

Our Sacred Space: Governance of Reentry at Georgetown's Prisons and Justice Initiative

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A case study of PJI - the organization where I was working while conducting the research - examining how frontline discretion shapes reentry governance in practice.

QUESTION AND CASE

How do PJI's frontline practices interrupt, soften, or reproduce punitive governance? The paper treats PJI as a single organizational case and does not claim to represent every reentry provider.

EVIDENCE AND APPROACH

Nine recorded interviews, 15 weekly field journals, six months of participant observation, and documentary evidence were triangulated with an explicit positionality analysis and no causal claims.

LEARNING FROM INSIDE

Working inside PJI made it possible to pair formal evidence with sustained observation of day-to-day governance. This methodological thinking was influenced in part by Richard Fenno's emphasis in *Home Style* on learning through presence, observation, and informal interaction; it was not a replication of Fenno's congressional research.

ANALYTICAL CONTRIBUTION

The paper develops a three-regime framework: domains an intermediary controls, domains that govern through it, and gatekeeping rules it authors itself. It treats translation across fragmented institutions as a form of governance.

IMPLICATIONS

- Make the location of discretion visible before prescribing more procedure.
- Use selective structure - scenario-based onboarding, clear escalation paths, visible ownership, and feedback - to support judgment without bureaucratizing relational work.

SCOPE AND LIMITS

The evidence is staff-weighted and drawn from one mission-driven organization. Corrections-side and currently incarcerated-student perspectives are incomplete, mechanisms are more visible than frequencies, and embedded research creates both access and positionality constraints.

PORTFOLIO NOTE

The full paper contains interview, participant, and internal organizational material and remains private. This brief is the public-safe version.