoplights, two motels and one fast food joint. If the prison has brought any prosperity to this small rural community, it was not immediately noticeable to me.

Beeville, Texas lies in the heart of South Texas (see figure two) and presents itself quite differently than Florence. While one can see for miles on a Colorado highway, South Texas is flat. Really flat. Really flat and really brown. Driving into Beeville from East Texas, it feels like you might fall off the edge of the earth at any moment. The roads are long, straight and seemingly endless. In fact, I was told that the stretch of highway that runs near Beeville to Corpus Christi is the longest stretch of highway without a curve in the United States. Unlike Florence, you could almost trip over the prisons in town without noticing them beforehand.

Texas is only considered a coherent whole by those who do not live there. For Texans, there is a significant cultural distinction based on geography and terrain. East Texas, with Houston as its hub, has more in common with its Louisiana neighbors than it does with the ranch lands of West Texas that President Bush calls home. South Texas is distinct. Its culture has a distinctly Mexican feel to it and although Beeville is not

directly on the border like Laredo or Brownsville the influence is still obvious. Despite the fact that Beeville is only a few hours drive from the urban, cultural centers of both San Antonio and Austin, there is nothing cosmopolitan about this place.

There is more to a community than just where it is located. Since ethnographic work is imbedded in the local community, the logical starting point for any study of this type is an understanding of history and geography. I begin the substantive sections by outlining what is distinct about these two places and discuss some of what they have in common. This section will outline the history and geography of these two communities, especially their successful efforts to land a prison.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?:

The term “community” that is used consistently by the respondents in this study can be troubling and raises many questions. For example, what are the definitional limits of “community?” Is this a question of geography or something deeper? Who is to be considered a part of the community? It is in attempting to answer these questions that the insider/outsider dichotomy begins to take form. The community is defined, in many ways, by who is considered an “insider” and who is considered an “outsider.” Geography is part of what matters in this definition, but one is not considered part of a community just based on a geographic location. Insider status is, in many ways, a self-definition and can be a very fuzzy concept, but an important one for the residents of a town. Greenhouse and others argue that the insider or “good” citizen defines himself and others in juxtaposition to the outsider or “bad” citizen and builds important notions about “community” using this classification (1994, p. 10).

Defining the insider and outsider is a difficult task. “[T]he boundary between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ is selective, fluid, somewhat arbitrary, and sometimes non-existent. That is, the concept of outsider does not necessarily apply to any actual group (p. 11).” The outsiders in my research often come in the form of newcomers to the community brought in with the new businesses for economic development purposes. All communities struggle with the encroachment of the larger society on their smaller world, usually due to market forces. Adjustments are made, but many “insiders” consider these changes to be detrimental to their notions of a good community and many have an especially hard time adjusting to new realities and get caught up in the quagmire of economic development policy (p. 75). On the one hand, a small town saves itself from potential extinction by bringing in new business, but on the other, a new element is brought in that changes the face of the community, bringing in the consummate “outsider” in the form of new employees (p. 158-161).

In small towns, the idea of community is given “great cultural weight borne by images of a harmonious small town, a face-to-face society (p. 12).” This idea comes from a mix of local social history and personal memory in which there is a harkening back to a local “golden age;” a time “when things worked” (p. 149). The reality of life cannot live up to this mythology and many bemoan the current state of “community” in their towns. This is the “myth of community,” one that exists in many rural towns. It is the idea that, although there is no “community” now, but there was a time when it was a part of their lives. Due to this harkening back, there is an important relationship between “community” and “history” in these small towns (p. 149). A shared social history is an

important part in keeping the “myth of community” alive; it is a tricky concept and perspectives (as well as one’s own “reality”) change over time.

There is a tension that specifically arises between the importance of social harmony and the introduction of market realities. The sense in the community is that in order to continue just to survive an influx of new capital is needed and there is inevitably the arrival of an outside element, which in turn brings dissonance into the previous sense of harmony. But as we will see below, this sense of former harmony itself may just be a myth, nonetheless the addition of new residents or even commuters become the “other” which a community can blame for the current problems. “Insiders” place these others into a category outside of their community, despite the difficulty insiders have in defining exactly what they mean when they use the term.

Community becomes a mix of the concepts of geography and a shared social history. This definition automatically and purposely excludes new residents who may move to a town. Their exclusion from and perspective on the community in which they now work is an important one and is better served by keeping them as “outsiders.” This is also done because the people who consider themselves “insiders” do so. Even with this definition, such as it is, the definitional problems continue. The next section will define one of the important parts of the definition of community itself, that of geography.

GEOGRAPHY:

If there is such a thing as a quaint rural town, neither Beeville nor Florence is it. Florence has some distinct geographical features that might make it more appealing than Beeville, but it is hardly Vail or Aspen, which lie in the mountains several hours to the north. The poverty of both communities is tangible and obvious to any visitor, with their abundant trailer parks and teenage girls pushing baby carriages. There are no high end stores in either place, or a mall within 30 miles.

Beeville, for its small population size, is actually quite sprawling. There is a downtown area, which has the courthouse and the library at its center, but most of the shopping has moved to the north side of town. This is the commercial zone, with all of the larger stores, except for the large H-E-B grocery store that is on the western edge of downtown. There is a Wal-Mart (which has since become a Super Wal-Mart), a large tractor supply store, and a few fast food joints and motels. The prisons are on the outskirts of town to the south and east.

Florence is much smaller and compact. Other than a new grocery store, and a Super 8 motel (which is a stone’s throw from the prisons), there is no commercial life beyond downtown and downtown itself has little commercial activity aimed at its residents, besides the local bars. Florence’s residential zones are either dilapidated older houses or newer modular homes. The only real growth that is immediately discernable is the new high school, built thanks to a bond issue on the ballot a few years ago.

To the outside observer, neither community looks like it has experienced an economic boom. In rural communities it seems that the storefronts in downtown are one measure by which locals gauge the strength of their community- the fewer empty storefronts that exist, the stronger the health of the town. There is an economic reality at play in this and more stores might mean a bustling economy, but there is a symbolic meaning as well. Many of the individuals that I talked to in both communities discussed the prevalence of empty storefronts in downtown before the prisons came. The empty

storefront represents not only a loss of economic security, but also a sense of community instability.

Both towns have filled most of their empty storefronts, but with very different results. The San Antonio Express wrote a story about downtown Beeville stating “while Beeville now has an abundance of fast-food franchises, its newer businesses also include rent-to-own furniture stores, nine signature lenders, three pawn shops and a growing number of payday lenders, including two located in Circle K stores.” (Guerra, 2000) These are not the kind of stores that most communities crave. They are stores that cater to a constituency living from paycheck to paycheck, without enough expendable income to afford luxury items. The situation was much the same as when I was there. Despite this, the H-E-B supermarket has expanded twice since the prisons came and business at the Wal-Mart is bustling. But this has done little to revitalize downtown.

Main Street in Florence seems to deal in two major commodities, alcohol and antiques. Whether or not the bars have opened in response to the prison is questionable, but the antique shops were certainly brought in through other means. According to a former City Manager, the Florence business leaders have taken the lead in changing their economic situation with the town’s new emphasis on selling antiques and knickknacks, since the prisons did not bring the kind of boom they had hoped for (SR, personal communication, August, 2003). Another former Town Manager also sees very little change in the economics of Florence that came from the prisons, but has seen some growth through other means. The town’s business leaders had expected that the government would spend more money in the town on supplies, but the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) has contracts with big firms for almost everything they buy. BOP regulations allow each facility to contract on its own for many of its supplies, but Florence’s business leaders rarely get the contracts.³⁰

One local warden claims that this is a problem of expectations from the town’s standpoint. He said, “they didn’t seem to understand that everything we buy has to be bid on and we always buy from the lowest bidder. If the local true value store is selling hammers for \$50 and we can get it elsewhere for \$25, we’re going to buy the hammer for \$25 (JG, personal communication, July, 2003).” The point is valid as a large prison facility is not going to shop at the local grocery or department store. Several years ago, a group of business owners had a meeting with the Wardens at the FCC to discuss the possibility of the prisons conducting more business with local vendors, but it seems to have little impact (LL, personal communication, May 2004).

Additionally, neither town is a geographical dream world. Despite having mountains at its outskirts, Florence is by no means a beautiful location and is much more arid desert than forest. The mountains might be considered lovely in another setting, but not when one can drive an hour away and see the craggy peaks of the Sangre de Cristos. I heard Florence residents call their mountains “ugly (SM, personal communication, May 2004).” Even so, at least they have their ugly mountains, since Beeville does not even have a physical feature that is distinctive at all. Not that either town is particularly distinctive. They both look like hundreds of small rural communities around the U.S. with their dilapidated downtowns and bustling Wal-Marts. Even the prisons do not

³⁰ For the BOP’s general rules about contacts with vendors, see <http://www.bop.gov/business/how.jsp>. The full BOP regulations can be found at http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/4100_004.pdf. This is a 133 page document that describes in detail what the BOP requires in order for a business to become a vendor.

detract from their rural American appearance and given the addition of prisons in so many communities, may actually add to it. Where these two towns differ most is in their social make-up and specifically their racial make-up.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS:

In most measures of economic health, Beeville and Florence are very similar when compared to how far behind they are to their respective states and the country as a whole. Where they diverge, however, is in the changes in median household income levels and unemployment rates, since Beeville's economic indicators have worsened since 1990 while Florence's have shown some improvement. This may be a sign that Florence is seeing some positive development due to the prisons, but several scholars point out that these indicators are complex when only looking at a few communities (Hooks, 2004; McShane, Williams and Wagoner, 1992).

The median family income in Beeville in 2000 was \$14,000 less than in all of Texas while Florence lagged behind the rest of Colorado at the time by almost \$18,000.³¹ Both towns lagged behind the country as a whole by almost \$16,000 year. When one considers the relationship between median household incomes in the towns in relationship to the state, these two towns appear to be going in opposite directions between 1990 and 2000. The median household income in Florence was 53% that of Colorado as a whole in 1990, but went up to 61% in 2000. Beeville's median household income in relation to the rest of Texas has gone down over the same period, from 72% to 65%. In Beeville's case, this may not have any relationship to the opening of the prison, since the local Naval Air Station also closed during that period of time, with a loss of a large number of jobs. It may be argued that this decline would have been even more severe had the prisons not opened. For Florence, these numbers seem to indicate some growth in relation to the state as a whole and may show that the prisons have indeed had an impact on the economy. However, there may also be something to the argument made by several former city managers that a focus on tourism and the addition of the antique stores to the downtown area has made a difference in Florence's economic health.

Whether or not there has been some growth in Florence, we still have two communities who lag far behind the rest of the country on most measures of socio-economic status. While the country as a whole had 9.2% of families living below poverty level in 2000, those numbers were 12.5% and 26.5% for Florence and Beeville respectively. Thirty-three percent of the population as a whole is in professional, managerial or other related occupations, while only about 25% of the populations of Florence and Beeville are. Neither of these indicators has changed significantly since the prisons came to town, so the growth may come from elsewhere.

Another area of divergence was in unemployment, where Florence had only a 1.3% unemployment rate in 2000 as compared to 5.5% in Beeville and 3.7% nationally. In the unemployment realm, we again see two towns going in opposite directions since the prisons opened. Beeville's unemployment rate was 3.0% in 1990 while Florence's was 10.1%. The national average in 1990 was 5.6%. One might argue that this too is a result of the prisons, but most people, whether from the prison or the community claim that very few prison jobs went to Florence residents.

³¹ All of the data cited in this section was retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

In addition to hard economic data, there are other important social indicators. One such indicator is racial, but the racial make-up of the two communities is important for different reasons for the purposes of this study. In Florence, there are a significant number of minority prison workers, most of whom live elsewhere. Part of this reason may be just how white Florence is.³² According to the 2000 Census, Florence is nearly 93% White with an African-American population of 0.3%. In other words, Florence has 11 black residents out of a population of 3653. Next door Cañon City was once home to the Colorado Chapter of the KKK and several prison administrators told me that their black employees complained about being profiled by the local police (HR, personal communication, June, 2004).

Beeville is not the heart of heterogeneity either, but has a bit more racial diversity than Florence, since it has a large Hispanic population. Beeville is only 3% Black, but Hispanics make up almost 68% of the population. Beeville has a serious racial divide, with Hispanics and White neighborhoods standing on opposite sides of the railroad tracks. The racial tensions are still obvious in the politics of the town, despite protestations to the contrary. Ken Chesshir told me that, “You have some old timers, like Arnold (Councilman Arnold Medina) who still screams ‘racism’ at every turn, but for the most part, things seem to be calmer now. Gilbert Herrera (a young City Council member and TDCJ employee) says that we should have a Hispanic mayor, but then Gil has wanted to be mayor since the third day he was on the Council (personal communication, February, 2004).”

Chesshir may claim that it’s getting better, but Medina abstains from every vote the Council takes. Three of the four County Commissioners were Hispanic at the time of my research, but several white local politicians argued that this was because they packed the voting booths, taking busloads of seniors from the local homes to the polls as well as other more unsavory acts. Whether or not this is true or just an urban (or rather rural) myth is up for debate, but shows the level of distrust between the races in the political world.

Although Beeville has more Hispanics than Florence, both towns African-American populations remain minuscule. In fact, the only Blacks I encountered in Beeville were on work crews and there was something very unnerving in seeing these inmates in their white uniforms, chained together and doing landscaping and other grunt work. The scene certainly had a slave-like feel to it that made me quite uncomfortable. I often asked about this issue, but none of my interviewees seemed to see the connection as I did. I also asked what the effects might be on a community when the only Blacks the residents encountered were incarcerated, but many community members dodged the issue. In fact, most seemed perplexed by the question.

One official did discuss the issue of race with me. He stated that there was a problem in bringing criminally sophisticated urban blacks to Beeville to be watched over by “ignorant country boys” as corrections officers (DH personal communication, March, 2004). He claimed that the inmates viewed them as fresh meat and did what they could to corrupt them. He said that they start with small favors, asking CO’s to mail a letter for them or some such small favor. Such a favor can cost an employee his job and after one such incident, the inmate essentially owns them, threatening to tell a supervisor about the

³² As on black warden told me, “I can’t even find anyone here who can give me a haircut (HR, personal communication, August 2003).”

favor unless the officer does more significant ones. Furthermore, the inmates will take advantage when they can. In one such incident, several inmates were indicted for unlawful restraint of a corrections officer. A 19 year old local corrections officer was held in a cell by three inmates during a cell search. Another inmate came out of the cell for the search and after getting on the other side of the CO, claimed that he had to go back in. He then pushed the CO into the cell where the other three grabbed him and held him down. The event ended without injuries, but the incident seems to exemplify the official's concerns.

Despite some differences in these two places, there is much that they share. This is especially true in terms of a similar history in lobbying for a prison facility. This process is an important part of the shared social history of each community and is the most important one in this study. The decision to and process of lobbying to land a prison changed the face of these two communities, often in ways never imagined. The following section will discuss this significant historical moment and describe the lobbying process in both communities.

SITING AND LOBBYING: THE PRISON DERBY:³³

Overall, the lobbying and siting process is a whirlwind of activity, with community meetings to discuss the proposal to get the prisons and prison officials visiting the towns and holding meetings of their own with community leaders and residents. Communities put together incentive packages to woo the prison away from other contenders and towards their own community. Prison leaders discuss concerns that exist among those few residents who might question the wisdom of bringing a prison into their community and the entire process reaches a fever pitch. Eventually a decision is made and the real work of opening a prison begins. The following sections describe the lobbying process that took place in each town.

BEEVILLE:

According to former City Manager and current head of the Bee Economic Development Authority (BEDA) Joe Montez, a Request for Proposals (RFP) from the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) ended up on his desk and he began putting out feelers in the community (personal communication, January, 2004). Montez has been a fixture in South Texas politics for over two decades, moving on to be City Manager of Corpus Christi before coming back to Beeville. The TDC (now the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or TDCJ) made it very clear that they would not consider any sites with significant community opposition.

Historically, prisons were not usually considered a paved road to economic revitalization. Lawsuits and other means of stopping various entities from locating prisons where they had not been before were commonplace (Carlson, 1992). Montez said that he was aware of this and wanted to garner as much support from community leaders as possible before bringing the proposal to the general public. His first move was to enlist the help of Grady Hogue, the highly respected former president of Bee County

³³ These histories are compiled mainly from interviews, but also from the two local newspapers, *The Bee-Picayune* and *The Cañon City Daily Record*, and two local history books, Margaret Moser's wonderfully detailed, *The Biography of a Particular Place* (2001) about Bee County and Rosamae Campell's *From Trappers to Tourists* (1972) about Fremont County, Colorado.

Community College to set up the Beeville Economic Development Authority (BEDA) and to help garner support from Beeville's business and political leaders.

According to the Executive Director of the Beeville Chamber of Commerce, it was her organization that started things. She said, "I know Joe likes to take credit for it, but the whole idea started in this office. We started a petition and when we got the signatures, we started the ball rolling (TH, personal communication, January, 2004)." Whether the proposal started in city hall or at the chamber of commerce, business leaders were open to the idea. The local elected officials took a bit longer to get on board. Montez told me, "I remember the look on the mayor's face when I told him. I said 'we're going to get a prison' and he said 'are you crazy?'" (January 2004)."

Montez decided to go to the Bee County Commissioner's Court instead.³⁴ The county commissioners were more open to the idea than the city government had been (especially after the petition was completed) and they brought the City Council around. Eventually, both the City Council and County Commissioner's Court gave a joint endorsement for the proposal to the TDC.

South Texas Politics is a Democrats game (although Democrat in Texas means something very different than Democrat in the Northeast), but the tide in the whole state was already turning towards the Republicans. Political savvy led Montez and Hougue to enlist the help of an unlikely ally, Republican County Commissioner Susan Stasny (personal communication, February, 2004). Stasny is an imposing presence; a tall, blond former cheerleader from the University of Houston. She is fond of pointing out that she's the only current County Commissioner with a college education and has been the only Republican in the county who has managed to stay in office for more than a single term.

"I think they just figured that I knew how to 'talk republican,' and given the makeup of the committee in charge, they needed someone who could speak the language up in Austin (February 2004)."

The support was there and Beeville put together a proposal for a maximum security prison, a so-called 2250, which is a prototypical Texas Prison Unit.³⁵ Local editorials sung the praises of the proposed prison that would bring in 766 employees and a payroll of \$1.3 million a month (Latcham, 1989, p. 4). In an editorial under the headline "Let's get behind bars," the Bee Picayune's editor, Jeff Latcham, discussed the positive impact of Naval Air Station- Chase Field (this was before it was targeted for closing) and Bee County College as positive trends in the town's development.³⁶ He stated, "[W]e would encourage citizens to continue the trend of positive, progressive growth by supporting the city's and county's efforts to submit a proposal for a Texas Department of Corrections maximum security unit here (p. 4). The article argued that "TDC's job requirements for such a facility is 766 employees resulting in a daily payroll of \$43,000-plus (\$1.3 million a month) (p. 4)."³⁷ In addition to discussing the numbers, the editorial asserted that:

³⁴ Texas seems to have an obsession with naming entities differently than the rest of the country. Prisons are Units and the County government is the Commissioner's Court, with the County Judge as the head. The County Judge isn't a judge in the usual sense of the word, but the political leader of the county.

³⁵ See footnote 55. A 2250 unit actually holds 2900 inmates when the Trusty camp is added to the population.

³⁶ Note that all of these are governmental or quasi-governmental developments, not industrial ones.

³⁷ The number of jobs that would go to locals as opposed to those who would be transferred in wasn't discussed in great detail at any point during the siting process.

Some of the economic advantages also would include:

- It is both a clean and stable industry
- It will help pay off the water district bonds through the sale of our present surplus water.
- It will not create a burden on our present sewer capacity
- And, it will create a market for our available housing (p. A4)

The paper went further, saying, “[I]etters of endorsement from individuals, businesses and organizations are needed.” The editorial summed up by saying “It’s important for the community’s future. It’s important for your future (p. A4).”

Latcham got on his bully pulpit again just five weeks later in an editorial headlined “Prison Could Salvage our ‘Reeling’ Economy (Latcham, 1989b, p. A4).” The headline was a pun referring to the closing of the Plaza Theatre which, according to the paper, was a sign of the community’s tough economic times and the editorial used the movie *The Last Picture Show* as a metaphor for the town’s potential demise. The article focused not only the economic advantages, but also on the classic NIMBY concerns. A Chamber of Commerce luncheon had been held where concerns about the prison were discussed and questions were answered by two top TDC officials. Latcham writes that,

some of the answers should be comforting to those who envision the classic Hollywood version of a prison town. For instance:

- It is extremely difficult to receive a furlough in the TDC...The only way Beeville would receive furloughed inmates would be if they were headed here anyway...
- No evidence exists that prisoners’ families move to the community in which their inmate is incarcerated...
- Prisoners would not be released here in Beeville...
- And TDC’s progressive programs have drastically reduced prison violence and escapes in the past five years. (p.A4)

Latcham then dropped the boom. “It is important for Beeville to pursue this prison, particularly since no other industry is presently knocking at our door (p. A4).” He summed up using his *The Last Picture Show* analogy. “It’s important for us to move forward. We’ll no doubt see another movie theatre in time, but we certainly can’t take that or anything else for granted. Let’s make sure that the Plaza was not our last picture show (p. A4).” The push for support worked and in May of 1989 a final version of the proposal to bring the prison to Beeville was prepared and presented to the State Legislature.

Bee County made the TDC’s first cut and put together a full incentive package. Taken together, the proposal was worth \$4.4 million, including \$250,000 in cash.³⁸ This included buying the land, providing water, sewer and other utilities as well as building a new highway bypass. The local Chamber of commerce printed up posters and bumper

³⁸ The actual proposal was given to the author by Beeville City Manager Ford Patton

stickers with the slogan “Bee for the Max,” with prison bars inside the letters. Forty-six other Texas communities were also vying for one of the new units.

A short, but very politically charged lobbying process ensued with Joe Montez and Grady Hogue pulling every string that they could. On the day of the final decision, several busloads of people went to Austin, posters in hand, to make a last ditch push. A local college student even dressed up in a bee costume for the event. The Beeville proposal was accepted. In fact, it was the only proposal accepted unanimously by the TDC. What was to become known as the McConnell Unit, named for the former Beeville Chief of Police, was a reality and opened its gates in 1991.

All was not perfect, however. A few months after the prison siting derby, the town found out that the federal government had decided to close Naval Air Station Chase Field, the largest employer in the county with 2100 civilian workers. So what was supposed to be a chance to diversify their economy had become the way to save it. But the closing of the naval base opened up an opportunity for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. When a military base closes, the land is first offered to other federal agencies and then to the state. No federal agencies wanted an old military base in Beeville, Texas, so the TDCJ stepped in and took the land. They built two medium-security prison units on this land that serve as the classification units for the TDCJ and built a corrections officer training facility there. The land also houses the regional offices for the TDCJ. The town that had lobbied specifically for a maximum-security unit, now also had two medium-security units housing over 5000 inmates as well as a small minimum security camp.

FLORENCE:

Florence watched its neighboring town of Cañon City gain five new state correctional facilities during the 1980’s, while its own economy flagged along with the decline of the mining industry. The relationship between the state Department of Corrections (DOC) and Cañon City has been mutually beneficial and Florence was hoping that its relationship with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) would be just as positive. Even more so, they hoped that the economic payoffs would be greater. A Federal Corrections Officer’s (CO) starting salary is around \$28,000,³⁹ far higher than the State’s \$21,000.⁴⁰ During the bidding process, the site coordinator for the BOP, Pat Sledge, said that up to 270 of the 450 positions at the new penitentiary would go to local citizens a significant number in a town with a population of just over 3000.⁴¹

Florence got into the bidding process in May of 1987 after Cañon City brought in the BOP to look at 220 acres of land on the outskirts of town that the Benedictine monks had put up for sale. Even though the Abbey decided to take the property off of the market, the Federal government still showed interest in coming to Fremont County. Senator Harold McCormick tried to get the entire state behind the idea of bringing the proposed prison to Colorado, but the legislature killed the measure.

Florence, however, went on undaunted. The BOP was hinting that there might be as many as three prisons in the complex (it turned out to be four) and in June of 1988, the

³⁹ <http://www.bop.gov/hrmpg/hrmcorrectionalofficer.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.gssa.state.co.us/announce/job+announcements.nsf/5a50e7ae62411f9e872564db004c6ce2/62d2067e2be56adf87256e51007bff4?OpenDocument>

⁴¹ Cañon City Record, 1/25/1989

Florence community went on the offensive, starting a campaign to raise \$100,000 to buy a parcel of land on the outskirts of town in order to donate it to the Federal Government. In Florence, the head of the local Chamber of Commerce, Darryl Lindsay, with Fremont Economic Development Corporation head, Skip Dyer and Florence Mayor Tom McCormick led the charge.⁴² Unlike Beeville, the town did not have the capital to buy the land, so these men went about raising the money from private sources.

The *Cañon City Daily Record* held a poll early in 1988 and 98.2% of respondents supported at least some form of federal prison in Florence. The original proposition was for one 700 bed medium security prison, one 200 bed minimum security prison with the potential for a second medium security facility with 700 beds and an expansion of 400 beds in the minimum camp. According to the survey, the prison complex would provide 500 jobs and about \$25 million annually in “local salaries and purchases.”⁴³

Florence set out to raise the money needed to buy the land to donate it to the federal government. They took individual donations, had a competition between local businesses, held a carnival and polished the whole thing off with a 24 hour radiothon on June 30th, 1988. All told the town raised more than \$126,000. The BOP was impressed by the local show of support and began serious consideration of the town and performed an environmental impact statement later in the year.

The impact statement was made public in January of 1989 and the town held a series of public forums on the proposed prisons in March. The environmental study found no factors that would preclude Fremont County as a potential site and, according to both newspaper reports and people that attended the meetings, there were no negative comments made at any of the forums.⁴⁴ The BOP then proposed adding a 500-bed maximum security facility to the project.

Although there were several delays in the actual decision process, Florence was chosen as the site for the new project on October 31st, 1989 with construction to be started in the spring of 1990. On December 1st, the BOP made an announcement that it would purchase the 400 acres of land itself so that the town could use the money it raised to extend utility lines to the remote location. They also announced that they intended to build another facility on the campus and that this fourth prison would take the place of their Marion facility as the only level six security prison in the federal system.⁴⁵ Level six is the so-called supermax level where the BOP sends the “worst of the worst.” Eventually this facility would house such prison superstars as Ramsey Yusef, John Gotti, Ted Kaczynski and both Oklahoma City bombers. The Administrative Maximum Security Prison, or ADX, would be a 23 hour a day lockdown facility, built almost entirely underground.

In December of 1989, the Federal Bureau of Prisons opened up an office in downtown Florence. Locals were so desperate for the promised jobs that the headline of

⁴² Unfortunately, Skip Dyer and Tom McCormick have both passed away, so I only have Darryl Lindsay’s recollection, in addition to newspaper reports, to go on.

⁴³ The fact that the number of jobs proposed keeps changing is not due to poor research on the author’s part. The proposed number of prisons and types of prisons kept changing until the final number of four was reached. As the proposal changed, so did the number of purported jobs that would go to the local community, although all estimates were based on an assumption that 60% of jobs would go to locals.

⁴⁴ Florence Citizen 3/30/1989

⁴⁵ Alcatraz was the first level six facility in the Federal system, but was replaced by Marion when it closed in 1963.

the local paper on January 8th, 1990 stated “Federal Bureau of Prisons: Don’t apply for Jobs Yet.” According to the local BOP office, they had already received numerous calls and letters asking about potential employment, but the BOP stated that it would be at least another year before the hiring process for the promised jobs began.

The groundbreaking on the \$150 Million project began July 14th of that year. The project was to be the largest prison complex in the federal system to date. The construction contract went to a contractor from Greeley, Colorado. The Colorado Rural Revitalization program set up shop. The town braced for the upcoming boom of business on Main Street. According to one newspaper report, construction may have swelled the population of Florence, but construction jobs were not going to locals. Despite this, local residents were preparing for the prison’s opening, volunteering for cleanup projects which included plans to reopen the Rialto Theater on Main Street (to date, it is still closed).

The minimum and medium security prisons opened their gates and the first inmates arrived in early 1992. All of the prisons were up and running by December of 1994. The prison inmates were sent into the community on various projects, painting a local school and helping out at a veteran’s nursing home. Early reports on the relationship between the town and the prison complex were mostly positive. As one reporter put it, “if one ignores the razor wire around the medium security prison, the two prisons visible from Colorado 67 look like a campus with mauve and powder blue buildings.”

CONCLUSION:

What we see above are two very similar stories of an economic development plan that has become more commonplace in the last 20 years. Two rural towns, desperate for jobs and some semblance of industry turn towards the government to save them from economic ruin. Both towns had a blueprint for this idea. Beeville had long been kept afloat by the military, even when oil and ranching were no longer viable options. Florence had seen its neighbor of Canon City “thrive” to some extent by depending on the Colorado Department of Corrections. It is not surprising, then, that given the opportunity to look for help from a governmental entity, both took advantage of the situation.

Additionally, the time periods are nearly identical. The United States was already in the midst of a changing economy, from the more industrial past to a service oriented economy. Both towns, lacking in major transportation access or a particularly well educated and trained populace had little chance to take advantage of these opportunities. The “dot com” revolution would take place in Texas three hours to the north, in Austin, with its access to the University of Texas. Denver is a boomtown of the West, but is also three hours from the rural community of Florence. Given these circumstances, it hardly seems strange that the local elites got creative and looked to the government to solve their economic crisis.

Neither town may have realized it at the time, but both would become a prison hub housing over 3000 inmates. Also, the towns put together proposals that just a decade before would have seemed ludicrous. In the early eighties, states were still imposing their will on communities to find sites for their new facilities and often giving incentives to do so. Of course prison building in 1980 was a much rarer event than it was in 1988

and '89 and the changing economic realities made prisons a more feasible, if not fully palatable option.

It is difficult to gather what the economic effects have been on these two towns. Several scholars have pointed out the difficulty in measuring the economic effects of local development projects, especially when there have been other intervening factors, as there have been in both Beeville and Florence (Feiock, 1991; Fellenstein et. al. 1999; Louishomme, 2003). The raw numbers seem to show that Florence has benefited more, but this is difficult to say with any certainty. What is discernable is what other socio-economic factors, such as race, play a role in this study.

Despite the differences in socio-economic factors, the lobbying process was remarkably similar in both communities. The real difference in this regard is not who was doing the lobbying or why, but who was being lobbied. Florence was specifically interested in a Federal prison, while Beeville was lobbying the state. This, more than anything else, is the most divergent issue between the two towns. The difference between the relationships Beeville would have with the TDCJ as opposed to Florence's with the BOP were not a consideration at the time of the lobbying process and would not become evident for several years.

Deciding whether or not these prisons have been a "success" in an economic sense, seems to be beside the point at this point. The prisons dotting our rural landscape are a reality whether they are having the hoped for economic effects or not. It is highly unlikely that many of them, if any of them, will close anytime in the near future. Given this, there is a need to have a better understanding of what we now have and what the future holds for hundreds of rural communities.

Policy arguments in Washington and state capitals about the prison building boom are an important part of this discussion, whether or not one sees a prison-industrial-complex as a reality or not. The prison population boom has leveled off the last few years, but states still have yet to "catch up" to the boom of the 80's and 90's. Even California, whose powerful corrections officers union has fought hard to keep privatization out of the state system, has proposals to send inmates to prison facilities in other states to ease overcrowding. This is in addition to the current \$7.8 Billion plan to build new facilities to ease a prison system running at nearly 175% capacity.⁴⁶ These new prisons are likely to go to rural communities who are lining up for them. The fact that the numbers do not seem to show that the prison will really help them, towns are still eager to land a facility and, as the former director of institutions for Texas's TDCJ told me, the state will not even consider going to a community that doesn't want them. They do not have to anymore

Rural prisons all over the United States are now a fact and policy discussions about whether this is a good or bad thing are somewhat superfluous. We need to move beyond this and try to understand what happens when the lobbying process is but a faint memory and the new prison is no longer so new. This section will discuss some of the major findings of this paper, with ideas of how to improve these problems in the future and outline some fruitful areas for future study.

⁴⁶ Two federal judges are currently considering proposals to cap the inmate population in California until new prison beds are built which would mean the early release of many inmates nearing the end of their sentences. <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/state/20070627-1819-ca-californiaprisons.html>

At a core level, nearly every issue we have seen through this research has come about due to problems of communication. Problems of inter-institutional communication breakdowns are seen throughout and these types of issues are going to be commonplace between any bureaucratic organizations. There are three areas where these concerns show themselves to the largest degree. The first is promises and expectations not realized during the lobbying stage. The second is communication between state or federal entities and the local government. The third is communication between the prison administrators and the community.

One cannot ignore the great amount of interaction individual prisons have with the world around them. This paper proposes looking at prisons through a new lens, not as a total institution that can be studied in a vacuum, but as a political and legal institution, to be studied the same way that the courts and the police are. Although this work certainly draws on the methodology of Sykes, Jacobs, DiIulio and Lin, where one studies the prison through immersion (Sykes 1958, Jacobs 1977, DiIulio 1986 and Lin 2000), it also draws on the work of other criminal justice scholars who went beyond this to look at the interplay between the local community and criminal justice institutions (Wilson 1968, Klonoski and Mendelsohn 1970, Lyons 1999, Skogan 2007). But this broader lens should not just extend to local communities, but the political system as a whole.

Perhaps more importantly, we have lost sight of the fact that the police, courts and prisons are, at least on the surface, all part of the same system. Although there has been some interest in the interaction between the court system and the police, prisons are usually left out of the discussion. Prisons are a vital part of this sometimes dysfunctional system of dealing with crime and more inter-institutional studies just of the criminal justice system could shed more light on how these institutions work, or often do not work, together.

Prison studies need to go beyond recidivism rates and inmate population numbers. The literature on the prison industrial complex does some of this, but prisons are still treated as an amorphous entity, as if all prisons are essentially the same. It may well be that Political Science and the “New Institutional” movement is the perfect place for these types of studies. One of the strengths of our discipline is in understanding how institutions interact, but we must first place prisons in their proper context- as a legal and political institution.

From the community’s side, this paper has implications for other economic development plans and the ensuing irony that the plans inevitably change the character of the town itself. These communities need outside entities to bring jobs and economic security, but they also bring new people into these small, often parochial towns. Additionally there may be other ancillary problems that are not discussed during the planning stages. In other words, the effect that an institution has on a community goes beyond just the number of jobs that it brings or the impact it has on the local economy.

This paradox is a play even when the institution being brought in is not governmental in nature. It may be that military bases or state hospitals will have similar issues that are discussed in this paper, but this may also be true with colleges and universities or other new “saviors” of the local economic development scene, such as casinos. Small towns have become more active and creative in getting involved in the world of economic development. They no longer sit back and hope that a Microsoft-like corporation will open a large office in their town. But this activity and creativity may

lead to some of the same issues that Florence and Beeville confront regularly and the relationships that develop between the town and its supposed economic savior may go through a similar development that we've seen here.

Given the limitations of this study, to determine all of the broader implications, but in some ways, what we have seen in these two communities is what one interviewee called "state sponsored welfare for rural communities."⁴⁷ Market factors have left these communities behind in a world of globalization where at the very least access to transportation centers or a well educated populace is a needed base on which to build an economy. There are good reasons those corporations, as Benny Johnson, mayor of Canon City so eloquently put it, "ain't exactly knocking at the door" and are unlikely to do so anytime soon. Of course this begs the question; if these areas cannot compete for corporate dollars, why should the state essentially subsidize their continued existence? Or perhaps more to the point, if there are good reasons why corporations do not want to locate in these areas, why would the state and federal government want to?

The "knee jerk" answer to these questions is that the incentive packages that have been put together to woo prisons to these rural communities are too good for the government to pass up, but this answer is too simplistic and only takes us only so far. Rural communities often give corporations tax abatements and other incentives to move various outfits to their area, but with little success.⁴⁸ I question whether, over the long haul, the ancillary costs of locating prisons in rural areas will overcome the savings realized through these incentive packages and the pool of cheap labor. The federal government does not seem to take advantage of this labor pool from the start and Texas has seen that there is a point at which the town runs out of qualified individuals to supply. I have seen no studies on the matter, but logic dictates that the transportation costs involved in moving inmates too and from these rural areas would grow over time to the point where the cheap land and utilities no longer pay off.

Even if the costs remain below what they might be in a more urban setting, there are still issues that need to be considered. In her new book, *The Golden Gulag*, Ruth Gilmore discusses the devastating effects these rural prisons have on the inmates' relationship with their family (Gilmore 2006). We must remember that most of these inmates in these prisons will eventually get out. Unfortunately, statistically speaking, most will soon return. This cycle has led to prison slang such as "doing life on the installment plan," where inmates do brief stints in the outside world sandwiched between long stints in prison. The utter disconnect that occurs between inmates and their families may be a factor in this and having to take a bus many hours in order to visit a loved one does not much help. An inmate from Houston in far eastern Texas might end up in El Paso, some ten hours away by car. This trip is simple compared to getting to Florence from any city outside of Colorado, which would include a plain flight and a three hour drive from Denver, hardly something many families would be willing or able to do. There are other issues as well, mentioned at various points throughout this paper that seem not to hit many of the principle's awareness. Two stand out most profoundly. The first problem is that of having rural kids, in many cases, guarding much more sophisticated urban inmates. The second has to do with the ancillary damage being done

⁴⁷ Interview DH

⁴⁸ Of course these communities cannot compete with overseas locations for certain types of jobs and one would hope that states do not begin to locate prisons overseas to take advantage of the pool of cheap labor.

to a substantial portion of the population in these rural communities when they work as corrections officers.

Unfortunately, these problems may just be the “nature of the beast” with our burgeoning prison population and our current treatment of inmates. Those issues are significant and well beyond the reach of this study, but they may be more difficult when prisons are sited for economic reasons. This is a short term solution to a long term problem, the proverbial “band-aid on a broken arm” that the prison building boom has caused. And that break that is just one of the collateral effects of our current criminal justice that seem to be just percolating below the surface. They will not just go away without major overhauls of the system and forward thinking policy decisions.

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