

FROM GUANTANAMO BAY TO PELICAN BAY: HUNGER STRIKING AND THE  
BIOPOLITICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF RESISTANCE

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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In this work I illustrate the ways in which power structures function in operationalizing geographies of resistance in two particular carceral spaces. Specifically I examine the social organization and internal power relations present within hunger striking prison populations at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and at Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California. I show that the Guantanamo hunger strikes are minimally organized with non-binding power structures, while the Pelican Bay hunger strikes have had greater levels of commitment, and have been more sophisticated in organization. I consider the relationships that exist between power, identity and violence within these hunger strike resistance movements. I contextualize these phenomena within a biopolitical framework that advances more traditional definitions of biopolitics; as opposed to conceptualizing biopolitics as a technology of power manifested by the state, I argue that oppressed populations, such as prisoners, construct their own power by regulating their own ‘vital biological processes.’

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction to the Project, Context & Research Questions**

This thesis is a critical evaluation of agency, performance and resistant geographies of power. In this research I evaluate the internal power relations and social organization of hunger strike resistance in two carceral spaces: the political prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California, including the wider California prison system writ large. I present data on the social organization of hunger strikes in these prison settings to better understand why such social phenomena occur in the ways that they do. I analyze these phenomena through a lens of resistant geographies and biopolitics. In doing this I re-conceptualize biopolitics as a technique of power manifested by subaltern populations, rather than simply a technique of power manifested by the state; this enables me to analyze and better contextualize my topic. Not only are these frameworks of resistant geographies and biopolitics useful in establishing theoretical ideas that are applicable to prison studies, these are also theoretical constructs that have utility in analyzing power and the geographies of resistance beyond prison environments.

Hunger striking has historically been a method of protest within carceral spaces. When the subject is raised, many recollect the widely publicized hunger strikes in the early 1980s in Northern Ireland (O'Hearn 2009). Also notable are the hunger strikes and death fasts that occurred in Turkey between 2001 and 2007 (Bargu 2014). I examine hunger strikes at Pelican Bay and GTMO here because the socio-spatial dynamics of hunger striking resistance exhibit certain similarities and differences in regard to the

strikes' internal power relations and social organization in both respective carceral spaces. I establish the empirical context of this below.

In the summer of 2011 a Hunger Strike within the Solitary Housing Units (hereinafter SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California was initiated by a handful of prisoners that then grew in number over weeks and months. While the SHU prisoners subsequently terminated their strike, another strike was conducted for several weeks later that fall. After planning and coordination from within the SHU as well as from support groups on the outside, Pelican Bay SHU prisoners organized and conducted another hunger strike starting in July of 2013. This strike, which lasted for two months, saw tens of thousands of prisoners in solitary confinement across California participating in the strike in solidarity, with thousands of prisoners in the General Population at Pelican Bay and in the California prison system conducting a work stoppage alongside the hunger strikes.

Furthermore, since January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba has been the site of a political prison that has detained alleged members of Al Qaeda captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan after 9/11. Over the last fourteen years the prison has seen many episodes of hunger striking. Earlier strikes beginning with the prison's inception in 2002 were overall less frequent in comparison to strikes that have occurred since 2005. Notable strikes include a protest in the summer of 2005, which requested extension of Geneva Convention protections to prisoners and the establishment of a Prisoners' Council of detainee leaders. A later strike with participation numbers similar to the 2005 strike occurred in 2013, lasting at least until November.

These two particular situations are the focus of the research for this thesis on the biopolitical geographies of hunger striking resistance. My main research questions are the following: 1) how do prisoner populations at Pelican Bay and at GTMO respectively demonstrate power structures, socially organize, coordinate and make decisions in the operationalization of their hunger strikes? 2), why does each respective prison population perform their unique social organization of hunger striking, i.e., why do they strike with the organization and power relations with which they strike? And 3), how do these social formations of resistance speak to relationships between power, identity and violence in these carceral spaces? While I examine these questions within the context of these two socio-spatial circumstances, these examples serve as a means for understanding why certain groups and individuals seek to subject their bodies to greater or lesser scales of violence, what I refer to as the ‘biopolitical geographies of resistance’, which I elaborate upon in greater detail in chapter 2.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary for me to establish the epistemological basis for several of the terms I utilize in my research questions. I define a resistant geography as an act of protest that is performed in space, the performance of which is defined by how, why, and where the performance occurs. Furthermore, my conception of ‘social organization’ refers to the power structures, coordination, decision-making, and collective and/or individual operationalization of hunger striking. Social organization is a term that discusses the socio-spatial dimensions of how prisoners negotiate together or individually the decision to hunger strike or not to hunger strike, i.e. the question of social organization considers the power relations present in the operationalization of these geographies of resistance.

As one can see, my first research question seeks to present the empirical, more objective data on the aspects of each strikes' socio-organizational dynamics. My second question is more subjective: why do we see the particular styles of social organization in hunger striking resistance in these prison spaces? Ultimately my third question speaks to the greater analytical, critical component of the thesis, and is closely associated with question 2. My research demonstrates that the Pelican Bay hunger strikes' social organization is defined by an overall unified, collective mentality, in which there are strong affiliations between prisoners on a group scale due to organizational centralization. In contrast, the GTMO hunger strikes involve the performance of more individuated, personalized geographies of resistance where a unified and centralized commitment to resistance is less important in comparison to Pelican Bay.

This study concludes that hunger strikers at Pelican Bay are brought together by a consciousness of the fact that all incarcerated racial groups constitute an imprisoned class within themselves; this consequently has resulted in significant dissolution of gang animosities and has produced interest in group agency and resistance. Alternately, the GTMO strikes are defined by more ad-hoc, spontaneous episodes of protest that are less reflective of group interests and are more driven by individual grievances, and are the result of prisoners who are not bound by group decisions to resist collectively. I contextualize these empirical findings through my theoretical framework of the biopolitical geographies of resistance; it is through understanding how oppressed bodies seeks to regulate and manage themselves that we will see to what extent and why certain oppressed bodies subject themselves to greater violence through their own agency at subaltern scales of power.

## **Case Studies & Methodology**

Hunger striking has long been a common tactic of resistance across carceral space. Given ample time and data one might be able to produce a deeper and more holistic genealogy of the varieties of social organization behind hunger striking in prisons, to better compare and contrast the power structures and social organization present in such resistant geographies. This is beyond the scope of a Master's thesis. This research takes advantage of two particular spaces of confinement with distinctly different qualities in regard to how prisoners operate and organize their strikes. It is by this choice of case studies and my subsequent methodologies that I discuss the genres of power relations in hunger striking prisoner populations present in these prison spaces. The two empirical situations are discussed independently in their own respective chapters. The case studies presented in this thesis, that of Pelican Bay State Prison/the California prison system writ large and GTMO Bay, Cuba, were chosen specifically to focus on differing social, political and cultural geographies of resistance within carceral space.

From information that can be gathered from the media that is available to the general public, I have been able to conclude that the social organization of hunger striking in prison environments is often unique to that specific prison, in that decisions and actions of resistance occur for different reasons with differing techniques, sets of power relations and scales of participation by prisoners. The 2011 and 2013 California hunger strikes at Pelican Bay State Prison were widely publicized through the efforts of families, activist groups and local media. This effort led to a movement that then spread to other California prisons and included tens of thousands of prisoners hunger striking for particular lengths of time. These strikes were conducted on a significant scale of

involvement in regard to thousands of prisoners transgressing racial and cultural boundaries, and thus it is for this reason that I have chosen to examine the Pelican Bay/California strikes.

The prison at GTMO has a much smaller population. In 2013 the Department of Defense (hereinafter DOD) released the numbers of strikers who were protesting starting in February of that year. While the DOD stopped releasing these numbers in December 2013, major fluctuations in hunger strike involvement by prisoners were reported. Additionally, conflicting reports have labeled specific prisoners as leaders of past strikes with certain authority over decision-making and resistance across the prison population. These conflicting reports and varying levels of resistance have allowed me to ascertain the scalar extent to which prisoners have become associated, or not, with hunger striking at GTMO, and whether there is more or less of an individual versus group mentality in the performance of resistance.

Methodologies often must be unique to the particular case study, prison or phenomenon being researched. This research engages in a very micro scale, localized form of analysis in the examination of the internal power relations and social organization of hunger strikes, and as such, I have taken advantage of methodologies that reveal the social phenomena in question at these localized scales of power. Multiple challenges are often faced in conducting prison research, particularly in regard to data access (Wacquant 2002). Representing marginalized voices can be limited not purely by prison administrations themselves, but also by universities. My methods have had to cater to what the University of Oregon's institutional review board (hereinafter IRB) is willing to permit. After several updated protocols and full reviews on my proposed data

collection, the IRB continued to stand its ground in opposition to a portion of my proposed methods of data collection on the Pelican Bay/California hunger strikes. Alternately, my methods for research on GTMO were approved in an expedited review, outside of the full review process, albeit after a lengthy process. Despite these challenges I have sought to represent prisoners' marginalized voices with the methods that I have chosen. Prisoners are uniquely positioned to comment on the social realities they endure (Piche et al 2014; Wacquant 2002), and as such I use methods that privilege voices directly, but that are also available to me pragmatically. I explain my methods by case study below.

I employed a two-fold methodology for collecting data on the Pelican Bay strikes. Firstly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a physician who has been involved with prison activism in California for many years, in addition to being involved in the hunger strikes on the outside in 2011 and in 2013. The physician interviewed was able to provide data on the medical context of hunger striking in regard to the role that health played as a factor that contributed to and/or limited scales of striking. Secondly, I conducted an archival review of letters sent by prisoners to the non-profit organization California Prison Focus during the Strikes. I visited California Prison Focus (hereinafter CPF) at its office in Oakland, California in order to collect this data. These letters were sent during the 2011 and 2013 strikes, some of which identify strike representatives, the extent of involvement by different gangs in the strike, resistance objectives, and descriptions of rationales for the initiation and termination of resistance.

The methodology for data on the GTMO hunger strikes was derived significantly from semi-structured interviews with three GTMO defense attorneys who have

represented prisoners that have been released from the prison. I also interviewed a psychiatrist hired by the defense attorneys to consult with prisoners at GTMO regarding hunger strikes and medical issues in the prison. These attorneys and the psychiatrist have spent many hours consulting with their clients and have visited GTMO on multiple occasions. As such the psychiatrist has been able to provide clearer insight as to how prisoners negotiate their resistance, or lack of resistance, with themselves and/or other prisoners. The data from the psychiatrist interview enables me to understand the linkages between the prisoners' health and how it affects strike organization and commitment. It was necessary to interview these several professionals as I needed to establish a representative sample of the social organization of how the GTMO strikes were conducted. While I could not speak directly to GTMO prisoners, either currently or formerly incarcerated, I recruited this population of professionals that have spent a considerable amount of time at GTMO working with GTMO prisoners.

Interviewing the attorneys became a challenge because of the representative sample I was attempting to establish; this was because the attorneys are focused on their cases and their cases only, and can only speak about one or a few prisoners, and were reluctant to make broader, more sweeping statements regarding the social organization of the hunger strikes. I initially discovered a variety of phenomena that was somewhat contested by some of the interviewees, and it was only after speaking to several interviewees that I was able to establish a clearer consensus regarding the internal structures and power relations at work in the hunger strikes. While the majority of my data on the GTMO strikes is derived from these interviews, I also draw upon some

document-based data in the form of legal reports and prisoner medical records available publically.

### **Chapter Overview**

Following this Introduction, chapter 2 provides a review of the academic literature on the topic of resistant geographies. I then lay my theoretical foundation for how I contextualize these resistant geographies, and explain how a reconceptualization of biopolitics from a subaltern perspective enables me to discuss the relationships between power, identity and violence in these hunger strike case studies. In chapter 3 I present data on the social organization of hunger striking at GTMO Bay. Chapter 4 follows with the presentation of data on the internal characteristics of hunger strike organization at Pelican Bay/California. These two empirical chapters on hunger strike organization at GTMO and California put me in a position to answer my first research question: *how* hunger strikes in both prison environments are socially operationalized, and secondly, *why* the illustrated social formations and technologies of organization have occurred within both spaces of incarceration.

In my conclusion, chapter 5, I compare and contrast the empirical similarities and differences between hunger strike resistance at GTMO and in California. I address the theoretical question of how these genres of resistance are best explained through a biopolitical contextualization. In this synthesis I argue that we must conceive of a biopolitics of scale when analyzing geographies of resistance, where the management of bodies occurs from below within a given population, i.e., biopolitics must be conceived through a more bottom-up approach. I epistemologically situate biopolitics as a technique of power that is devised and manifested by the subaltern, rather than just a technology of

power that the state utilizes for its own interests. This permits me to answer my ultimate research question regarding the relationships between power, identity and violence in both prison spaces, and explains why certain bodies choose to endure more violence than others through the performance of hunger striking.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS

In this chapter I review the academic literature on geographies of resistance. The second half of the chapter is then devoted to my theoretical contribution where I reconceptualize Foucauldian biopolitics as a geographical theory of resistance. In my concluding chapter I return to this biopolitical geography of resistance in order to more completely answer my third research question, analyzing the conceptual relationships among and between violence, power and identity in the GTMO and California hunger strikes.

#### **The Geographies of Resistance**

In their edited volume *Geographies of Resistance*, Pile and Keith (1997) provide one of the few compilations of literature on the geographies of resistance within political and cultural geography. Their ontological conception of power is rooted in the idea that the elite hold power, while resistance is conceived of as the idea of protest or fighting back against the elite. For Pile and Keith, resistance is about making other spaces, i.e., other geographies, possible. When studying resistance, attention must be paid to the “ways in which resistance uses extant geographies and makes new geographies and to the geographies that make resistance” (Pile and Keith 1997, 2). Additionally, “...resistance becomes a mode through which the symptoms of different power relations are diagnosed and ways are sought to get around them, or live through them, or change them” (Pile and Keith 1997, 3). Thus resistant geographies are interested in altering social relations and changing social space. Common elements within resistant geographies include “desire and anger, capacity and ability, happiness and fear, dreaming and forgetting” (Pile and

Keith 1997, 3). Resistance, therefore, may be constituted by a multitude of emotional, social, political and cultural geographies.

Studies on resistance in the past have focused on themes of temporality, class struggle, and economic contradictions (Pile and Keith 1997). Several empirical studies in geography have engaged with these themes: Michael Watts has emphasized the relationships between state violence, resources and cultural/ethnic identity in Nigeria; Routledge has discussed how space and power have been contested in political revolution in Nepal; Brown discusses how power is negotiated between the state and civil society in urban space surrounding activist movements in Vancouver, British Columbia; Jacobs analyzes uneven power structures in resistance struggles faced by Aboriginal groups in Australia (Pile and Keith 1997). Routledge (1997) further argues that while these studies are empirically informative, they end up over-generalizing phenomena by virtue of their place-based nature. Routledge argues that literature on geographies of resistance should emphasize the more localized social, cultural and political heterogeneities of resistance across spaces. Routledge suggests that it is more useful to speak about resistance in terms of ‘resistances’, or ‘webs of resistance’. For Routledge, resistance is “any action, imbued with intent that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes and/or institutions. These circumstances may involve domination, exploitation, subjection at the material, symbolic or psychological level” (Routledge 1997, 69). Actions of resistance may involve symbolic performance, social networks, physical settings, bodily processes, cultural/religious practice, desires and hopes.

Routledge emphasizes that social movements often repress their own internal heterogeneities in the interests of a broader tactic. Thus resistance may operate on an individual scale as well as on a broader scale, where the greater interests of the group supersede those of single individuals. In order to conduct resistance on these various scales, social spaces and networks must be established. Such spaces through which these scales of resistance are operated may be real, imaginary or symbolic. Acts of resistance that embody these symbolic, imaginary, emotional themes consequently transform space into ‘performed space’ (Routledge 1997).

In order to appreciate the complexities within such social processes and performed spaces of resistance, we must understand how such sites are “created, claimed, defended and used” (Routledge 1997, 71). Firstly, spatial process and relations *across scales* influence the character and emergence of resistance. Secondly, Routledge suggests that we must ask how *practices* illustrate the homogeneity or heterogeneity of resistance in space. Thirdly, it is necessary to consider how these relationships enable or constrain articulations of resistance, and lastly, we must consider how the character and meaning of place may change upon a social space becoming a site of resistance. Overall, Routledge argues, the goal in studying geographies of resistance is to present radical interpretations of the relationships between political identities, political spaces and radical politics (Routledge 1997). In order to fully understand the complexities of resistant geographies, we must challenge any assumption that asserts that political struggles can be understood purely in terms of the practices of institutions and the power elite (Pile and Keith 1997).

Pile and Keith are somewhat contradictory in saying this based upon their approach in referring to resistance as resistance and power as power, which they

epistemologically define as separate entities. I do believe that scales of resistance are entirely significant; however, my epistemological approach here suggests that it is more suitable to interpret resistance as power on any scale. On this point Michel de Certeau, a philosopher interested in practices that challenge dominant orders, suggests that spaces of resistance can and ought to be acknowledged as being dislocated from those of the powerful:

...resistance does not just act on topographies imposed through the spatial technologies of domination, it moves across them under the noses of the enemy, seeking to create new meanings out of imposed meanings, to re-work and divert space to other ends (de Certeau 1984, 18).

Thus the performance of group and individual identities becomes an effort to re-invent the meaning of space. Resistance becomes a technique of the self, in which individuals and groups exhibit performed power. Fanon discusses this social process, arguing that it is necessary for resisters to conquer parts of themselves in order to resist power (Pile and Keith 1997). Thus the process of becoming is key to resistance, and resisters must develop an identity of resistance.

### **Scale & Resistant Geographies**

It is often a challenge to be able to discern where power is located in a struggle, as individuals and groups are positioned differently in multiple and unequal power relationships. Because of these challenges in understanding positionality relative to power, this thesis utilizes the concept of scale in its epistemological approach in order to understand the social organization of resistance. And while there is a relation between localized scales of resistance and the state, the theoretical emphasis and bridge I seek to provide here rests upon how power is constructed on a micro scale, i.e. resistance and agency in prison resistance movements. In order to establish a theoretical synthesis

between the geographies of resistance and scale, I review the use of scale in geographic literature below.

The concept of scale in geography has historically been a common unit of analysis. Smith (1992) presents a Marxist perspective on scale, explaining how capital moves across scales in the global economy. Smith also uses the term ‘politics of scale’, emphasizing how power is implicit in scalar relations. In Smith’s words, it “is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested” (1992, 66). Smith also writes of ‘jumping scale’, where “political claims and power established at one geographical scale are expanded to another” (2000, 726). Brenner further defines scale as “a ‘vertical’ differentiation in which social relations are embedded within a hierarchical scaffolding of nested territorial units stretching from the global, the supranational, and the national downwards to the regional, the metropolitan, the urban, the local, and the body” (2005, 9). Brenner’s vertical perspective on these spatialized levels of analysis is mostly rooted in how capital is fixed within such scales. Cox (1998) discusses how the local operates beyond jurisdictional boundaries, and views the politics of scale through networks of associations. Cox considers how ‘spaces of dependence’, or fixed arenas of social life, develop interplay with ‘spaces of engagement’, or networks that go beyond fixed space in networks of interaction (1998). Marston (2000) argues that scale should be examined from a social-constructionist perspective, in order to situate capitalist production, the role of the state, labor and non-state political actors. Marston argues that this framework holds possibilities for social change. Similarly, Jones (1998) suggests that scale must be understood as an epistemology - not ontologically as something that exists but rather as a

way of apprehending. Furthermore, Towers (2000) argues that scale can be used to analyze social structures and human agency. Alternately, Marston et al (2005) negate the concept of scale in its entirety, arguing that scale has developed excessive conceptual differentiation amongst geographers, and preconfigures social life with its constructions and hierarchies.

I do not agree with Marston et al (2005) that scale is too variegated conceptually to be useful in spatial thinking. On the contrary, it has significant utility, and because of its multiplicity of purposes across and within geographic subfields it must be contextualized with specificity. The emphasis in the geography literature on scale has been empirically situated within the realms of economic geography, Marxist geography and political economy, as shown above. Political and cultural geography have not taken advantage of scale to this same extent. Thus I propose this synthesis where definitions of scale from the literature are adopted from the literature to be configured within a more political-cultural framework, in particular within the geographies of resistance.

Very few studies in geography have engaged with the idea of scalar power relative to resistance. This is a literature gap that I seek to fill by analyzing the internal power relations and social organization of hunger striking at GTMO and Pelican Bay. Definitions of resistance are bound up in the ways in which people have the capacity to change their social realities, or at least seek to change them. Taking the vertical perspective from Brenner, scales of resistance are produced in part by authority, with the state on one end of the scalar hierarchy; individuals and groups, such as prisoners, on an oppressed scale, resist with the agency they manifest for themselves on a lower scale, especially at the scale of the body. Additionally, geographies of resistance subsequently

become imbued with power upon materially, pragmatically and socially formulating their unique technologies of protest. Within the prison landscape, power and violence at the scale of the state is exerted over prisoners, with the agency of protest, such as hunger striking, occurring at more micro, localized scales within prison populations. At the scale of oppressed prison populations, geographies of resistance are constructed, wherein micro scales of power relations and social organization exist within the operationalization of resistance. Thus an epistemology of localized scales of internal resistance in carceral space enables us to examine the power structures and social coordination within such geographies of resistance, e.g. hunger striking.

I proceed below by outlining literature on hunger striking within the social sciences in order to draw linkages between the scalar perspective on geographies of resistance and the particular technology of resistance examined in this thesis. I then explore what I refer to as the transgressive biopolitical geographies of resistance in demonstrating how power can be contextualized within these localized scales and apparatuses of protest.

### **Hunger Striking Literature**

Although literature on hunger striking has existed across the social sciences, geography has been a field where it has only been discussed marginally. Sharpe (1973) in his extensive account of protest movements defines hunger striking as a nonviolent expression of resistance, meaning that hunger strike participants globally and historically have discursively represented their protests as active resistance that is peaceful in hopes of producing social and political change. Research on hunger striking has focused primarily on Ireland (Beresford 1987; Campbell et al 1994; O'Malley 1990; O'Rawe

2005). Givant (1982) discusses the traditional perspective in hunger striking of martyrdom and nobility in self-destruction. Feldman (1991) explains that hunger strikes are authenticated by the “symbolism of the corpse”, and similarly Sweeney relates hunger striking to a “cult of self-sacrifice”. Other scholars have examined gender (Aretxaga 1987), as well as hunger strikers’ context within the media (Mulcahy 1995). White (1988) has examined the relationships between hunger strikes and social movement commitment and the linkages between movement ideology, protest culture and solidarity.

Scanlan et al (2008) acknowledge that while the social science literature on resistance and protest in general has been extensive, these accounts have only marginally mentioned hunger strikes, meaning that hunger striking has not been a unit of analysis that has been directly studied. Scanlan et al provide a detailed history of hunger strikes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In their words: “Although not ‘new’, hunger strikes have had increasingly new applications, be it in emergent or existing movement within new cultures, or in new settings and contexts” (2008, 286). Scanlan et al emphasize that hunger strikes have had increasingly new applications across emergent or existing movements within new cultures, new settings and contexts. Using a comparative and historical perspective these authors analyze how, why and when hunger strikes occur, and who has utilized them to seek change. Scanlan et al find that hunger strikes over the last century have been widespread phenomena and are typically small, brief and relatively successful tactics for protesting against state power. Hunger strikes, they argue, exhibit the interplay between structural factors influencing the emergence of such resistance, and exemplify hunger striking as a form of self-sacrifice that carries symbolic meaning.

Scanlan et al argue that what is unique about hunger strike protest is the potential self-destruction of the body. In studying hunger strikes, Scanlan et al argue that emotion, declaration, duration and representation are themes that must be discussed in evaluating hunger strikes. They suggest that hunger strikes ought to be considered from a comparative perspective, as examining hunger strikes across movements and actors can reveal the unique cultural, social and political power dynamics implicit in how hunger strikes function. Furthermore, Scanlan et al also emphasize the geographic context of hunger striking, stating that while authorities can engineer mechanisms of control in space, insurgents change meaning and uses of space, at times transforming their material poverty into advantage (2008). Thus hunger strikes are socio-spatial in nature, and it is through this socio-spatial perspective that my conceptual framework and empirical examples are examined.

Bargu (2014) provides a deep ethnographic analysis of hunger striking and death-fasting prisoners in Turkey. Political prisoners in Turkey began hunger strikes that became death fasts starting in 2000, and ended in January 2007. Turkish political prisoners had protested the infrastructural development of what were termed F-type prisons for solitary confinement. While many of these protesters were released, many continued their hunger strikes and death fasts privately. Bargu explores the death-fast struggle by placing self-destructive techniques of political action at the center of her inquiry in order to theorize this highly particular form of struggle in which life is forged into a weapon. Bargu explores the justifications and reasons for choosing such tactics as well as the ethical and political implications of these death-fast struggles.

Within the context of the Turkish hunger strikes and death fasts, Bargu theoretically contextualizes such tactics and violence as the “weaponization of life”. In her words, “The self destructive act makes a commentary on the meaning of life by conveying the prioritization of the life of a political cause over the biological existence of its proponents” (2014, 16). In evaluating the ethical dimensions of bodily destruction, Bargu draws on Foucault to understand the biopolitical context of starvation and death. Bargu goes beyond Foucault, however, in stating that biopolitics is better referred to as “biosovereignty” in this case. In other words, Bargu suggests that these techniques of resistance become a social and political process where individuals and groups exercise their own oppressed sovereignty outside of state sovereignty.

In this thesis I focus on two spaces of confinement in which localized power in hunger striking differs. I evaluate these two socio-spatial circumstances individually, which are then later compared in my analysis, such as Scanlan et al suggest. My approach here is similar to and different from Bargu’s; Bargu touches on scale, but does not sketch it out overtly. I empirically analyze the micro scale power relations and social configurations in hunger strike organization at GTMO and at Pelican Bay. In addition, like Bargu, this is a method for understanding why certain incarcerated bodies subject themselves to violence at greater scales than others in carceral spaces. I answer this question within my framework of the biopolitical geographies of resistance, outlined below.

### **The Biopolitical Geographies of Resistance**

The theoretical framework that I will use to contextualize the phenomena examined in this thesis is an extension of biopolitics (or biopower) as originally presented

by Michel Foucault. In this section below I provide a more nuanced conception of biopolitical theory in which I bring resistant geographies together with biopolitics. It is necessary to spatialize biopolitics in order to develop more useful intellectual tools for understanding the geographical contexts of resistance and the violent implications thereof.

Lemke (2011) emphasizes the broad use and variety of definitions attached to the concept of biopolitics. In Lemke's words:

...(biopolitics is) part of a shifting and conflicting theoretical and political field. Each answer to the question of what processes and structures, what rationalities and technologies, what epochs and historical eras could be called 'biopolitical' is always and inevitably the result of a selective perspective. In this respect, biopolitics must sharpen its analytical and critical profile against the blind spots and weak points of competing suggestions (2011, 2).

Thus biopolitics is a subjective term, and cannot simply be implied; it must be qualified within the context in which it is used. While my theoretical framework is grounded in Foucauldian biopolitical principles, I expand Foucault's biopolitics, arguing that biopower must be conceived of as having a more spatial and scalar dimension.

Michel Foucault's work is largely historical, or, as he would prefer, genealogical, in that he often traces thematic developments throughout the history of continental and western society. Foucault is concerned with power, and begins his analysis of the genealogy of power in western society in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995). In this seminal work Foucault examines how legal authority and the image of incarceration established their power by virtue of their spectacle; torture and the realities of imprisonment were a facet of early modernity, Foucault argues, and encouraged subjects to obey authority's expectations. Furthermore, it is in *Discipline and Punish*

where Foucault introduces and elaborates upon Bentham's panopticon. Foucault identifies western society as adopting Bentham's original architectural design in articulating the norms of societal behavior directed by the possibility of surveillance. To be institutionally monitored without knowing whether or not one is being watched was a fundamental aspect of how power structures functioned between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This in turn produced what Foucault terms discipline, which he also refers to as 'anatomy-politics', i.e. a technique of individuated power where 'docile bodies' are manufactured as compliant in order to function within a presupposed hierarchical place in society. The production of docile bodies is ultimately the production of identity, as one is expected to assume one's given hierarchical place unquestioningly, and acknowledge oneself by virtue of that place.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault argues that western society's panopticism prevailed as the dominant mechanism of power in producing social behavior during the post-Renaissance period (1995). In his later lectures from the late 1970s, however, Foucault begins identifying a technique of power that transgressed anatomy-politics – that of biopower or biopolitics. Foucault first introduces this social and political transgression in his 1976-1977 lectures *Society Must Be Defended* (2003). For Foucault, biopolitics was a technique of power in which a given power structure, i.e. the state, sought to manage or regulate a given population for the interests of the power structure. While anatomy-politics was focused upon individuated power, panopticism and docile bodies, Foucault explains that power shifted from being focused on producing the individual to being more focused on populations as a whole. It was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

Foucault argues, that western society became socially aware of itself as a species with the advent of this new technique of power.

Foucault explains that collective bodies are essential for enabling power to do what power wants to do, and so, genealogically speaking, power began to intervene in certain regulative capacities to further its interests, as opposed to purely punishing individual bodies. Foucault emphasizes that while there was this transgression of power in the western world at this time, anatomo-politics did not ‘disappear’ per se as a technology of power. Discipline, Foucault says, remained as a component of the wider biopolitical apparatus. In Foucault’s words, “This new technique does not simply do away with the disciplinary technique, because it exists at a different level, on a different scale, and because it has a different bearing area, and makes use of very different instruments” (2003, 242). Thus genealogically these two series of power “are not mutually exclusive and can be articulated with each other” (Foucault 2003, 250). In other words, disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms of power function together in a system of normalization, where there is some form of individuated production of subjects along with an emphasis on biological regulation. This tandem construct, however, is a transgression beyond pure discipline, where the endgame of biopower is the biological management of the population.

In greater detail, biopolitics is characterized by the advent of the state’s control over a population’s “vital biological processes” (Foucault 2003). These include the management of reproduction, mortality, health, and other regulative techniques at the institutional level as mechanisms that invest in the biological well being of a population. As an example, the era of industrial capitalism was highly biopolitical in its operation; as

Foucault emphasizes, bodies are necessary on a collective industrial scale as sources of labor in factories, and so the state and the bourgeoisie had to ensure that bodies would be present and able to permit capital accumulation for the bourgeoisie. This involved providing a certain quantity and quality of health care and housing to laborers, because production had begun to suffer by virtue of the extreme exploitation workers had begun to endure by this point. This capitalistic biopolitics also involved slightly raising wages so that workers would be able to live to work another day. Thus workers were managed in such a capacity that they were able to exist and be socially reproduced for power's interests. In *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Foucault argues that discourses of sexuality became more common in the west in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as a biopolitical technique of power. Sexual discourse, Foucault argues, became more institutionalized in hospitals and schools in encouraging the permissiveness of pleasure to further manufacture biological and therefore social reproduction for the interests of capital and the state (Foucault 1977; 1978). As Foucault says, bodies must be physically present in order for the state apparatus to manifest its power through the regulation of populations of bodies, and thus provisioning sexual discourse throughout the population within institutional spaces was a manifestation of biopower.

Foucault also argues that population management can be exercised not just in economic forms but also through discourses of racism, security and militaristic practices. In *Society Must Be Defended* and later in *Security, Territory and Population* and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Foucault explains how most war and/or violent conflicts have been fought against the name of one population, while at the same time in the name of another population. The European Fascism of the 1930s and 1940s and the rise of the

Nazi party is Foucault's chief example of this, where Jewish bodies had to be completely annihilated in order to insure the racial purity of Aryan bodies (Foucault 2003).

Twentieth-century wars utilized drafts to recruit bodies to fight other bodies for the purpose of representing the power of one race as superior to another, a technology of power where discourse and biopolitics functioned jointly.

What stands out regarding all of Foucault's discussions of biopolitics as well as geographical contributions to the subject is the scalar differentiation between anatomo-politics and biopolitics. Let us recall that anatomo-politics differs from biopolitics in that anatomo-politics is individuating and interested in creating docile bodies; it is a technique of power that is out to target every specific body on an extremely personalized scale. And while these mechanisms often flow together, biopolitics is more interested in bodies collectively and the regulation of a population in general. Furthermore, the common unit of analysis that seems to run throughout Foucault's and geographers' discussions of biopower, as well as anatomo-politics for that matter, is the role of the state as the arbiter of power. It is the *state* that constructs panopticism; it is the *state* that institutionalizes regulatory mechanisms over the birth and death rate, discourses of sexuality, education, health care, labor, and all the rest of it. While any scholar of Foucault will readily acknowledge that Foucault believes that power is everywhere, it ultimately seems that Foucault believes it is always derived from the state. This is the point from which I build further. Biopolitics is clearly germane to how the state functions and why it uses its power in the ways that it does; however, biopolitics is not just a technology of power that is ascertained and utilized by state power structures. Biopolitics is an apparatus that is exercised and manifested by the subaltern. Borrowing from Gramsci, I use subaltern in

this context to refer to populations that are subjugated, oppressed, and manipulated, i.e. those individuals and groups that are the victims of the elite.

Geographers have employed Foucauldian biopolitics in across political, cultural and economic geography. Biopolitics is a term that is used across academic disciplines with different meanings and interpretations. Geographers in particular have sought to spatialize biopolitics across subfields. Coleman and Grove (2009) discuss the extent to which Hardt and Negri's analysis of biopolitics has a spatial dimension. The authors emphasize that there is a biopolitical geography in dividing up and conquering the generative energies of a global pool of laborers, and that we further ought to pay attention to the space-time embeddedness of particular forms of labor and exploitation in order to see the biopolitical realities present. Legg (2005) argues that biopolitics can be analytically and methodologically applied within the sub-discipline of population geography, and as such population geography must have awareness of the biopolitical processes and their different and multiple scales of operation. Salter (2006) examines the micropolitics of borders by outlining the relation between the government and the individual body. Salter suggests that a biopolitical order is constructed along with the formalities of passports, visas and biometrics how populations and individuals cross between sovereign spaces. Similarly, Sparke (2006) discusses the expedited border-crossing program Nexus and its production of the geographies of citizenship in North America. Sparke argues that inter-state mobility for an entrepreneurial business class is an outcome of an exclusionary and exceptional biopolitical technique of power, functioning together with neoliberal trade policies. Alatout (2006) investigates Palestinian and Israeli environmental narratives as effects of power, arguing that while

Palestinian narratives focus on property rights and are more territorially-driven, Israeli narratives are more biopolitical in that they promote and focus on quality of life, health and the general well-being of the population. Additionally, Nally (2011) examine how the management of food folds into biopolitical strategies for managing life, in that corporate agribusiness attempts to recondition spaces of human and animal life in order to quicken the reproduction of capital.

While geographers have interlaced biopolitics within variety of spatial frameworks, I seek to go further by spatializing Foucault's original definition of biopolitics within the realm of the geographies of resistance, a conceptual transgression that geographers have not yet made. Bargu (2014) explains that resistance relative to Foucauldian social thought has been significantly undertheorized. Foucault touches on resistance briefly in the *History of Sexuality Vol. I*, saying that "Where there is power, there is resistance" and that "Power comes from below, that is, there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix" (1978, 94, 95). While Foucault makes these brief points, he does not outline in any depth frameworks of resistance to state biopolitics. This is what attempt to sketch out here.

If we say that management of bodies in a population exists only at the state scale then we are precluding any kind of massifying mechanisms of embodied regulation that may exist on other social scales, particularly within scales of resistance. I am proposing a more nuanced biopolitics of the self, a biopolitics where bodies seek to manage themselves through their own available agency, where the subaltern regulate their own vital biological processes as a technique of power. To speak of biopolitics as purely state-

driven precludes us from understanding how resistance has biopolitical elements in subaltern contexts. This conception of biopolitics is one where populations construct and manifest their own power through regulatory mechanisms that they attempt to institute through their own agency.

In writing on GTMO, Derek Gregory (2006) discusses biopolitics, exception, and what Agamben refers to as the 'homo sacer' or bare life: "...while I think it is wrong to represent the space of exception as the paradigmatic space of political modernity, I do believe it is a potential space whose artificial brutalities must be – and are being – resisted at every turn" (2006, 421). What is interesting here is that Gregory frames biopolitics within the realm of resistance. He further says:

And the prisoners themselves have refused to be reduced to bare life: insisting on their individual dignity, standing their ground before hostile military tribunals, and undertaking directly biopolitical modes of resistance, including hunger strikes and suicide attempts that culminated in the deaths of (those) three young men in June 2006 (2006, 421).

Suggesting that biopolitical power exists in forms of embodied resistance is an entirely unprecedented statement, and is a strong conceptual differentiation from what scholars have long understood biopolitics to be (i.e. a technique of power utilized by the state for managing populations). How is resistance biopolitical, and why should we conceive of it this way? What does this mean? Gregory does not provide explanation here; his conclusions are not entirely substantiated and provide no theoretical synthesis that can help us identify how biopolitics can manifest through the geographies of resistance. Framing life and death almost purely through the lens of state power, whether it is through direct bodily subjugation or institutional representation, ignores the possible

subaltern dimensions of biopolitics, which are phenomena that must be explored in greater detail.

While I am arguing here that we must examine the biopolitics of subaltern resistance, I am also attempting to develop a more spatialized theory of a biopolitical geography of resistance. As I have argued, geographies of resistance desire to produce new geographies and aspire to change social space, which may occur through the performance of identity and violence. When studying the geographies of resistance through a scalar mode of analysis it is necessary to view resistance and the subsequent politics of transformation attached to it within a given spaces' own localized scales. The purpose of this is to identify the social and political heterogeneities of agency and resistant power present within performed, resistance spaces. Resistant geographies can produce power within their own scales of resistance by virtue of the techniques within which resistance is operationalized. Relations between resistant geographies and the state as the only social relations that are present within performed space are not the only geographies at work; additionally, resistant geographies can produce scales of power and varieties of social relations within their own subaltern units and populations through performed resistance.

This analytic of authenticating biopolitical geographies of resistance on localized scales also requires that we understand not just scales of power and their unique social relations in resistant spaces but also what I refer to as the *scale of the body itself*. Foucault's biopolitics is rooted in the idea of "vital biological processes", and the controls and mechanisms that may be instituted to insure the biological existence or lack thereof of a population, i.e. an investment in life for power's interests. These

institutionalized mechanisms are in place to insure a population's survival, or through the techniques of sovereignty and domination to insure a population's decimation. Again, for Foucault the state is always the scale at which biopolitical regulation and population management is exercised. The vital biological processes of a population, however, are not just managed and regulated at the scale of the state, but are also managed *within subaltern populations and by subaltern bodies themselves*. The body plays a significant role in how, why and where resistant geographies are performed. Thus there can be different scales internally within subaltern populations in terms of the extent to which bodies become the direct vehicle of resisting power. Resistance may take the form of accessing the vulnerability of the body, yet such acts of resistance may or may not be uniform across all individuals within a given population. Some individuals and/or groups may resist by managing their vital biological processes extensively in a greater multitude of vulnerable, violent and damaging ways than others. Thus it is necessary to acknowledge the possible heterogeneity of scales with which individuals and/or groups may utilize the body in space when resisting state power and state violence.

The multiple scales at which resistant bodies are manipulated and managed by the resisters themselves forms the foundation for what I will henceforth refer to as the biopolitical geography of resistance. Using this framework I analyze both GTMO and Pelican Bay's hunger strikes' social organization and internal power relations between groups and individuals. In answering my first and second research questions on how and why prisoners in these carceral spaces socially organize their resistance I emphasize the scales of participation in hunger striking, as well as the scale of the body. This theoretical framework opens doors to the consideration of the relationships between power, identity

and violence as exhibited by hunger striking resistance in spaces of incarceration and beyond.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **GUANTANAMO BAY**

#### **History of the Military Base & the Prison**

GTMO Bay was a territory that originally belonged to Cuba prior to and immediately after the Spanish-American War of 1898. After the Cubans and Americans defeated the Spanish and Cuba gained its sovereignty, the U.S. refused to relinquish its military presence in Cuba unless GTMO was legally leased to the U.S. While the Cuban legislature initially resisted this move, the Cuban president eventually ceded GTMO to the U.S. and agreed to the annual lease agreement (Hansen 2011). The 1903 Platt Amendment enabled the U.S. to keep its lease until a time at which it chose to return the territory to Cuba. This non-mutual agreement strategically enabled the U.S. to hold onto GTMO indefinitely, and prevented Cuba from ending the lease. The Platt agreement was amended by the Treaty of 1934, which was dictated by the U.S. The Treaty of 1934 essentially reiterated the same language as the Platt Amendment, with the addition that in the case of an epidemic the U.S. would cease communications with the Cuban government (Hansen 2011). Since the Cuban revolution in 1959, the Castro government has refused to cash any of the lease checks sent by the U.S. (the cost of the lease is about \$4,000 a year), in effect refusing to recognize GTMO as a U.S. territory (Hansen 2011; Greenberg 2009).

GTMO officially became a naval base in 1903, and during the first several decades that GTMO was a U.S. territory it served as a coaling station, training ground, and winter base for the naval fleet. In the 1920s both enlisted men and officers at GTMO were able to circumvent prohibition, and the base became an exceptional space at this

time relative to the military's permissiveness regarding the legality of alcohol (Hansen 2011). By the 1950s and 1960s the space served a very minimal purpose for the navy after it ceased functioning as a fueling station. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 President Kennedy's National Security Council advised him to relinquish GTMO to Cuba as a strategy for ending the crisis. While this might have ended the crisis sooner, Kennedy refused to do this because he believed doing so would compromise the U.S.'s image in the world as a global Cold War power (Hansen 2011).

The purpose of the space began to change in the 1990s, when the base housed refugees during the political coup in Haiti. It was not until late 2001- early 2002 when the Department of Defense (hereinafter DOD) built the infrastructure for a prison within the naval base. The prison is operated under the auspices of the DOD within the naval base territory, with other naval and military operations functioning independently of the prison. Following the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the National Security Council under President Bush began brainstorming as to where the alleged Taliban and Al Qaeda prisoners captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan should be incarcerated. In the fall of 2001 it was decided that GTMO was the best location to erect this prison (Hansen 2011; Greenberg 2009). When prisoners first arrived at GTMO on January 11, 2002, they lived in unhealthy and cramped conditions for the first several months of their detention, a result of a rushed construction of the prison's infrastructural facilities (Hansen 2011; Greenberg 2009).

It was in the first two years after the prison's inception that the initial period of torture transpired. So-called 'enhanced interrogation' techniques, such as waterboarding, stress positions, long-term standing, sleep deprivation, and other torture methods were

utilized against prisoners between 2002 and 2003 (Greenberg 2009). These practices, which were also carried out at Baghram Air Force Base in Afghanistan and in the CIA rendition program in its so-called 'black sites' around the globe, eventually ceased after coming under public and political criticism regarding effectiveness and the interrogations' lack of respect for human rights and the law. Available evidence suggests that the average person continues to believe in these geopolitical imaginations that represent GTMO detainees as terrorists (Morse 2013), believing that these particular torturous acts are still carried out; this is factually incorrect, however, in that these particular interrogation techniques were terminated by 2003 (Greenberg 2009). Nevertheless, prisoners continued to be detained indefinitely, without legal recourse or counsel, and have experienced other inequalities at the hands of the prison, the DOD and the U.S government. These inequalities and grievances have played their respective role in the production of hunger strike resistance.

### **Geographical Literature on GTMO**

GTMO has been a space in which the state has exercised sovereign power in several capacities. Literature in geography has identified several of these manifestations of state power and authority. Minca (2005) argues that ultimate biopolitical power is demonstrated in the space of the camp, in that human life can be put in jeopardy and taken in such a geopolitical space. Minca argues that the space of the camp "is the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized", and that we must pay close attention to the politics of the exception. It is therefore imperative for us to engage with Giorgio Agamben's work when discussing a space such as GTMO, in order to understand

the unstable threshold between life and death as an outcome of state sovereignty (Minca 2005).

Reid-Henry (2007) also suggests that Agamben's thoughts on sovereignty have utility in discussing GTMO: "In short there is a need to examine the geographical mechanisms behind the production of bare life and its consignment to variously constituted spaces of exception whose *particularity* is a part of their very functioning" (2007, 632). Reid-Henry argues that we must ask questions regarding how the effects of sovereignty are realized differentially, specifically in relation to how bare life is produced in geopolitical space.

Morse (2013) has conducted a discourse analysis of the legal discursive geographies constructed by the U.S. government that represented GTMO detainees as terrorist bodies. This work demonstrates how the White House, the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel and the Department of Defense were involved in a sophisticated institutional process of establishing discursive representations of prisoners. This elaborate institutional scheme, Morse argues, intentionally produced monikers that were geopolitical imaginations, and that it was through this discursive, representational power that detainee bodies were to be represented as deserving of torture and indefinite imprisonment. Morse refers to the representation of GTMO prisoners as the "carceral imagination", i.e., a spectacle that enabled the U.S. to justify its actions in other regions of the world, namely in the Middle East with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and later the Iraq invasion in 2003 (Morse 2013).

These discussions of sovereignty, law and representation analyze the GTMO prison with unit of analysis of state power in managing this prison space. While these

accounts provide useful conceptual and theoretical tools for analyzing GTMO as a space of incarceration within the global war prison, I find that these studies mostly follow a similar line of reasoning regarding sovereignty and state-scale power. These studies lack the necessary frameworks for understanding subaltern scales of violence, power and identity, and the relationships thereof that are present within the prison's geographies of hunger strike resistance. In the following section of this chapter I explore the chronology and social organization of the GTMO hunger strikes, and present empirical data regarding the subaltern scales within which power and violence are constructed in hunger strike resistance. Speaking generally, the reasons for hunger striking depend upon socio-geographical setting and circumstance. The rationales for why prisoners choose to hunger strike at GTMO are varied, and will be discussed here in conjunction with the internal power structures and internal socio-organizational dynamics of hunger strike conduct. I begin by outlining particular periods in the prison's history when there have been widely-publicized hunger strikes; following this I emphasize what I have found to be the most salient themes present during these periods of time as they relate to the social organization of hunger strikes, and the internal power relations that develop amongst prisoners.

### **Hunger Strikes – Historical Developments**

The last known prisoner arrival at GTMO was in 2008 (Human Rights First 2016). Overall GTMO has held 779 prisoners (Worthington 2007); this is cumulative, however, as there was never a single moment when the prison contained that many individuals. It is difficult to determine exactly how many prisoners were hunger strike participants at one time or another during the prison's history; however, hunger strikes

have transpired in a myriad of organizational capacities and during certain periods of time since the prison was opened.

While the precise date is unknown, internal government memoranda obtained through freedom of information act requests, client interviews by habeas legal counsel, as well as court records reveal that hunger strikes date back as far as the early months of 2002 (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). These earlier strikes, according to the military, were sporadic and did not involve many prisoners at a time, and consequently did not pose a significant risk to prisoners in terms of fatalities or injury. Statements given by released detainees originally from the UK, Afghanistan and Pakistan explain that one or more brief hunger strikes occurred in early 2002 in response to mistreatment of the Koran by a guard in Camp X-Ray. This strike ended following an apology given by an officer over the prison's loudspeaker system; it was subsequently determined that guards were no longer permitted to handle the Koran except in the case of emergencies. Certain reports from former detainees believe the strike lasted three days, while others report it was an eight-day strike. The number of prisoners on hunger strike following this incident is unknown (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005).

The first known hunger strike lasted from February 27 to May 10, 2002. This was reported to be a rolling hunger strike, caused by an MP removing a turban from a prisoner during prayer. Over the strike's two-month period, prisoner involvement rose to a peak of 194 participants. An official statement from the GTMO Joint Task Force stated that 159 prisoners refused lunch and that another 109 refused dinner on February 27. On the following day it was officially reported that 107 refused breakfast and 194 refused dinner. A statement released by the public affairs officer for the Joint Task Force

regarding this hunger strike attempted to play down the scale of coordination that the prisoner population sought to manifest: “by no means is this an organized, concerted effort by the camp’s detainee population, but merely a demonstration of some of the detainees’ displeasure over the uncertainty of their future” (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). By mid-March, three detainees who had refused both food and water for around a two-week period were force-fed fluids intravenously. By early May the number of strike participants had dwindled, as only two prisoners were reported to still be participating at this point. Both of these prisoners were ultimately force-fed – one after 63 days, and another after 71 days of not eating (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005).

It was not until the summer of 2005 when another larger-scale strike was reported similar to the two-month strike in 2002. From late June through most of July a hunger strike was carried out in all five camps of the detention center. According to attorneys from the law firm Shearman & Sterling, the prisoners described the strike as being a “peaceful, nonviolent strike” lasting “until demands are met”. The strike called for “no violence, by hand or even words, to anyone, including guards” and also stated the strike’s goal, “starvation until death” (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). An imprisoned British resident provided some detail regarding the initial organization of this strike: “They began on June 21, 2005, by rejecting one meal each day for a week. On June 28, they began to reject two meals. On July 2, 2005, they began rejecting all food...A majority...are taking part in the hunger strike” (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005).

While the DOD stated that 52 prisoners were hunger striking, attorneys representing the prisoners demonstrated that approximately 200 prisoners were participating in this strike (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). This mass

organization prompted the prison administration to call for the creation of a Prisoners' Council in order to negotiate with the prison authorities regarding prisoner demands. While the authorities requested the Prisoners' Council, it was the prisoners themselves who organized and established this social unit. Based upon promises to bring the prison into compliance with Geneva Convention protections, the June-July hunger strike ended July 28 (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). Unfortunately, however, Geneva Convention protections ultimately were not delivered to the prisoners, and consequently another hunger strike was initiated in mid-August. When the August strike began, the prison administration retaliated against the prisoners by placing the members of the Council in isolation (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). The DOD acknowledged the August hunger strike on September 2, reporting there had been prisoners on hunger strike since August 8. Lawyers reported that by October the number of strikers had diminished to 24 prisoners (Institute on Medicine as a Profession 2013).

Following a report of a guard disrespecting the Koran in February 2013, another large-scale strike arose. This strike lasted until at least November, as the DOD released the number of prisoners on strike from the emergence of the strike in February until November, when the DOD stopped releasing striker numbers. The strike eventually rose to a total of 106 in July. The graph below (figure 1) represents the growth and decline of strike participation during this movement (Miami Herald 2013):

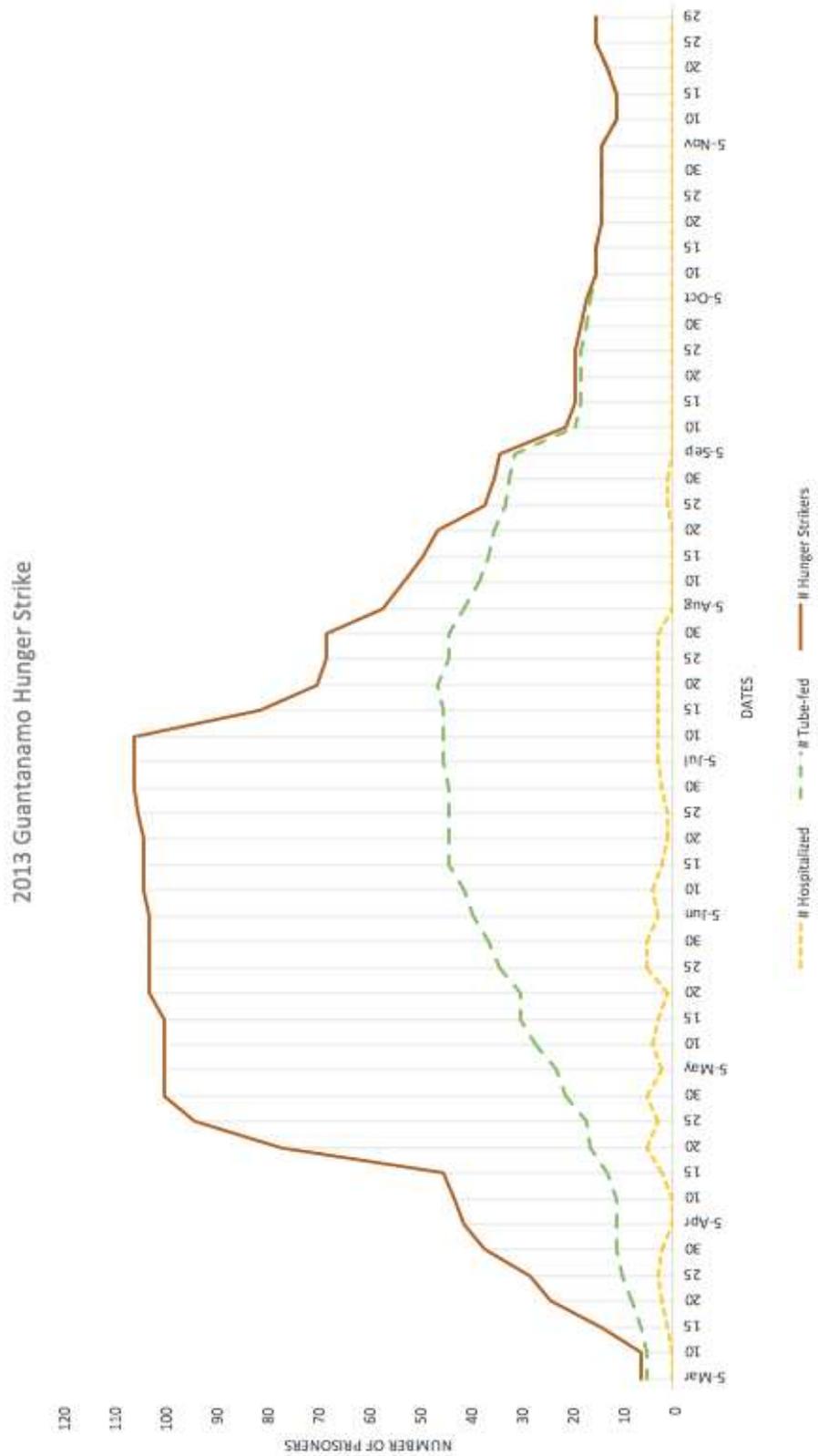


Figure 1. Guantanamo Hunger Strike: Adapted from Miami Herald, 2013.

As is illustrated in figure 1, between mid-April and mid-August, around 100 prisoners were hunger striking continuously. Also illustrated in this graph is the number of prisoners that were force-fed as well as the number of strikers who were hospitalized and put on IVs during this time. Those who are hospitalized experienced severe medical complications from not eating for sustained periods of time (Center for Constitutional Rights 2005). Understandably, the number of prisoners being force-fed fluctuated relative to the number of prisoners hunger striking.

### **Definitions, Categorizations, and Social Organization of Hunger Striking**

In conducting interviews with attorneys who have represented GTMO prisoners and physicians hired by the defense who have medically counseled detainees, particular themes have become evident in my research regarding how prisoners socially organize their resistance movements. Most notable of the characteristics of hunger strike social organization and power structures are 1) the relationship between the group and the individual, as well as 2) cultural and religious factors that affect execution of hunger strikes. Having outlined some general chronology regarding hunger strikes that have transpired at GTMO, below I highlight the power relations and socio-organizational elements present in these periods of resistance. I identify the lawyers from my interviews by a number (i.e. lawyer 1, lawyer 2, etc.) in order to protect confidentiality.

A prisoner is officially considered a hunger striker by the prison authorities after having missed nine meals. Once prisoners drop below a certain percentage of their body weight they are force-fed nutritional supplements if they do not voluntarily drink them. The International Committee for the Red Cross (hereinafter ICRC) outlines three general definitions of hunger strikers. These include ‘true’ hunger strikers, ‘non-total fasters’ and

‘dry’ hunger strikers (Institute on Medicine as a Profession 2013). Dry hunger striking is a very dangerous form of hunger striking where a striker consumes neither food nor water. An individual who does this cannot survive longer than a few days. This form of hunger striking is very uncommon because not drinking water would be counterproductive – a hunger striker requires time for their resistance to be acknowledged, and so rapid bodily deterioration by not consuming water would not be a useful tactic to most hunger strikers. So-called ‘non-total’ hunger striking refers to taking other nutrients, vitamins or any other supplements beyond just drinking water. A ‘true’ hunger striker is one who consumes no solid food of any kind, only taking water (Institute on Medicine as Profession 2013). Force-feeding is a method of negative reinforcement, used by the authorities as a technique to try and break the hunger strikes. The DOD’s perspective, formalized in 2006, is that hunger strikes are acts of self-harm rather than forms of resistance; this enables the DOD to characterize force-feeding as a life-saving measure, and justifies the violence and extreme physical discomfort implicit in inserting and removing feeding tubes three times a day (Institute on Medicine as a Profession 2013).

While prisoners are classified under these discursive groupings, their official status as a hunger striker must be further determined by psychiatric evaluation. If a prisoner is psychiatrically determined to be hunger striking for a rational reason, and if they are resisting on their own accord based on personal convictions or decisions, this denotes hunger strike status. It is worth noting, however, that the social organization of hunger striking at GTMO does not operate within categories that are as neatly defined by

the ICRC, which have been adopted by the prison authorities. As lawyer 1 explained to me, these definitions often mean very little to the prisoners when they are striking:

AM: From the perspective of the ICRC definitions that give the criteria for what defines a hunger strike, missing nine meals completely is the criteria that defines it officially?

Lawyer 1: Well, who gives a damn what they say. I mean, that's not what matters is it? The fact that they define a hunger strike by nine missed meals. That's got nothing to do with what these prisoners do. The prisoners define it the way they want to define it. A lot of them miss, you know, five thousand meals.

As I explain in the section above on the history of GTMO's hunger strikes, the 2005 strike was coordinated by missing one meal a day for a week, which prisoners thereafter expanded into missing two meals several days later, and then all meals in the days following. As stated above, there are conflicting definitions of what constitutes a hunger strike or hunger strike involvement at GTMO. While certain categorizations exist on the side of the prison administration and its medical professionals in terms of what prisoners must do to be officially considered a hunger striker, prisoners seek to define their status as hunger strikers on their own terms outside of these official categorizations. While the GTMO medical establishment has significantly adopted the ICRC definitions, prisoners do not seek to conduct their hunger striking based on such official categorizations of not eating.

In conducting my initial interview(s) it was unclear from the dialogue just how deeply organized the GTMO prison population has been in hunger strike resistance. A psychiatrist that I interviewed was skeptical of the extent to which the strikes were socially coordinated, and stated that he believed that the organizational aspects of the hunger strikes were not deeply embedded:

This is a network of guys. I don't know if anybody is a leader. I haven't seen anything to indicate to me that there's that kind of mentality amongst them or that they're organized like that...there's a lot of individuals with a lot of individual interests. I don't think it worked – I just don't see that as realistic at all... there can always be a common feeling, I mean we see it on college campuses all the time; something lights everybody up and they just do what they need to do. And there is a leadership that's there, it is ad hoc, and then it kind of fades, you know, and sometimes these things have a life of their own. So I'm not so sure they're that organized. I mean I've never seen anything that indicates to me that they're that organized... I just don't see why it had to be fought as if it was an organized protest where there's leadership. I'm not so sure. It may be.

Lawyer 3 also stated that the hunger strikes were, to his knowledge, “not that organized”.

These passages explain that while the strikes have had some level of organization, they should be represented as not being extremely centralized in their operation. And while there have been long-standing grievances within the prison population, such as indefinite detention and lack of legal access, there was a particular tripping point that initiated some of if not several of the hunger strikes at GTMO. My conversations with attorneys have allowed me to gain a clearer representation of the social organization and power relations present in the conduct of the hunger strikes, which I focus on in the remainder of this chapter.

The hunger strike in the summer of 2005 saw the outcome of the Prisoners' Council. As mentioned above, this Council, whose creation was requested by the prison administration, was organized and established by the prison population itself. The Council's purpose was to represent the rest of the prisoners and negotiate with the authorities regarding prisoner demands, which the commanding officer hoped would end the strike. The prisoners demanded that the prison and U.S. government extend the Geneva Convention to them, which the commanding officer sought to do, as establishing

a Prisoners' Council in the case of prisoners of war is required under the Convention. The prison population nominated six prisoners to establish this structure; however, this was accomplished partly with practicality in mind, and the prisoners who were chosen or elected to be on the Council were prisoners who also spoke English, in order to be able to comfortably and effectively communicate with the guards and prison authorities in the negotiations.

This council was only in operation as an intermediary between the prisoners and the administration for a brief period of two or three weeks, as the commanding officer who instigated the Council was removed from power for attempting to extend the Geneva Convention to the prisoners. It was the removal of the administration's recognition of the Council, as mentioned above, that sparked the following hunger strike in August. Interestingly, however, despite the administration's dismissal of the Council, the prison population did not dissolve this structure, and the Council remained as a force to a certain extent after the summer of 2005. According to an attorney, this remains as a social structure to this day: "...each prison block would basically elect a leader. It was normally the person who could interact most effectively with the guards, so it was normally again someone who spoke English".

Lawyer 2 explained that the Council was a "power structure that is not binding" in that there is not strong discipline or centralization of power because of the Council's structure. In asking lawyer 1 if prisoners are purely expected to follow the Council's interests and decisions, lawyer 1 explained that the structure was not quite this rigid:

...it isn't that sort of 'Come with us and I'm gonna tell you what to do' [. It really is the interface. So when the guards get out of hand, or the prisoners need something, that's when the block leader intervenes, and kind of talks it down as opposed to everyone getting a big old bash-on. It's not the kind

of thing where I'm elected block leader, so now we have a trade union, and we're going to start, you know, asserting our rights. It's not really that.

As this passage demonstrates, the prisoners in the Council function as a sort of representative group for the rest of the prison population, who in a way assume the responsibility of hunger striking so other prisoners do not have to or do not need to become involved. At an even more micro scale within the Prisoners' Council, negotiations occur regarding the best technique for the individuals in that group to resist. Decisions within the Council are frequently made by mutual agreement with the other group members. Attorney 1 explains this social process:

Depending on who they are, there's a core group of six of the very long-term prisoners who have been force-fed for years. They had reached a level of accommodation. This included (name redacted)... he was absolutely committed to what he was doing, but on the other hand he wasn't a masochist. So he reached an accommodation with the other five guys, so the guys would let him walk to the force-feeding chair where he would walk once a day where they drink the revolting stuff in a can... And then the other times they would make him stick it up his nose. So you've got those compromises.

The Prisoners' Council ultimately prefers that strikers engage in completely involuntary consumption of solid food and nutrients in their hunger strikes; however, with the consent of the Council members, exceptions are made to this expectation.

There is a certain degree of freedom GTMO prisoners have in taking part or not taking part in hunger striking. Prisoners are not expected to become involved should they have extra-medical reasons, such as pre-existing medical conditions that could be exacerbated by not eating for lengths of time. The Council and wider prison population strongly respect these limitations. While group movements are often more recognized, these strikes are only one technique of hunger strike protest. What is unique about the GTMO hunger strikes is that prisoners can conduct their own personal, individualized

strikes without the rest of the population becoming involved. Lawyer 1 explains the absence of group restrictions in strike conduct:

AM: It's socially acceptable, I suppose, for people at Guantanamo to go on hunger strike even if there isn't a wider scale strike going on at the same time?

Lawyer 1: Oh yeah, oh yeah. And indeed there's necessity for the social group, the current group who are five or six people now, sort of designated by consensus, to continue the strike. You know, they tell the other prisoners you don't need to die there, I'll carry the torch, that's really what it's all about.

As stated above, the Council assumes a level of responsibility in striking for the rest of the population. Additionally, however, a mass strike does not need to be occurring for prisoners to hunger strike. According to one attorney, the strikes can be broken up into two categories, one being the mass-scale strikes – such as the 2005 and 2013 movements – and two being the individualized strikes, in which prisoners strike off-and-on, and resist more voluntarily by actively choosing to drink the nutritional supplements instead of receiving them by force-feeding. An individual prisoner striking on-and-off outside of the group is expected to speak with the Council regarding their potential plans to strike, including for how long and what his particular personal grievances are; as the psychiatrist explained in the quote above, there are many individuals with a variety of interests, which may not be reflected by the wider group's interests during a movement. No attorneys could recall any situation in which the Council suggested that a particular prisoner should not participate in their own hunger strike, outside of a prisoner having previous medical complications. And even if the Council advises prisoners not to strike because of standing health issues, prisoners may still exercise their right to protest regardless.

Within group movements and individualized off-and-on strikes, the question arises as to what extent prisoners make the decision to strike on their own accord. Attorney 2 stated that he “never felt like (his) clients were pressured” to participate in a hunger strike. That being said, lawyer 2 emphasized that many prisoners join in because they do not wish to feel left out of the struggle. Because of the legal ambiguities, indefinite detention, cultural disrespect and other abuses, this attorney explains that “it would be impossible for you not to hunger strike” if a movement is occurring, and since “all your brothers are hunger striking” you would have “no choice” but to participate. Thus while the Council maintains a social structure that is not binding, there is some scale of social anticipation regarding the extent to which other prisoners should resist, in addition to the potential violent outcomes of certain forms of resistance.

To drink the nutritional supplements means that one is voluntarily consuming nutrients, which in the eyes of many prisoners is not true resistance. Prisoners most frequently see themselves as true hunger strikers when they put themselves in the vulnerable situation of potentially being force-fed. According to both attorney 1 and attorney 2, it is often the case that in order to be a true resister and a true hunger striker prisoners must also not voluntarily walk to be force-fed; rather some prisoners comply with being forcibly extracted from their cell by the ‘Extreme Reaction Force’ squad of six guards, who violently beat prisoners and drag them out of their cells on restraint chairs so they may be taken to be force-fed. The preference for completely involuntary, true hunger striking by enduring force-feeding was a common phenomenon not just in the 2005 strike but also in the 2013 strike. This outcome occurs within and outside of the six-member Prisoners’ Council.

A further characteristic of the social organization and internal power structures present in the GTMO hunger strikes reflects the cultural affiliations prisoners have with one another. The entire prison population is made up of Muslim men, which, according to an attorney, is a factor that establishes collective mentalities in hunger strike resistance. While the prison population is constituted by numerous nationalities, Islam is a unifying factor in hunger strike operationalization and organization. It is widely publicized, and confirmed in my interviews, that the 2013 strike was initiated because of Koran desecration by a guard. Lawyer 2 explained that the strike took off, with minimal to no prior planning, immediately following this act of abuse and disrespect, and as the above graph shows, the number of strike participants rose drastically within two to three weeks. A performance of this scale for these reasons illustrates the importance of religion in constructing a group movement.

While the Prisoners' Council was established by consensus, lawyer 2 clarified that it was imams who made up the Council. Imams are religious leaders in Islam, and it is due to religious status and title that prisoners listen to the Council. Being imams, the Council members have the authority to call for a strike, a technique of power that is in part granted to them due to their religious status. Interestingly, these imams in the Council became religious leaders at GTMO, and were not Islamic clergymen by trade in their home countries prior to being captured in late 2001. These men, aside from being English speakers, are respected because of the spiritual knowledge or awareness they are said to have. It is for this reason that prisoners follow suggestions from the imams and pay heed to Council members. An attorney emphasized that prisoners feel obligated to discuss their options as on-and-off hunger strikers, resisting outside of a mass movement,

as they believe respect is due to the imams when exercising their personal decision to hunger strike. Since the imams in the Council can call for the strikes because of their spiritual/religious status, some social hierarchy exists in calls for mass resistance.

While these cultural and religious elements affect collective organization and collaboration in hunger striking, it is possible that religious identity may preclude prisoners from resisting by not eating. The one psychiatrist I spoke to informed me that he has had clients who take issue with hunger striking because of religious beliefs:

...that gets them into a real dilemma with regard to religious convictions, because suicide is condemned in Islam. And they have to decide – I had one man say to me he decided to stop his hunger strike...He said ‘by hunger striking I’m killing my stomach. That’s condemned, I can’t do this’. So that’s a particular interpretation of the theology that others may not share. It has just a lot of variation I think.

It is unclear to me how widespread this phenomenon is at GTMO; this quote is partly a reference to one prisoner, and I am uncertain as to how frequently prisoners overall share this interpretation and choose not to hunger strike because suicide is condemned in Islam.

I sought to confirm this information with attorney 1:

AM: Religion is a significant factor, as (name redacted) explained to me, with some prisoners. They feel like hunger striking is not something that they can do because of Islam, and I'm curious as to what extent this phenomenon is true.

Lawyer 1: I've never heard someone say they can't hunger strike because of Islam...I'd be quite surprised. I mean, look, there may be a pretext, but back in 2013, the overwhelming majority of prisoners struck. All of the ones who took their religion seriously struck. The people who didn't were generally the ones who were sick, and then there were some who were just being compliant with the guards, but I never heard anyone say they couldn't do it because it's against their religion.

While it is challenging to represent this phenomenon, such limitations in hunger striking based on religious identity appear minimal, both with hunger striking individually on-and-off and within group movements.

### **Social Patterns in Hunger Strike Social Organization at GTMO**

All in all, there have been two overarching themes that I have discovered in my research regarding the power relations and social organization governing the GTMO hunger strikes. There is an important social relationship between the larger group of prisoners striking together and those who strike separately outside of a movement. Culture/religion is a factor in how prisoners socially coordinate and organize their resistance. Prisoners maintain a social obligation to their fellow prisoners, as well as the religious leaders in the Council, and often feel that they are bound to resist should they not have a preexisting medical excuse. Based on the data presented here, we can see that while they are expected to have some social responsibility to the imams in the Prisoners' Council, prisoners can make their own choices to a significant degree; they may strike voluntarily by actively drinking the nutritional supplements, or they may strike by entirely involuntary means in submitting to force-feedings and forcible cell-extractions. Techniques of resistance and forms of social organization are not set in stone but rather are fluid, and while prisoners negotiate with the imams and one another, they are not bound to the group norms. Thus the GTMO hunger strikes have a libertarian quality attached to them with regard to how prisoners negotiate power relations and socially coordinate their resistance.

While these geographies of resistance in this carceral space are defined by nonbinding power structures and individual freedom in protest technique and duration,

this phenomenon is not necessarily uniform in other spaces of confinement. As we turn our attention in the next chapter to hunger striking at Pelican Bay and throughout the California prison system, we will see that the power relations between the group and the individual are not nearly as permissive in how prisoners socially organize their resistance. While social organization may be permissive at GTMO in several capacities, we will see how Pelican Bay hunger strikers are brought together collectively by strong associations of group identity that transcend the social scales of hunger strike commitment at GTMO.

## CHAPTER IV

### PELICAN BAY

#### **Solitary Confinement & History of the California Prison System**

Supermax prison development in California began in the late 1980s; Pelican Bay state prison and its solitary housing units were made operable in 1989, and Corcoran state prison was opened in 1988 (Reiter 2013). Between 1984 and 1996, California constructed 23 new prison facilities (Gilmore 2007; Reiter 2013). California converted additional prison space to supermax status during the 1990s, and tens of thousands of solitary housing units (hereinafter SHU) were built over the next twenty years. In 1995 Corcoran state prison in the central valley converted another 512-bed unit into a supermax unit, and in 2000 the CDCR opened an overflow supermax unit at Tehachapi state prison with a further 378 cells. The CDCR also operated a 44-cell supermax unit for women at Valley State Prison throughout these years. Between 1990 and 2006 the California prison population doubled, reaching 173,000 prisoners. Since the introduction of supermax units in California in the late 1980s, California's supermax population has consistently been 2% of the state's overall prison population (Reiter 2013). State correctional spending increased steadily with the rising prison population, and between 1980 and 2012 spending increased by 436% (Reiter 2013). In most California state prisons, the state government spends an average of \$49,000 per prisoner per year; however, at Pelican Bay, the state's main supermax facility, it costs the state more than \$70,000 per prisoner per year (Reiter 2013).

Overcrowding further complicates the pattern of mass incarceration in California. The number of beds in California prisons frequently has remained behind population

increases. As of 1993, a lawsuit, *Madrid vs. Gomez*, revealed that approximately half of the beds in the Pelican Bay supermax were double-bunked (Reiter 2013). Over the last twenty years, this policy of bunking two prisoners within a supermax cell has been common in California. Between 1993 and 1997 double-bunking rates peaked in the Corcoran and Pelican Bay SHUs, when between 40% and 70% of all supermax cells were double-bunked. Today at Pelican Bay, double-bunking rates are around 10%, while at Corcoran and Tehachapi the rates remain higher, at 60% and 100%, respectively.

There are numerous gangs that constitute California's prison populations, determined by white, latino and black racial-ethnic affiliations (Noll 2012). These include the Aryan Brotherhood, a white supremacist group; the Bloods and the Crips, both African-American gangs which, while having a national presence, are based in Los Angeles; the Northern and Southern Mexicans, i.e. the Mexican Mafia, who are a Mexican-American organization from Los Angeles; Nuestra Familia (Norteños), mostly based in Northern California; the Sureños, from southern California; and the Black Guerrilla family, known for their Marxist and Communist ideologies (Noll 2012). Historically many of these racially based organizations have been known for violent conflict with other racial groups in and out of prison. Many prisoners enter a maximum-security prison such as Pelican Bay already members of a gang (Reiter 2012), and it is a prisoner's potential gang status that affects whether or not that prisoner is placed in solitary confinement.

Supermax prisons and solitary housing units are ultimately prisons within prisons (Reiter 2013). This enables SHUs to be exceptional spaces that have been able to circumvent legal oversight since their inception, what Angela Davis refers to as “extra-

legal” punishment (Reiter 2013). In the first few years following the opening of Pelican Bay, reports of abuse began trickling out of the prison. The California legislature and governor began receiving letters from prisoners outlining exploitation and harsh living conditions in solitary confinement (Reiter 2013). A class action lawsuit, *Madrid vs. Gomez*, was launched in 1995 regarding these abuses. The lawsuit’s plaintiffs were SHU prisoners, dozens of whom reported comas, fractured ribs, torture and brain damage, among other forms of physical abuse. The Madrid case illustrated that correctional officers conceal information about goings-on in the prison through a ‘code of silence’ regarding issues of force because of possible retaliation for speaking out about such exploitation (Reiter 2013). Reiter explains how the case also revealed that guards do not have written guidelines for executing their tasks in managing prisoners:

In sum, correctional officers had control over every aspect of day-to-day conditions of confinement with Pelican Bay prisoners, from whether prisoners were housed with violent cellmates to whether prisoners are allowed out of their cells into the shower or exercise yard, whether they were given medical or mental health treatment, and whether they were beaten up or burned, or not (2013, 152).

In addition to power within the SHU, power over who actually gets sent to the SHU rests not with the courts or the legal system, but rather with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (hereinafter CDCR). The CDCR and its correctional officers are able to utilize ultimate discretion in determining if prisoners are placed within the general population or in the SHU. A prisoner is placed in the SHU either for a rule violation, for a period of time lasting a few months to several years, or the prisoner may be labeled by the authorities as a gang member and can be placed in the SHU for an indeterminate period of time, potentially lasting beyond a prisoner’s original criminal sentence (Reiter 2013).

The conditions of confinement in the SHU can change for any prisoner at any time. If prisoners correspond or have observed associations with other known gang members, or possess any other visual representations the administration associates with gang membership, such as gang tattoos, correctional officers may make determinations to place prisoners in the SHU indefinitely. A prisoners' theoretical gang affiliation is often also based upon spoken word, guard contacts between different prisons within the California system, prisoners' files or records, or any combination thereof. Gang identification is significantly engineered by prison authorities and is largely predatory, i.e., prisoners are intentionally labeled as such in order to establish norms for solitary incarceration (Goodman 2008). Thus supposed gang status is a technique of power for the CDCR, as this method of labeling is a process of discursive and social construction for indefinite detention.

Although the Madrid vs. Gomez case found that guards' actions at Pelican Bay had violated the U.S. constitution in regard to prohibitions against cruel and unusual punishment, the court never found that the conditions of long-term solitary confinement themselves were inherently unconstitutional. The outcome of the case saw the court working with lawyers and monitors to ensure that adequate policies were in place to preclude any abuses that were articulated in the suit (Reiter 2013). Furthermore, Madrid protected some of the most vulnerable prisoners in the SHU by raising standards for guard training and permitting minimal but greater legal due process in supermax confinement (Reiter 2013).

Other legal cases in the 1990s challenged the vague and discretionary rules permitting correctional officers' ability to 'validate' a prisoner's possible gang

membership, which frequently results in prisoners being placed in the SHU for an indefinite period of time. In *Castillo vs. Alameida*, a prisoner filed a claim arguing that he was placed in the SHU indefinitely as retaliation for working as a jailhouse lawyer (Reiter 2013). After nine years of ongoing litigation, Castillo, the plaintiff, agreed to a settlement that promised substantial revisions to California's prison gang validation procedures. In particular, the settlement required that the CDCR provide prisoners with the actual documentation being used as evidence to validate their gang membership, in addition to extending prisoners the opportunity to refute such claims. This decision in effect further limited guards' ability to depend upon hearsay evidence by word of mouth from informants, and also called for 6-month reviews to re-illustrate that prisoners continued to be active gang members in order to justify their indefinite incarceration (Reiter 2013).

Despite the reforms brought by this litigation, courts continued to rule that long-term and indefinite solitary confinement was constitutional. The average length of time a prisoner spends in the Pelican Bay SHU prior to release is 2.5 years, whereas the average length of stay in the Corcoran SHU is six months (Reiter 2013). Again, these numbers refer to prisoners who end up being released from solitary, as many prisoners have spent years and sometimes decades in the SHU. As of 2011, there were more than 500 prisoners who had spent greater than five years in the Pelican Bay SHU – 291 prisoners had been in the SHU longer than ten years, and 78 prisoners had spent 20 years or more in solitary confinement (Reiter 2013). Many prisoners may never be released from the SHU. A common phrase 'parole, snitch or die' is used in prison to illustrate this lack of mobility (Reiter 2012). This slang refers to the three ways in which a prisoner may leave

the SHU: he can be paroled from his sentence, he can renounce his gang membership by ‘debriefing’ (i.e., naming names of other possible gang members and sharing information about gang activity so that he can be moved into ‘protective custody’ or the general population), or he can die in the SHU (Reiter 2012). While debriefing to get relocated from the SHU may sound appealing, this choice is frowned upon by most prisoners since this forces them to renounce their identities to the authorities in order to live in conditions where they have a few more freedoms. Selling out themselves and their social and cultural group is something prisoners usually refuse to do. Furthermore, this technique has manufactured violence between racial groups, in that if a prisoner ‘snitches’ then that prisoner may be retaliated upon (by their own racial group or another) if they are moved to general population, where it will be very difficult if not impossible for the guards to protect a prisoner who has debriefed.

The CDCR’s argument is that they can mitigate and prevent gang violence through the debriefing process. This has proven not to be effective, and instead has historically produced more violence within the prison population (Reiter 2013). Changing this policy was one of the prisoners’ major goals in the 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes at Pelican Bay and throughout the wider California prison system.

### **Chronological Developments of the Pelican Bay Hunger Strikes**

The SHU’s presence as a space of indeterminate incarceration, existing outside the direct rule of law, shaped the rationale and justifications for the 2011 and 2013 California prison hunger strikes. Below I outline the sequence of hunger strikes that transpired at Pelican Bay and throughout the California prison system between 2011 and

2013, and following this I present data illustrating the internal power relations and micro-scale social organization of the hunger strikes.

Members of the so-called ‘Short Corridor Collective’ originally planned the strikes in the SHU. In 2011 and 2013 the Short Corridor prisoners launched three hunger strikes, largely driven by a homogenization of racial groups protesting together as a collective unit. In February 2011 the Short Corridor sent their demands to the Governor and CDCR officials (Prison Focus 2012). As these demands were initially ignored, the Pelican Bay SHU planned and executed multiple hunger strikes. The first began July 1 2011, lasting about three weeks. The July strike transpired not just at Pelican Bay but also at another eight prisons in the California system, with 5300 prisoners striking altogether on July 1, according to the CDCR (Reiter 2013). By July 3, the CDCR documented 6,600 prisoners refusing meals at 13 different prison facilities in California (Prison Focus 2012; Center for Constitutional Rights 2016). The second 2011 strike was initiated September 26, and lasted until October 15 involving approximately 12,000 participants across the California prison system (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016). This strike was terminated following the CDCR’s promise to review all current SHU assignments. In March 2012, the CDCR proposed a new Security Threat Group Management Strategy, which was essentially a further proposal for adding steps to the debriefing process (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016). At this time the Center for Constitutional Rights joined the lawsuit originally filed by the Short Corridor prisoners themselves (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016). Dissatisfied with the lack of initiative on the part of the Governor and CDCR’s lack of a plan for ending long-term indefinite solitary confinement, a third strike lasting 60 days was initiated on July 8 2013. At its start, over

30,000 prisoners throughout the California system had joined in on the strike. By the end of the strike two months later at Pelican Bay, it is reported that about 40 prisoners were still consistently striking. The strike was suspended as of September 5, when California lawmakers agreed to hold hearings to address the Short Corridor's demands (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016). While these hunger strikes operating across racial groups received publicity, hunger strikes of fewer participants had transpired previously in the Pelican Bay SHU, dating back to as early as 2001 (Earle 2015). While it is difficult to know exact numbers, these strikes involved limited participation in comparison to the hundreds and thousands of prisoners striking in 2011 and 2013 (Earle 2015).

### **The Social Organization of the Pelican Bay & CA Prison Hunger Strikes**

Below I present data taken from prisoner letters sent to California Prison Focus, a prison rights group in Oakland, before and during the 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes. The data presented from these chosen letters speak to the power structures present in the social organization of the resistance. While some of these letters are public, the majority of them were collected from the files of California Prison Focus. I identify prisoners by a number, as prisoners' names were redacted prior to viewing them in CPF's files. Letters from prisoners participating in the hunger strikes at Pelican Bay as well as Corcoran are examined, and are therefore identified as such (ex. Pelican Bay prisoner 1, Corcoran prisoner 2, etc.). In examining these letters, two general themes arose regarding the social organization of the strikes; these include 1) the leadership structure present in strike planning and operationalization and 2) the ways and extent to which prisoners were committed to resisting. While these two themes are evident throughout many of the

passages shared here below, I have separated quotes based on how salient I believe a theme is illustrated in a passage.

I also present data from two interviews; one was conducted with a former prison rights activist and medical doctor also affiliated with California Prison Focus who is familiar with the medical context of hunger striking. In the second interview I spoke with a former prisoner and prison rights activist who is the editor of *Prison Focus* and who is familiar with gang organization and prison resistance movements. It is useful to examine discourse from these interviews here because they provide a critical perspective on hunger strike social organization that is not necessarily explained through prisoners' own ethnographic accounts of strike planning and social coordination in their letters. In the final section of the chapter I bring these two themes together and discuss the social patterns in hunger strike social organization based on this data.

The grievances that justified the strikes were originally written by the Short Corridor Collective and were articulated through what the Collective termed the Five Core Demands. These were mailed to the CDCR and the Governor of California, as stated above, and for publicity were also distributed to CPF in Oakland, and were published in CPF's newsletter, *Prison Focus*, which eventually circulated through the SHU. The Five Core Demands were released in the spring of 2011 (Center for Constitutional Rights 2015) and were written as the following:

- Perceived gang membership is one of the leading reasons for placement in solitary confinement.
- The practice of “debriefing,” or offering up information about fellow prisoners particularly regarding gang status, is often demanded in return for better food or release from the SHU. Debriefing puts the safety of prisoners and their families at risk, because they are then viewed as “snitches.”

- The validation procedure used by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) employs such criteria as tattoos, readings materials, and associations with other prisoners (which can amount to as little as greeting) to identify gang members.
- Many prisoners report that they are validated as gang members with evidence that is clearly false or using procedures that do not follow the *Castillo v. Alameida* settlement which restricted the use of photographs to prove association.

Thus the SHU prisoners were requesting that gang identity be respected by asking that debriefing be terminated; the attempted authoritative crackdown puts prisoners in a position to be easily manipulated, and debriefing should be abolished because it does not limit prison violence. These demands were suggested as an ultimatum in April 2011 before SHU prisoners began their first hunger strike over the summer.

The Short Corridor prisoners who were labeled as gang leaders by the prison authorities had been moved into the same pod in the SHU in years prior. The CDCR's objective in isolating prisoners this way was an attempt to obstruct prisoners' potential ability to mobilize other prisoners. The spatial proximity established between these particular prisoners did the opposite, however, and enabled them to organize collective resistance. Pragmatically speaking, while communication is slow and can be challenging, prisoners can yell between cells and pods in order to plan and organize. The Pelican Bay SHU prisoners sought to resist social categorization and characterization as members of racialized and violent prison gangs through protesting in this fashion. Furthermore, prior to the first hunger strike in 2011, the Short Corridor Collective released their "Agreement to End Hostilities". This agreement was decided upon by consensus within the Short Corridor, and called for prisoners to cease inter-gang violence:

If we really want to bring about substantive meaningful changes to the CDCR system in a manner beneficial to all solid individuals, who have never been broken by CDCR's torture tactics intended to coerce one to

become a state informant via debriefing, that now is the time for us to collectively seize this moment, and put an end to more than 20-30 years of hostilities between our racial groups...all racial group hostilities need to be at an end...and if personal issues arise between individuals, people need to do all they can to exhaust all diplomatic means to settle such disputes; do not allow personal, individual issues to escalate into racial group issues...we must all hold strong to our mutual agreement from this point on and focus our time, attention and energy on mutual causes beneficial to all of us and our best interests.

All members of the Short Corridor Collective signed this agreement when it was distributed, which totaled 17 SHU prisoners. The decision to end inter-gang animosities was called by this select group of prisoners, and seeks to speak for the rest of the SHU population. The Collective speaks in an informative tone, stating that it is in everyone's interest to cease any aggression that exists within or between gangs. The Collective attempts to speak on behalf of all SHU prisoners here as a select group of people representing hundreds if not thousands of others. Below I focus further on the power the Short Corridor had in orchestrating strike conduct, and how effective this group mentality was in coordinating resistance.

CPF's summer edition of *Prison Focus*, Issue 37, contains an article titled "Hunger Strike Clarification", in which Pelican Bay prisoner 1, also a Short Corridor member, states "This peaceful HS protest is not 'led' by any individual or group; it was deemed necessary after more than a year of discussion and thought amongst many PBSP-SHU prisoners from all races." This illustrates that the Short Corridor did not want to establish a hierarchy in the social organization of the strikes, whether from the Short Corridor or from any one racial group. Furthermore, this prisoner explained that this was a peaceful hunger strike, and is not and should not be considered to be an offensive tactic. In this same issue, in an article titled "HS Thoughts" Pelican Bay and Short Corridor

prisoner 2 corroborates that the strike July 2011 strike is to include SHU prisoners from all races acting together as one in the struggle. This prisoner also suggests how prisoners become involved or not:

To the HS participants themselves, we recommend: no one participate if they are too elderly or have a serious chronic illness...And, if one cell-partner cannot join, then the other shouldn't either...Anyone can join any time while the HS continues and should remain on it as long as possible in support.

Pelican Bay prisoner 2 'recommend(s)' that prisoners ought not become involved should they have extra-medical issues. That being said, while the decision to participate should be personal and voluntary, prisoners should join in with the group if they do not have any other reason not to join indefinitely. In an interview with a physician who had been a private correctional medical consultant, also associated with California Prison Focus, I was informed prisoners' communal support in hunger strike participation:

AM: So there was some sort of camaraderie or communal suggestions to one another, like, you should continue or you should not continue with the strike?

Physician: There was a lot of caring for each other in there...that people are very sick, on multiple meds, and that yeah, [you should] support us in other ways, write to your friends...there's stuff to do, but you don't have to be the one putting your life in jeopardy. I mean, no one wanted to die.

The Pelican Bay and California prisoners overall hoped that as many prisoners as possible would join the movement, yet participation could be manifested in other ways beyond simply not eating, such as writing letters, communicating information, and providing other forms of moral support. That being said, most letters discuss involvement relative to not eating.

In another letter in this issue of *Prison Focus*, prisoner 1 explains how the strike will be defined by refusing solid food but also by taking water, i.e., the protest is not to be

a dry hunger strike. This letter emphasizes the three-race unity of the resistance, asking CPF to publish letters from prisoners from each of the three racial groups with which prisoners identify in order to represent this phenomenon. Thus the group orientation of the strikes is demonstrated by their desire for equal racial representation of their social organization.

Other Short Corridor prisoners discuss the inter-racial cooperation in the hunger strikes leading up to the first 2011 strike. In a letter dated April 24, 2011, Pelican Bay (and Short Corridor) prisoner 3 comments on this phenomenon:

...the so-called worst of the worst prisoners have gotten together and agreed to a peaceful protest...New Afrikans, Mexicans, Whites, and others have signed on to do this indefinitely until our demands [are] met...this is a small step but there's no telling where we can go from here if we survive this Hunger Strike.

Thus, according to Short Corridor prisoner 3 here, the cross-racial, group commitment for enduring violence by hunger striking across racial lines in the SHU prison population is necessary to produce change. This letter also discusses the extent of participation:

This is a call for all prisoners in (SHU) Security Housing units, (Ad-Seg's) Administration Segregation and (G.P.s) General Population as well as the free oppressed and non-oppressed people to support the July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 Peaceful Hunger Strike Protest... If you cannot participate in the 'Hunger Strike' then support it in principle by not eating the first 24 hours of the hunger strike.

Thus while it was based in the SHU, the Short Corridor was interested in establishing solidarity beyond their specific space of confinement within the larger carceral apparatus of Pelican Bay and throughout the California system. Prisoner 3, as a Short Corridor representative, asks that other prisoners show solidarity by not eating for the first day. Additionally, this demonstrates the dichotomy present between the social expectation that

prisoners do what they are told versus acting on a personal conviction outside of this structure.

The Short Corridor prisoners frequently spoke in their letters about wanting to be referred to as ‘representatives’ of the strikes, and not ‘leaders’ in order to discursively separate themselves from the ways in which the CDCR represented the strikes as being coercively organized by gang influence. This was echoed in several different letters sent by several different members of the Short Corridor who were representatives of the different racial and ethnic groups in the prison. A letter dated May 30 sent by Short Corridor prisoner 1 identifies the “Principal H.S. Representatives/Negotiators” of which there are nine including Short Corridor prisoner 1. This prisoner asks CPF to electronically share this information, because if other prisoners in the California system see it then it will impact the number of prisoners across the state that participate. In a June 8 letter, prisoner 2 asks CPF to add a Short Corridor prisoner to the published list of representatives. It is unclear why this representative did not write to explain this himself; however, this demonstrates that there is a defined representative authority to which other SHU prisoners heeded their attention.

While the strike began July 8, prisoners did not all join the movement immediately. The extent of participation evolved slowly as the strike began. In a letter from June 12, Short Corridor prisoner 4 explains how the representative structure continues to recruit other prisoners to join the movement:

Those who are healthy we are still trying to convince them to participate, if even for just a few days. Hopefully we can get another 1 or 2 before the target date. (Note: there are others from different groups who are participating and will raise the overall number for this unit).

This passage illustrates challenges in recruitment. The letter goes on to say that this particular prisoners' unit has many older prisoners who cannot safely participate, as the strike is voluntary, not mandatory. Short Corridor prisoner 4 discusses expectations for striking:

As far as the Northern Mexicans are concerned, we are only requesting a minimum of five days and anything beyond that will be left up to the individual participant. At least one of us has committed to at least 10 days. But we are **not** pushing an all or nothing agenda. In other words, we are not asking people to die for this, all we are asking is to do what you can.

It is not entirely clear why the representatives are calling for this particular racial group to strike for five days, after which point the strike is up left to prisoners on their own. Nevertheless, while the strike is said to be voluntary, this discourse suggests that the Short Corridor desired for certain numbers of prisoners to participate for certain durations of time; however, establishing participation was evidently an initial challenge for the representative structure.

In a July 7 letter, a Corcoran prisoner provides details regarding the strike leadership structure in place in the Corcoran SHU just before the first strike began:

One of our spokespersons, (name redacted), has spoken to administration officials in relation to the hunger strike on at least three occasions. On the last occasion the administration expressed its desire to meet with each participant individually – an obvious gambit to muddle or fracture the core demands and how they are presented. Brother (name redacted) of course has rejected this, as did the other spokespersons. The collective New Afrikan population has made it clear that we speak with one voice, and only we dictate the terms of any discussion, and (name redacted) is our voice in any such dialogue.

This passage reflects relations between the prison authorities and SHU prisoners, but specifically the 'spokespersons,' which are Corcoran's equivalent of the 'representatives' at Pelican Bay. A certain form of social hierarchy is sketched out here, in that power is

vested in one of the spokespersons for purposes of communicating and negotiating with the prison authorities. According to this prisoner, other prisoners refused intimidation by the guards, in effect respecting the spokesperson(s) position of localized authority.

Prisoners commented on the scope of prisoner participation in their letters in the following weeks of the hunger strike. As of July 14, spokesperson 1 at Corcoran describes the growing involvement of racial groups as the strike continues:

On 7/9/11 our white brothers began entering the fray, moving from moral support to active participation in the hunger strike, while our Northern Mexican brothers continue to lend their moral support. The New Afrikan and Southern Mexican collectives have persevered unabated and there have been several more hospitalizations...

While these letters reporting on recruitment state that older prisoners are not expected to join the strikes because of their age or other health issues, several of these prisoners were reported to be striking on some level despite medical implications.

Facing dwindling participants and an ultimatum from CDCR stating that they would re-examine the 5 Core Demands, the Short Corridor chose to end the first hunger strike after three weeks. In an August 22 letter, Short Corridor prisoner 1 shares plans for another hunger strike in the fall:

...as it stands now, the H.S. will begin around 2, on Sept. 26 (a lot of the Africans are doing Ramadan during mo. of August; plus we want to see what...comes of the Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup> assembly hearing.

As we can see, the Short Corridor acknowledged cultural appreciation as being necessary for the success of a collective movement, in order for African American prisoners of the Muslim faith to be involved in the next strike. This passage also exhibits a certain level of consciousness of prisoners being a class in and of themselves, as the Short Corridor recognizes the challenges to group resistance and seeks to work around them.

An October 9 letter from Corcoran spokesperson 1 provides details of social organization during the second strike:

All new afrikan and southern mexican partisans in this isolation unit...are participating in the hunger strike, while our white and southern mexican brothers are providing support. We have not eaten since September 25<sup>th</sup> and the administration here has unleashed an unprecedented wave of retaliatory reprisals aimed against us at breaking the hunger strikes and provoking a reaction which would undermine the non-violent basis of this peaceful protest. They have thus far failed... We are all participating of our own individual free will guided by a collective desire to end this systematic torture and industrial profiteering at our expense.

As we can see, this spokesperson represents the SHU strikers at Corcoran as well participating out of personal convictions with a group interest. Thus there is temporal continuity in regard to the second strike functioning with the same goals and mentality of the first strike. Furthermore, there is socio-spatial continuity across the California prison landscape in that, while ‘spokespersons’ is a different word choice than ‘representatives,’ the Corcoran SHU demonstrates that they have a representative body similar to the Short Corridor Collective at Pelican Bay that seeks to follow the Short Corridor’s plans.

While prisoners within the Short Corridor Collective and other SHU prisoners demonstrate their willingness to recruit others to voluntarily join in the hunger strikes, it is unclear how much power the leadership structure had in orchestrating social organization. Ed Mead, California Prison Focus’s editor of *Prison Focus*, explains that despite the fact that the gang leaders in the Short Corridor did put the word out for other prisoners to follow, there were potential limitations to this organizing ability:

You know, the gang leaders are not that powerful. They can't bring 30,000 people to stop eating for a day...the first hunger strike they had 6600...Maybe that's the extent of the influence they would have. The second hunger strike they had almost 12,000. The third one, of course, they more than doubled that on the first day. I think that has a lot to do with educating, you know, raising the consciousness of the population,

more so than—you know—some kind of command hierarchy—the line that CDCR pushes (Interview 4/13/2016).

Mead suggests that each subsequent strike gained momentum from the precedent set by the previous strike, and that without each of the stages or episodes of resistance before the ultimate 2013 strike, 30,000 participants could not have been recruited to the struggle. But the gang leaders alone, as Mead states, do not have this kind of power despite their status as the Short Corridor Collective: “...even after the Agreement to End Hostilities, race riots are still taking place. A lot fewer, but if the gang leaders had that much discipline, those kinds of thing wouldn't be happening” (Interview 4/13/2016). It is difficult to ascertain to what extent these episodes of violence occurred after the Agreement to End Hostilities was issued; however, they clearly did not undo the terms of the agreement or CDCR’s agreement to acknowledge the prisoners’ demands.

Aside from what stands out as data pertaining to the leadership structure(s) present in the California prison hunger strikes in 2011 and 2013, I have found thematic similarities that revolve specifically around the extent to which prisoners are committed to their movement. In a letter dated July 14, 2011, Corcoran spokesperson 1 explains how some prisoners, including elderly ones, had been hospitalized not long after beginning the strike but had been released from their hospitalization and had returned to hunger strike further. These prisoners refused additional care and continued not eating, despite the health impacts. A September 2 letter from the Pelican Bay representatives discussing the upcoming secondary hunger strike at the end of September:

...even if CDC(R) now, at this late date, starts spitting out memos and even installing pull-up bars, dip bars, etc., in an attempt to undermine the H.S., we will “not”, call off the H.S. until all our Five (5) Core Demands are met, or unrefutable tangible proof that they will all be met.

As a result of the CDCR's lack of response to the demands, the Short Corridor explains that they will be unrelenting in their resistance until such reforms are made. This emotion is still present several weeks later when the second strike was initiated. In a September 28 letter, Pelican Bay prisoner 5 emphasizes commitment during the second strike:

(I) will not eat until Friday the 30<sup>th</sup>. As I have stated before I will not eat until we get concrete change and justice in longterm isolation and validation policy. Or I will die fighting for justice...The fight continues and I shall stay the course until we achieve victory.

This stated commitment to death and self-incurred violence was commented on in other letters. In particular, this necropolitical discourse was echoed from the spokesperson(s) at Corcoran. A letter of July 14, 2011 from Corcoran spokesperson 1 also illustrates this commitment to the violent implications of the struggle: "I am, and most who think as I do, are comfortable with the notion of dying to ensure we effect a meaningful change in this torture without end." This prisoner further states that they did not intend to cease resistance until:

...the hunger strike was over and that the 5 core demands would be met. However, until we receive some verification from our comrades in Pelican Bay, we will not stop... We are all prepared to continue until our bodies fail...

A letter dated June 23, 2013 sent by Pelican Bay representative 1 discusses plans for a third upcoming hunger strike at the beginning of July. Representative 1, in reference to himself and the rest of the collective SHU population, indicates that "We will await our death...", thus representing group commitment to not giving up on the hunger strike until CDCR agrees to consider their 5 Core Demands. Corcoran prisoner 2, in describing developments after over a month of striking, writes about the extent to which the group

movement was withstanding the strike. This prisoner comments on prisoners who had terminated their strikes after being further isolated from one another:

So they gave up everything just to be moved back to 4BII. It was an incredibly selfish act. All of this sacrifice – putting our minds & bodies through this, the 115s, the validation points, the loss of credits, TVs, canteens...all for naught. So you know, virtually everyone is stunned & upset at this decision but they can't complain. They are mandated to follow orders w/out question. But no one governs the Crips, so we are still hunger striking...without the numbers of the masses our sacrifice is meaningless – or has at least has no practical effect. And that creates a huge dilemma for me: Do we continue or stop?

In a letter from the following day, August 17, 2013, Corcoran prisoner 2 explains how social expectations for hunger strike participation had been loosened by this stage in the strike:

The leaders of the other groups have modified their positions and now say that participation in the H/S is optional. This is widely seen as an attempt to somehow cover up what they must now painfully & regrettably recognize was a terrible decision. But regardless, making it optional is still abandoning everyone. For though it has always technically been optional, every able-bodied person was strongly encouraged to participate – sort of like an opt-out policy. But now it's the exact opposite – more like an opt-in policy. And the early returns remain discouraging as less than 10% of the former strikers in my building have elected to opt in. I expect that those of us who remain will be moved and isolated in an attempt to break us. So, in sum, the Crips here remain on H/S, the overall numbers here are expected to be low (but committed).

Thus we can see the extent to which collective gang organization was in effect during the final days of the hunger strike at Corcoran. According to this prisoners' account of events, multiple prisoners had broken the strike after having been relocated as a form of discipline for resisting. Interestingly, this prisoner explains how the Crips make their own decisions regarding continuous striking outside of cross-racial initiatives. This 'opt-in' decision for choosing to further strike or no longer strike reflects the greater freedom that was extended to prisoners, in that participation in the resistance was more individualized

by this point at Corcoran, despite what was occurring at Pelican Bay and any directives that were still coming from the Short Corridor Collective.

It is also notable that along with the 2013 hunger strike there was a joint work stoppage in general populations across the California system. The CDCR reported that 2600 prisoners had engaged in a labor strike in solidarity with the hunger strike. Further details regarding the extent of involvement at Pelican Bay in particular and breakdowns of labor strikers at other California prisons is not known, as CDCR has no obligation to report this data to the public. Like the hunger strikes, this was planned far in advance. A proposal for a joint work stoppage was discussed in a letter sent to CPF dated October 15, 2012:

I concur with one of the strategies, laid out by (name redacted). His suggestion for economic disruption would be the proper addition to our other tactic, of hunger striking. If we partake in both of these actions cdcr would most definitely take a more serious interest in correcting its malfeasance acts... We must engage in attacking the cdcr's economic programs (i.e., PIA work program, and its outside business resources, like businesses that redistribute its products. This strategy will be seen as effective in other progressive movements. However, our progressive comrades from the outside must take part... Sacrifice inside must be unified and unrelenting.

According to the editor of *Prison Focus*, work stoppages in prison are rather rare and involve a significant amount of vulnerability, as jobs in prison are difficult to obtain, in addition to the fact that prisoners receive extremely low pay for their work. Mead also reported that while the 2013 hunger strike had a length of two months, the work stoppage only lasted for several days. According to Mead, the work stoppages' limited scope is not necessarily surprising: "...while the number of participants [in the California hunger strikes] was of historical significance, it was a mile wide but only an inch deep, in order to bring about what needs to come about... Just as that 30,000 figure started rapidly

declining, the following day, so too did the number of people participating in work strikes...Everyone is on board until it starts getting tough”. Thus despite the extent of the movement going beyond the SHU, the labor strike was merely a display of solidarity for the SHU, and did not go further with its own set of interests. It is unclear whether there were work stoppage representatives in the general populations, or if gangs simply accepted the idea as directed by the Short Corridor representatives at Pelican Bay.

### **Outcomes of the Pelican Bay & CA Prison Hunger Strikes**

The state of California reached a settlement with the plaintiffs in the class action suit, *Ashker vs. Governor of California*, as of September 1, 2015. The settlement calls for a number of reforms to the California prison system. As of the settlement date, California will no longer impose indefinite SHU sentences. Alternately, the CDCR is working on establishing a two-year, four-step, step-down program for prisoners to be able to return to the general population, with prisoners receiving increased privileges at each step.

Furthermore, California will review all current gang-validated SHU prisoners within one year of the settlement in order to determine if prisoners should be released from the SHU under settlement terms. Additionally, the CDCR will create a modified general population, titled ‘Restrictive General Population Unit,’ or RCGP, for rule violators who have recently committed a serious offense. While this space will be a high-isolation environment, its goal is to extend freedoms from the general population as a more human alternative to the SHU itself, where prisoners can move freely, have out-of-cell time and can receive visits (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016).

Since September 2015, the CDCR has reviewed 1,126 prisoners in solitary confinement and has approved 929 to leave solitary. 781 prisoners have already been

transferred to the general population (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016). Members of Pelican Bay's Short Corridor met with CDCR officials on April 16, 2016 as the beginning of the prisoners' involvement in the new monitoring process. Prisoner participation in the monitoring process is another outcome of the settlement and will continue to be a common practice in the implementation of the settlement's reforms (Center for Constitutional Rights 2016).

While the settlement has delivered and will continue to deliver these shifts in penal policy in California, *Prison Focus* editor Ed Mead argues that agreeing to the settlement was not the best decision for the SHU population:

I have a strong disagreement with the settlement. I think if the case had gone to trial the public education and consciousness raising would have been incredible. But being gang leaders, and only able to see as far as they can throw, they opted to get out, rather than wait a while and do it right. So that's what they did, they got themselves out. They've been out for a while, and there's nothing... The silence coming out of California prisons is deafening... of course, the problem is, the old worst of the worst are released, and there come a new worst of the worst. So, you know, the SHU remains full. They haven't dealt with the issue. They haven't... As far as I'm concerned...the (settlement) was a sell out.

In hindsight we can only speculate on this; however, while it is possible that greater publicity may have been the result of the case actually going to trial, the Short Corridor's social organization, along with legal counsel at the Center for Constitutional Rights, was able to see their demands affect meaningful change in policy.

### **Patterns of the Social Organization in the Pelican Bay/CA Hunger Strikes**

Reiter (2014) relates the California hunger strikes to Black Panther George Jackson and the broader social justice movement at San Quentin in the early 1970s; Reiter suggests that the strikes invoked human rights discourse of an international dimension, which echoed "the international anti-imperialism dialogue Jackson invoked to

defend and legitimize his claims” (2014). It is evident that the Short Corridor prisoners illustrate a certain level of class-consciousness in the planning and social conduct of their strikes; however, I have examined additional letters that argue that the hunger strikes should not be represented as having a historical connection with any other movement in terms of goals or demands, suggesting that Reiter’s claim is not entirely accurate. Reiter (2013) as well as Earle (2015) describe one of the representatives in the Short Corridor, Todd Ashker, as a “leader” which is an inappropriate representation; the ethnographic prisoner discourse in this case study demonstrates that prisoners sought to discursively deny any alleged coercive power structure or hierarchy for fear of gang representatives being labeled by the prison authorities as leaders, in an attempt to deny the legitimacy of the strikes. Thus it follows that we should not uncritically adhere to the CDCR’s carceral imagination of Short Corridor prisoners inducing gang-based coercion by organizing the hunger strikes.

Additionally, Reiter (2013) argues that the Pelican Bay hunger strikes lacked a shared political ideology in their collective resistance when compared to other hunger strikes. Reiter cites the 1981 IRA strikes, hunger strikes by Palestinian prisoners and even the GTMO hunger strikes as examples in which prisoners exhibited a shared political philosophy. This statement is also not entirely accurate; in regard to GTMO, my data in chapter 3 shows that decisions to hunger strike are quite varied, and that there are many individual interests at work, not to mention that strikes are sporadic, even if they manifest in the form of a group movement. Within the social organization of their resistance, my data reveals that the Short Corridor representatives at Pelican Bay as well as the other

SHU spokespersons at Corcoran performed a political ideology that revolved around fighting back against state violence and policy in order to end indefinite SHU detention.

While this is evident, the extent to which other non-representatives in the SHU truly believed in and understood the strikes' political context is unclear. Ed Mead suggests that "The majority of prisoners don't have class consciousness... Their only information is what they get from bourgeois television and newspapers. They're not going to develop class consciousness". More direct ethnographic accounts that reveal any wider class-consciousness of the SHU population in Pelican Bay or throughout the greater California system beyond the hunger strike representatives have yet to be collected. Nevertheless, the ethnographic discourse presented here demonstrates that this effort was driven by a small group of prisoners that exhibit a level of social, political and cultural awareness that was necessary for being able to socially organize the SHU population at Pelican Bay and across the California prison landscape. Compliance amongst racial groups was a prerequisite for this organization, and a 'representative' or 'spokesperson' – based power structure was the most discursively non-hierarchical basis for executing this, as non – Short Corridor prisoners wrote in their letters showing agreement with the Short Corridor's plans. Collective prisoner identity carried significant weight as opposed to singular racial identities in these geographies of resistance.

In this chapter I have explained the historical foundation of solitary confinement in California, its context with the 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes, as well as what power relations were present in how SHU prisoners were able to socially coordinate their hunger strike resistance movements. In chapter 5 I share my conclusions on both the GTMO and California hunger strikes, and explore my third research question in greater

depth, bringing together the empirical studies of resistance in these two carceral spaces with the biopolitical context of these hunger strikes. I will discuss the relationships between power, identity and violence relative to GTMO and Pelican Bay, and will also discuss the biopolitical geographies of resistance from micro-scale, localized perspective, in which oppressed populations manage their bodies and the violence endured as a manifestation of subaltern power.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **Power, Scale & Resistance**

Power means control. In asserting its authority, power strives to maintain, establish and further its goals and objectives in space. In simpler terms, space is a key vehicle through which power is practiced. To discuss power without simultaneously discussing the role space plays in power's functioning would preclude us from fully acknowledging power's complexities. In short, power and space are codependent actors, and neither can operate independent of one another.

The geographical imagination of power relies upon modes of thought that are often ideological or discursive. As any Foucauldian scholar will argue, power is everywhere. As Foucault would say, power operates in particular forms and should be categorized as such, i.e. as technologies, techniques, mechanisms or apparatuses of power. Discourse and ideology are techniques of power that reflect and/or contribute to representational power and its interests; however, linguistic functionalism aside, it is also pertinent to imagine geographies of power through a material dimension that analyses of representation do not immediately acknowledge. In other words, while speech acts are techniques of power (i.e., categorical and generalizable statements constructed and posed as truth), power can operate beyond this discursive realm. Power can be physically and materially performed in space, such as through forms of embodied resistance, e.g., hunger striking.

My first two research questions are aimed at providing insight into the initial objective and subjective context for understanding the internal power relations and social

organization of hunger striking in two prison environments. I have sought to establish the ‘how’ relative to hunger strike social organization, in addition to the ‘why’ prisoners resist with the power relations and social organization that they do. I have done this by second-hand data through interviews in both case studies as well as through direct prisoner ethnographies in the case of the California strikes. Following the presentation of my data in each empirical chapter, I summarized the social patterns and trends in the social organization of hunger striking in both spaces of confinement. It is these patterns that I conceptually contextualize here in the conclusion.

My research questions are intentionally hierarchical in nature, as each builds upon one another in order to understand my third research question on the interrelationships between and among power, identity and violence. This question emphasizes a very localized, micro scale perspective on social relations in hunger striking resistance. As geographers we certainly must consider how power is developed and exercised by those who sit at the upper tiers of power structures; however, we also must consider the materialities of power – which are often subsequently linked to violence – that are performed and authenticated by the agency of individuals and groups whose social realities are defined by domination and oppression. Therefore answering this third research question requires us to go beyond simply identifying techniques of power that are orchestrated by the state. In these cases we are interested in the performance of hunger strike resistance and prisoner agency thereof.

Thus a theory of the biopolitical geographies of resistance is necessary in order to contextualize the complexities of power, identity and violence in space. While GTMO and Pelican Bay are the empirical case studies examined in this thesis, this perspective is

applicable within the socio-spatial dynamics of hunger striking within and beyond the prison landscape.

### **Foucault's Biopolitics vs. The Biopolitical Geographies of Resistance**

The state produces embodied vulnerability and violence that bodies must endure. The state “invest(s) in life”, as Foucault would say, in order to conduct biopower, i.e., establishing the prison at GTMO, and by creating the infrastructure for solitary confinement in California. As the state needs bodies to do what the state wants to do, it will manage and regulate populations for its interests. At both GTMO and Pelican Bay, the themes of representation and exceptionality are evident. GTMO prisoners must be detained in a space in order to be represented as terrorists to justify the U.S.'s geopolitical actions in the Middle East. The CDCR ambiguously imprisons labeled gang affiliates in solitary confinement, which are exceptional spaces, in order to construct the spectacle that such prisoners are the ‘worst of the worst’, in the CDCR’s own words, and therefore deserve to have their identities stripped of them and be indefinitely incarcerated – a mechanism that creates greater violence than it is expected to limit; however, biopolitics functions at more micro scales as incarcerated subaltern populations to seek to manage themselves through embodied resistance.

From a Foucauldian biopolitical perspective, there is unquestionably a relation between prisoners and the state, in which the state regulates and manages the wider social body of these prison populations. In order to regulate these prison populations, a certain level of anatomo-politics and discipline is necessary within the hierarchies of the state. It is a panoptical expectation that hierarchically placed bodies that carry out state power and perpetrate state violence do just that, yet political and/or ideological uniformity within the

panopticon is not necessarily a given. In simpler terms, the hierarchies that execute state sovereignty may have differing interests or desires as members of the state. While these realities should be understood, violence still is the outcome of many techniques of state power that result in subaltern performance of resistance. It is this localized, micro-scale framework of resistance that is the focus of my analysis.

While my research illustrates that there are a mix of individual interests present in hunger strike resistance at GTMO, long-term incarceration and cultural disrespect are common justifications for protest. This social body must be detained to represent alleged success in the state's fight against terrorism. These prisoners are not trained or disciplined as subjects in an anatomo-political format, as Foucault would define it, but are rather bodies that are managed to represent U.S. power and domination. At Pelican Bay and throughout the California prison system, solitary confinement functions as prisons within prisons, for prisoners to be indefinitely detained outside of the legal bounds of the court system. The CDCR represents prisoners as 'the worst of the worst', who therefore are imagined to be deserving of solitary confinement. The CDCR argues that gang organization produces violence, which can only be eradicated by indefinite solitary detention. Thus constructing representations of prison populations is a technique of state power. It is evident that representation, and the material realities of indefinite imprisonment, have produced geographies of resistance.

Life and death become confusing constructs within the GTMO and California prison landscapes. At GTMO, prisoners are detained indefinitely as an outcome of their ambiguous legal status, and are further not prohibited from dying by hunger striking because they are ultimately force-fed. Within the SHUs in California, prisoners may be

released at the end of their sentence; this is unlikely to happen, however. Instead they are usually stuck between a rock and hard place because ratting out other prisoners is not an option prisoners frequently choose. The relationship between hunger striking and the state exists where hunger striking is agency over the possibility of further bare life that seeks to put the legitimacy of state power in question. That being said, such a critique of state policy and power may or may not strive to produce structural change, as the resistance may be more of an illustration of identity.

The 2005 GTMO strike saw the prisoners define their demands, yet in 2013 the main goal of the strike was rather uncertain and was not significantly articulated by the prisoners. At Pelican Bay and throughout California in 2011 and 2013 the prisoners very directly and overtly expressed their Five Core Demands, and the hunger strike movements attempted to change and were somewhat successful in the 2015 settlement altering SHU policies in California. At GTMO, hunger striking is more difficult because of the immanent threat of force-feeding by the state. Having tubes inserted through a prisoner's nose into their esophagus and having them removed three times a day is an extremely debilitating, painful and overall violent process. Thus the state biopolitically regulates prisoners' vital biological processes by not permitting prisoners to die, limiting the agency of prisoners, and further tortures prisoners by force-feeding them. At Pelican Bay the final strike ended before an order to force-feed prisoners was issued, so we cannot know to what extent prisoners would have endured being force-fed, and ultimately how difficult it would have been for them to reach death. As we can see, hunger strikes bridge micro and macro-structural processes, and thus the relations and negotiations between prisoners and the state should not be denied or go unrecognized; however, the

presence of power structures in the conduct of the social organization of resistance functions on a more localized scale within prison populations themselves. It is the choice of greater self-reduction to more violent forms of bare life that is the crux of this localized power.

While such resistance may be a rejection of bare life as imposed by the state, the act of protesting by depriving one's body of nutrients for sustained periods of time is a form of socially manufactured bare life on a subaltern scale. This is not a manifestation of coercive self-harm where prisoners should be represented as suffering from hunger striking because it is their 'own fault', as the DOD and CDCR have represented hunger strikers; rather, it is a tactic in which prisoners reduce themselves to a greater level of bare life by actively harming themselves beyond the violence and abuse already being endured. Thus the biopolitical geographies of resistance inform us as to the extent to which individuals and groups seek to manage and regulate their own vital biological processes in carceral space.

Between GTMO and Pelican Bay, there is social differentiation with regard to the scale of the body, i.e., the social patterns within both carceral spaces are somewhat dissimilar in prisoners' *commitment to enduring violence* by hunger striking. In comparing and contrasting the social organization of hunger striking at GTMO and Pelican Bay/California writ large, hunger strike resistance at GTMO appears to be a less committed struggle than the strikes within the California prison system. Prisoners' letters from Pelican Bay and Corcoran illustrate that they were extremely committed to the strike, willing to protest to the death if necessary. While the letters exhibiting class-consciousness came largely from the representatives and spokespersons, non-

representatives also wrote saying they would choose to protest to the death if the movement required it. Gang identity brought together members of the same race and different races, even if the non-representatives did not necessarily understand the wider structural aspects of the struggle. Such prisoners were willing to reduce themselves to bare life by not eating as a statement of solidarity, as hunger striking for even a brief period of time was a performance illustrating linkages between individuals, the wider racial group and the collective of racial groups working together. It was, however, the representatives and spokespersons that had stayed the course by the end of the 2013 strike, as only about 40 prisoners at Pelican Bay were still striking when the protest was called off. Thus for a California prisoner in solitary confinement to perform his identity for himself and his peers, he must assume the personal responsibility of the possibility of death by hunger striking.

These comparisons and contrasts in the social patterns of hunger strike power relations and social organization in both of these prisons illustrate the overlapping aspects of anatomo-politics and biopolitics. At GTMO, prisoners demonstrate their docility to the imams in the Prisoners' Council only to a point; if the imams call for a strike, the prisoners are expected to join a movement for at least a brief period of time. And while prisoners docile to the Council in communicating about the possibility of striking individually through more personalized geographies of performed resistance, prisoners can exercise this level of autonomy and freedom unto themselves. When a movement occurs at GTMO, the imams need prisoners to initially participate, i.e., the Prisoners' Council biopolitically seeks to harness the vital biological processes of the rest of the prison population's bodies in order to perform the Muslim identity that the Council

wishes to perform. In California, the Agreement to End Hostilities was a call by gang leaders to end inter-gang animosities and violent encounters in order to encourage the peaceful power of the hunger strikes. This was a disciplinary technique of power that sought to produce individuated compliance across racial groups in California SHUs. From the perspective of the Short Corridor Collective, this anatomo-political framework was necessary pragmatically in order to mobilize the wider SHU population at Pelican Bay and throughout the California system in collective resistance. Furthermore, as Ed Mead explains, the majority of SHU prisoners do not possess significant class consciousness or awareness of the structural inequalities being resisted by hunger striking, and thus by hunger striking that majority of prisoners became docile bodies. In simpler terms, the Short Corridor required mass-scale resistance by mobilizing SHU prisoners to manipulate their vital biological processes. And while the average SHU prisoners were not docile to the state by resisting state power and state violence by hunger striking, the average SHU prisoners lacking class-consciousness were partly docile to the Short Corridor by participating in the movements.

As I have illustrated with my data, GTMO is a case where Muslim identity plays a role in strike operationalization. The imams in the Prisoners' Council can call for group strikes, and able-bodied prisoners are expected to join, in part because of the imams' status. Should prisoners want to protest on their own, they must share their plans with the imams because the imams are the religious leaders, who then advise prisoners on individualized strikes. Yet despite these socio-organizational elements GTMO prisoners appear to exhibit less commitment to resisting than California hunger strikers. Interestingly, the data showing strike participation in the 2013 movement which includes

the number of strikers being hospitalized and tube fed over time (as shown in figure 1 in chapter 3) tells us that even though the number of strikers rose to 106 participants from the beginning of April to the beginning of July, less than half of the participants were force-fed between the beginning of May and the beginning of July, and this number declined as the number of strikers began to decline in July. Prisoners are officially considered hunger strikers after missing nine meals at GTMO, but they are not force-fed until they drop below a particular percentage of their initial body weight. The state clearly mitigates hunger strikers by violent force-feeding, as I have stated above; however, a core group of 10-20 prisoners continued not eating and endured force-feeding well into October. This group very likely included the Prisoners' Council, as well as a selection of a few other committed prisoners. Thus despite a peak in the number of strikers, most prisoners did not strike for prolonged durations of time, as the Prisoners' Council assumed this authority. It is the Council that takes on the responsibility of enduring violence, as more of a representation of symbolic power and performance of identity than a radical movement. This non-binding power structure effectively limits the scale of participation, consequently also limiting the scale of the body and endurance of violence by most prisoners.

To put this together, the scale of the body and the biopolitical geographies of resistance are unique to each respective prison space, with different factors catalyzing or inhibiting the social organization and endurance of violence in hunger strike protest. While hunger strikers are affected by force-feedings at GTMO, there are fewer criteria for hunger striking than in the 2011 and 2013 California strikes. Fewer prisoners participating in the hunger strikes at GTMO, and consequently the fewer prisoners

enduring the violence of refusing food, is an outcome of cultural norms and roles performed and not performed in carceral space. Greater unification was present in California prisons, which contributed to prisoners' willingness to end up death fasting if the CDCR had not capitulated to their demands. Racial and gang identities were present in the organization of the California strikes; however the Short Corridor Collective was able to further produce an identity of prisoner class-consciousness across racial lines to the extent that it encouraged and established a scale of strike participation that went beyond the Short Corridor, regardless of whether SHU prisoners fully appreciated the greater political context and implications of the strikes.

### **The Biopolitical Geographies of Resistance: Beyond the Hunger Strike**

The relationships between power, identity and violence in carceral space constitute the biopolitical geographies of resistance. The biopolitical geographies of resistance are embodied vulnerabilities that the subaltern construct for themselves, in which subaltern populations access agency and power by subjecting themselves to violence through the availability of their physical bodies. These geographies of violence depend and draw upon various genres of identity and power relations in order to operationalize the hunger strike as a biopolitical geography of resistance. Subjecting oneself to violence is a technique of power that becomes necessary in order to perform identity and/or to critique or resist state power and state violence. While these geographies are present within hunger striking in carceral space, such geographies can extend to other tactics of resistance within and outside of the prison landscape.

As the research shows, a labor strike was planned and occurred in the California prison system along with the third hunger strike in 2013. These events were only

marginally mentioned in the data I had available to me, as letters did not provide any greater detail beyond what I presented in the latter portion of chapter 4. Work stoppages, while they do not as overtly affect prisoners' vital biological processes in the same capacity as a hunger strike, are biopolitical nonetheless because they put prisoners' vital biological processes in jeopardy at certain scales; prisoners are fortunate to have jobs at all, and often depend on the meager income to support themselves in ways that the prison does not. Additionally, prison labor frequently functions as a system of social reproduction in order for the institution itself to function; work stoppages therefore are an even more powerful mechanism of protest because prisoners' vital biological processes become threatened when that very system of social reproduction is brought to a halt. Furthermore, there are economic linkages and contractual obligations that extend outside of carceral space, in which a labor strike has implications for the vital biological processes of non-prisoners. Thus labor strikes in prison are another apparatus that falls into the category of the biopolitical geographies of resistance.

Furthermore, gender is an additional unit of analysis that must be examined. The GTMO and California prisoners are an all-male population, and the ways in which gender is a form of identity that affects hunger strike social organization and power relations has yet to be investigated. Additionally, geographers have not examined the gendered elements of hunger strike resistance in general, within and outside of carceral space. How does gender performativity function within the power structures and social organization of hunger striking? These questions and examples of social relations that produce these technologies of protest have not been deeply investigated, nor have these formations of

resistance been evaluated within this biopolitical framework. These are possible directions for future research.

Thus biopolitical geographies of resistance exist within socio-spatial circumstances where we see subaltern management of the subaltern's physical, material body's vital biological processes. The subaltern within carceral space harnesses the body through violent means in order to perform identities, and/or to critique or alter state violence. The scope of the biopolitical geographies of resistance, however, extends beyond spaces of incarceration, and its theoretical potential should not be limited solely to these tactics within these spaces. This framework is applicable in studies of other social movements and spaces where protesters take advantage of the body, enduring violence in order to exercise power. We must acknowledge that resistant power is multifaceted in its techniques of operationalization, and that violence within peaceful biopolitical resistance may be an inevitable and even necessary component of such protest. The state manufactures violent social realities that provoke geographies of resistance; however, it is the discourse of bare life that must be produced by those bodies that are oppressed. In other words, the structures of state violence may only be put in jeopardy by the subaltern choosing to subject itself to greater violence.

In sum, utilizing the body as the bearer and vehicle of power relations is a measure of protest that is intentionally conducted to produce discourse revealing the subaltern's social realities and lived experiences, despite the extent to which prisoners are organized for social change or not. Such starvation politics and the labor of dying constitute geographies of the extreme, in which the body is the limit and the extent of resistance. Subaltern populations actively engineer the slow decomposition of the body in hopes of

drawing attention to their exploitation. As Scanlan et al illustrate, the majority of hunger strikes in the last hundred years have transpired in prisons (2008). From an activist perspective, I argue that such a tactic of biopolitical resistance may perhaps be one of the most realistic options for social change in our world today, within and outside of carceral space. How can this be accomplished? The power generated from hunger striking can become discursively significant if a strike is compelling. What, then, makes a hunger strike compelling? There must be a significant and committed scale of involvement, in which a strike lasts for a sustained length of time. And while a core group of individuals may initially organize a strike, hierarchy must not superimpose upon members of a given population from resisting with their own bodies out of their own personal, intellectual volition. Thus all participants must possess and demonstrate class-consciousness and/or awareness of the structural inequalities being resisted.

As I have emphasized above, understanding the role of the body in how state power functions is germane to resisting and restructuring state power in order to end state violence. Individualistic biopolitical geographies of resistance cannot produce the same discourse as a collective movement. This is particularly evident within the prison landscape in comparing GTMO to Pelican Bay. Thus awareness of scale relative to this genre of protest is necessary for any potential positive outcome. I am not attempting here to provide a pure prescription for how hunger strikes can or must be conducted; rather, based on the case studies evaluated in this thesis, I have found that, pragmatically speaking, these are the socio-organizational dynamics of hunger striking that better enable a positive outcome for strikers. Even making a statement such as this is walking on treacherous ground. While I am not at all telling subjugated prison populations or

other social movements to organize around hunger striking, the political left must present and accept hunger striking as a possible technology of resistance. The discursive power that can be generated from effectively socially organized hunger striking holds significant potential for social change in our world today. These possibilities cannot be ignored.

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