

## Prisons in transition

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### Abstract

The role of the prison has changed, in some ways dramatically, over the last two decades. The prison population has grown and its composition has altered. There has been an increase in the depth and weight of imprisonment, and a hardening of its emotional tone. Prisoners' voices have been silenced, outcomes have deteriorated, and yet public presentation of the prison has improved. Power has shifted upwards, as senior managers have an unprecedented grip on establishments and their 'performance'. There are new fantasies about, and constructions of, the prison's role, with little evidence to support such public and political dreams. Such sleights of hand are only possible without knowledge of the prison's interior life. Punitive prisons which treat prisoners, and possibly prison staff, unfairly and with little or no respect add to human suffering and do not address either the problem of crime or the problem of public fear.

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### 1. Introduction

This article considers the changing role, composition and power structure of the prison in England and Wales, showing how shifts in exterior values express themselves in daily practices, and how changes in the emotional tone of penal policy can have major effects on prison life. It looks in particular at the changing role of justice or fairness in prison, at some of the consequences of these transformations, at the movement of power upwards, and the decline of trust in the organisation of prison life.

There have been at least eight major transitions relevant to prison life in the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> These are:

1. The changing size and composition of the prison population
2. Changes in the depth, weight and emotional tone of imprisonment

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<sup>2</sup> Others include the development and 'rebirth' of offending behaviour programmes, and the related rise to power of prison psychology; the introduction of electronic monitoring, linked to early release; and the shifting of power upwards. The renewed climate of penal optimism resonates strangely with the post-war treatment period. Likewise, we are seeing the return of the indeterminate 'preventive' sentence for offenders regarded as dangerous. The difference between old-style rehabilitative efforts and contemporary versions is that prisoners have to become 'entrepreneurs of their own personal development, rather than an objectivised or infantilised client upon whom the therapeutic solutions are imposed' (Garland, 1997: 191).

3. The silencing (or effective channelling) of prisoners' voices
4. Worsening outcomes: for example, suicides, and reconviction rates
5. Better presentation, and some improved physical conditions
6. More professional management ('modernisation') and the movement of power upwards (away from prisoners and staff)
7. New fantasies about the prison's role
8. The emergence of a market, and a paradox.

I will say a brief word about each below.

## 2. The changing size and composition of the prison population

First, the prison population. The figures are matched in many other jurisdictions. In England and Wales, we imprisoned a low of 40,722 people in December of 1991. This figure had risen to 77,400 by the end of 2005. A figure of 80,000 has become acceptable currency since the publication of a recent review of correctional services (Home Office, 2004), despite early expectations — now dashed — that this review might provide an opportunity to reduce the use of custody. The author of the review, Patrick Carter, replied when asked, that this figure was a 'pragmatic choice, a matter of political strategy' (Carter, pers. comm. 2005). The prison population has nearly doubled in 14 years, and the fastest increase until recently has been among women prisoners. With no obvious explanation to be found in crime rates, it is clear that increasing resort to custody at the threshold, and increasing sentence lengths, are to blame. There is something important to note about these 'new prisoners'. As more people are imprisoned at the threshold of custody, increasing proportions of the population enter prison with troubled psychiatric histories, prior suicide attempts, and problematic drug use. Far from representing the 'most dangerous', the new prison population is arguably beginning to represent the 'most vulnerable'. The figures below (Table 1) are taken from a longitudinal study conducted in local prisons, and they are based on random samples. Over a two year period, as the population increased rapidly, it also became more 'disordered'.

## 3. Changes in the depth, weight and emotional tone of imprisonment

David Downes and Roy King used the notions of 'depth' and 'weight' to denote the security level and psychological burden of imprisonment, respectively (see, e.g. King & McDermott, 1995). Due to a combination of security breaches followed by security concerns, the use of new technology, and introduction of self-governing strategies including offending behaviour programmes, drug testing, incentives and sentence planning, prisoners describe their prison experience as 'deeper', 'heavier' and also 'tighter' (Crewe, in press). By way of illustration, I shall discuss the problem of justice.

## 4. Why does justice matter in prison?

As George Orwell said in his essay, *Politics and the English Language*, words like 'justice' are often used without knowledge or precision. They are by their nature loose and opaque. They are open textured, subject to multiple and conflicting meanings. It is easier to identify and describe injustice, particularly in the prison, than it is to talk about what justice is and how it might be secured.

In England and Wales, following a widely acclaimed and detailed report into the causes of disturbances in 30 prison establishments in April 1990, Lord Justice Woolf called for prisoners to be treated with justice, humanity and fairness (Home Office, 1991a). His message was enthusiastically received but came to be widely misunderstood. Justice

Table 1  
'Imported vulnerability' in the prison population (12 prisons\*)

	2002	2004
Previous psychiatric treatment	24.1%	32.3%
Suicide attempt before prison	18.5%	26.5%
Drug use	48.6%	61.1%

\*samples=100 randomly selected prisoners in each prison at each time and site.

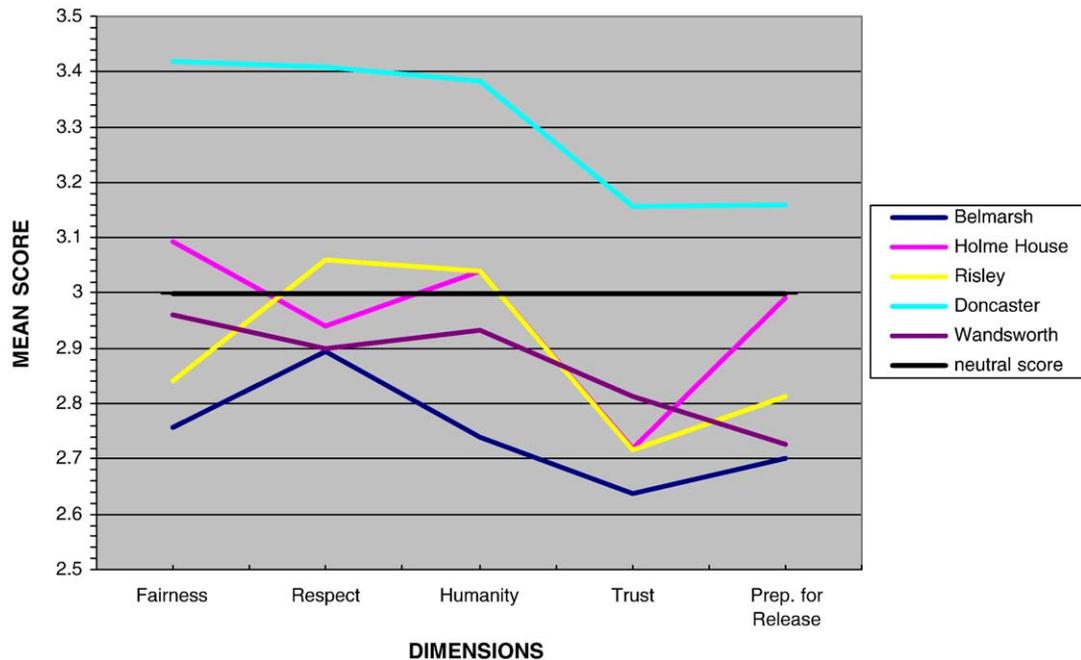


Fig. 1. Mean scores for fairness, respect, humanity, trust and preparation for release.

became leniency, in some important places. Prison staff understood that order in prisons might depend on developing good relationships with, or ‘being nice’ to, prisoners. Woolf’s careful 600-page report was never read by prison officers. Nor by senior managers, or many others. His terminology cried out for careful reflection, but barely received it. I have argued elsewhere (Liebling, 2004) that the abandonment of justice from 1993 onwards in English criminal justice was partly related to a failure to distinguish clearly enough, in practice in particular, but also in policy, between the loaded and complex conceptual terms, ‘liberal’, ‘justice’ and ‘care’ (see also Home Office, 1991b). The question of what it might mean to operationalise justice in the context of a prison was never addressed. As Thomas, Capps, Carr, Evans, Lewin-Gladly, and Jacobson et al. (2003: 101) argue, what is good, true and beautiful is not the same as what is ‘just’. ‘Being nice’ is not the same as ‘being fair’. These confusions and their consequences have made it much harder to develop and defend just criminal justice practices, or to humanise prisons.

When justice was abandoned, following a punitive turn from 1993 onwards, exacerbated in prisons by the escapes from Whitemoor and Parkhurst (two maximum security prisons) in 1994–5, the inner life of prisons began to deepen and tighten (Home Office, 1995). Day-to-day life reflected the moral messages prison staff were hearing about the status of prisoners. Relationships suffered, privileges had to be earned, and suicide rates increased.

Let us look for a moment at some attempts to operationalise and measure justice (or for present purposes, fairness) in prison.<sup>3</sup> There is considerable resonance between the findings of these studies and the findings of the procedural justice literature more generally (see, e.g. Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, & Sherman, 1997; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Blader, 2000).

A detailed empirical study of fairness in three prisons in England and Wales found that prisoners’ perceptions of fairness in prison were determined to a significant degree by perceived relationships with staff. Two other dimensions — regime conditions and procedures — also contributed significantly to the overall perceptions of fairness (Bottoms & Rose 1998; Liebling, 2004: 263–5). In the end, judgments about the fairness of prison life, just like citizens’ judgments about policing, are more strongly mediated by relational than instrumental matters. The character of this world of relationships and interaction is by its nature moral.

<sup>3</sup> The question of how definitions of each term were arrived at and operationalised in our research is discussed fully in Liebling, 2004. On justice as fairness, see also Rawls, 1980; Raphael, 2001.

A study of my own with colleagues relied on exercises aimed at identifying what mattered most in prison, and on conversations with prisoners and with staff about experiences of fairness and respect in prison. I have described how these ‘dimensions that matter’ were identified, in all the prisons we went to, elsewhere. It is important to note that the dimensions identified constitute a set of core values. Instead of the number of assaults, level of staff sickness, or cost per prison place, prisoners yearned for fairness, respect, trust, humanity and safety — and talked fluently about how these values, always in short supply, were practised to very different degrees in different prisons. They were especially fluent about how to assess their presence or absence in the prisons context. Our conversations led to a structured questionnaire, with each dimension or scale represented by several items, crafted with the help of staff and prisoners, and tested using reliability analyses. We began to see this survey as a way of conceptualising and measuring the prison’s moral climate. The results suggested that experiences of fairness and respect were limited, even in the best prisons (selected results are shown in Fig. 1; the neutral score is 3 and the maximum is 5. Anything below 3 is a negative score. See Liebling & Arnold, 2002). They also differed between prisons of the same type. The *value orientations*, or ‘penal styles’ (Mastrofski, Reisig, & McClusky, 2002) of individual prisons varied significantly, shaped to a considerable extent by its history, culture and leadership. The concept of fairness was closely correlated with humanity, trust and relationships.

Previous studies had hypothesised, following Woolf’s analysis of the disturbances, that fairness would be linked to order (Sparks, Bottoms, & Hay, 1996). We found, in our analysis of the relationships between dimensions, that respect and fairness were linked to well-being as well as to order (Liebling, 2004). In a follow up study, we found that relational or moral aspects of prisoners’ treatment were linked to levels of distress, which in turn, were related to institutional suicide rates. Fig. 2 shows that respect, fairness and frustration, together with participation in offending behaviour programmes, and high perceived safety, explained most of the variance in levels of distress among randomly selected prisoners in 12 prisons. In turn, mean levels of distress in each prison, measured using the GHQ and an 11-item distress measure of our own, were significantly correlated with institutional 3-year moving average suicide rates for the relevant period ( $r = .81$ ). These findings are based on two separate analyses of 100 prisoners in each of 12 prisons at each time, in 2002 and 2004. In each case, the higher figures indicate analysis of the 2002 data, the lower italic figures indicate analysis of 2004 data (see, e.g. Liebling, Tait, Stiles, & Durie, 2005). The model was very similar at each point. Our interpretation of these findings is that prison life really is all about relationships; that moral and emotional climates can be identified; they matter, they differ, and they lead to different outcomes.

Fairness or justice matters, then, because it is a declared value, the first virtue of social institutions (Rawls, 1980), because injustice alienates and produces disaffection, but also because it generates distress. Treating a person fairly

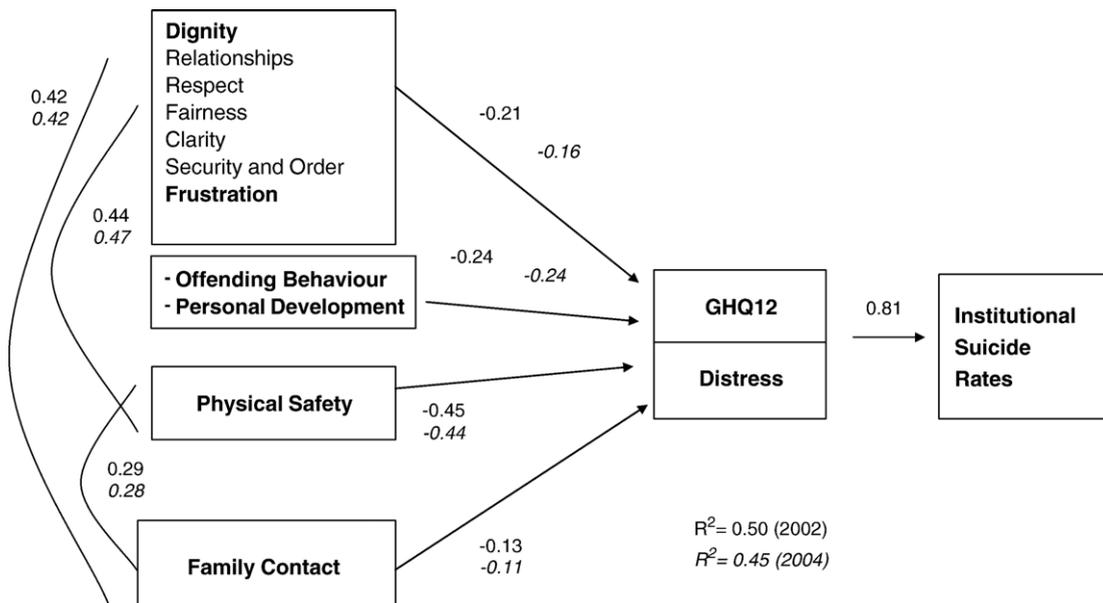


Fig. 2. Schematically modelling variations in overall distress and GHQ12: prisoner data 2002 and 2004.

expresses the fact that they are of value. It requires respect and may generate trust, even in a prison. Disrespect denies a person's validity, causing not only righteous indignation and defiance — two relatively healthy emotions for the individual — but also distress and unresolved shame. Using these kinds of evaluations, we can see that prisoners' treatment inside prison varies between establishments and over time, with different outcomes. My informed guess is that similar findings might arise if the outcome we were investigating was reoffending. Therapeutic interventions would surely work better in well organised prisons that have respectful climates, easy access to the community, and graduated release programmes. They are likely to be better implemented, as well as more supported by an organisational environment that is consistent with their approach. For now, I am suggesting that when the emotional climate of criminal justice policy hardens, the moral and emotional climate inside the prison deteriorates. Despite optimistic claims made for the prison, and much improved management, what we find inside them is extreme distress and little preparation for life outside.

Of course, to return to the broader context, existing social structures including growing inequality and the increasing insecurity of the workforce add to, and may explain, much human misery. These social factors certainly explain socially skewed suicide rates that disproportionately represent offenders, whether in or out of prison (see further, [Marmot, 2004](#)). We should remember in our conversations about the prison and its effects that society needs rehabilitation as much as the prison needs reform.

I turn now to the remaining transitions.

### 5. The silencing of prisoners' voices

What has happened to the organised prisoner movement, or to prisoners' voices over this period? There is little or no radical prisoner action or even organisation in prisons in England and Wales today. There are channels for formal complaint, but they are long-winded and cumbersome. There are prisoner committees in many establishments, but they are controlled and limited, with little leeway for deviation from the standard. Prisoners say 'resistance is futile', and they often accept the current depoliticised explanations for crime, and their own sense of individual accountability, with resignation. They know their moral status is low. They understand the expressive function of the prison: that they are there to be denounced, resented and changed. Prisoners' thoughts and inclinations are the subject of assessment and continual review (see [Cummins, 1994](#); [Foucault, 1977](#)). As one prisoner put it:

'People are scared. They're all chasing things now ... They don't want to have the TV taken off them ... the prison system will only give you stuff which they can take away from you' (prisoner, in [Crewe, in press](#)).

Prisoners have become careful and self-governing.

### 6. Worsening outcomes

Outcomes, such as suicide and reconviction, have deteriorated. The rate of suicide in prisons in England and Wales has increased from around 40 per 100 000 prisoners during the 1980s to a high of 148 per 100 000 in 2002–3.<sup>4</sup> The rate seems to be steady at around 128 per 100 000 prisoners using three year moving averages, following very substantial investment and attempts at culture change in mainly old local prisons with the highest numbers. Likewise, 59% of offenders released from prison in 2000 were reconvicted of an indictable offence within two years. This figure has increased steadily since the 1980s despite growing claims about the effectiveness of programmes on the relatively few prisoners selected to attend them.

### 7. Better presentation

Presentation, on the other hand, has dramatically changed. There are performance targets, a weighted scorecard or performance league, glossy brochures, new buildings with state of the art technology, policies to address racism, culture, violence, and drug use. Prison Service Business Plans convey an impression of benevolence, accomplishment

<sup>4</sup> Some (but not all) of this increase is accounted for by a change in recording practice to include all self-inflicted deaths whether or not they receive verdicts of suicide at inquests in 1990.

and success. The prison's rhetoric is profoundly upbeat. High performing prisons attract a star rating. Yet as managerial knowledge has increased, sociological knowledge has declined (Simon, 2000). It is difficult to argue with the invention of a 'prison officer of the year' award. But these developments have a sociological meaning, as well as some hazardous effects, that we should reflect on. Senior managers, and prison officers, have each been lured by the new managerialist requirements of self-governance and performance. The new performance framework disguises important sociological events — more recent disturbances, a rise in hostage incidents, an exchange of ownership from public to private, and back again, and so on.

## 8. More professional management

The way the prison's power to punish is *organised* — that is, the management of prisons — has been radically transformed. More power flows, more effectively, particularly at the top of the organisation. There are budgets, strategic plans, and much improved internal management structures to the prison today. Contrast this state of affairs with the picture painted by King and McDermott in 1989 of a management crisis: staff out of control, declining regimes and a complete lack of information about what anything cost, where the money was spent or what was expected. Again, I am personally in favour of the effective management of prisons, but I wonder about the word 'robust', and there have been some losses of trust and confidence between staff and managers in British prisons which can have dangerous and unintended consequences.

There is a very strong and substantially increased feeling of accountability and a remarkable consensus about means and ends among governors. Individuals with power are nervous, in case they fail to make it perform for them. The Prison Officers' Association has been described as 'first toothless and now gumless' in the face of market testing (although the successful in-house performance test of a cluster of prisons on the Isle of Sheppey is being seen of something of a comeback for the POA).<sup>5</sup> Officers are agreeing to cost savings and staffing reductions in a way that was unimaginable twenty years ago: their interests have been aligned with those of the powerful and they have become 'instruments of their own domination'. Governors who are not 'on message' are isolated. Private sector management techniques have been adopted to regulate the now contingent workforce: competition, the contract, insecurity of employment and tight performance management render employees relatively powerless and therefore compliant. Flatter structures, fewer protections and clearer goals ensure that what is delivered is what is desired: reasonable treatment of prisoners by a carefully controlled, largely un-unionised staff. A new cultural and service delivery ethos is demanded, via economic reasoning; that is, instrumental means. The practice of management becomes an 'exercise of domination' (Sennett, 1998: 115). Garland cautions us in our use of this analysis that these new rationalities will only be partially achieved in practice: how do individuals actually engage with, subvert, and think about, modern penal governance? How does strong government-from-a-distance feel? One consequence identified by several critics has been the substitution of checking for trust.

One of the problems identified by several critics has been the adoption of these new managerialist techniques, and the invitation extended to powerful corporate interests to make them happen, without incurring the abandonment of the traditional core values of trustworthiness, integrity and 'public service' which the public sector stands for (however incapable it has been of translating these values into practices). Much has been written about trust and its apparent decline in modern social and political life. Without trust, we experience discomfort, anxiety and lack of confidence in our ability to evaluate others. It is, under any circumstances, a fragile commodity. Despite the coercive conditions of prison, I have shown elsewhere that acts of trust and distrust characterise its daily life (see, e.g. Liebling, 2004: 240–51). Trust is

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<sup>5</sup> A Press release dated 21 December 2005, 'Home Secretary announces result of Sheppey prisons performance test', announced: "I am writing to inform you of my decision to award a service level agreement to the Sheppey cluster of prisons for the next three years, commencing 1 April 2006. The prison service has passed the Performance Tests, which were introduced to challenge existing suppliers to demonstrate that they could continue to deliver strong performance improvements when compared to suppliers from other sectors. While I know that you will be pleased with this news, you should be aware that the independent assessment of the Sheppey bid stated that it only just met the necessary performance thresholds. I should also be clear that, despite the fact that I am awarding the SLA to Sheppey, I remain fully committed to encouraging a fully contestable and plural market. We will begin the New Year with a series of announcements to outline our vision of expanding contestability in the delivery of offender services. [Shortly to follow is] the launch of a detailed contestability prospectus aimed at the public, voluntary and private sector suppliers. This will specify the type, length and value of contracts available to emphasise our long term commitment to developing a viable market for all suppliers. I want to reaffirm my personal assurance that contestability is motivated by the desire to improve performance at the most appropriate cost. I am certain that there will always be a place for the public sector to deliver offender management services because of their experience and expertise."

contagious, and operates in concentric circles: so as a prisoner, if I trust this officer, I may trust the prison system, and therefore the social order. But what about elsewhere in the organisation? What have been the effects of the move towards a new high-risk, low loyalty, non-linear, lean workplace? What are the consequences for staff and prisoners of a prison being opened by the private sector, won back a few years later by the public sector, then diagnosed as failing?

We found varying but quite low levels of trust by staff in their senior managers, with staff in poorer quality prisons trusting them least.<sup>6</sup> In two prisons, staff rated their trust of prisoners higher than they rated their trust of managers: a fact they noted with some alarm as they completed our questionnaires. This had important sociological implications for life in those establishments. Trust grows slowly out of embedded social relationships, and can be lost quickly via dishonesty or incompetence. Duffee has argued that one of the favourite past-times of officers is ‘identifying dishonesty and hypocrisy in those above’ them (Duffee, 1974: 155). Officers often behave as if they are exclusively interested in material rewards, but one of the striking findings of our study was the importance of their personal relationship with, and feelings about, the Governor (Liebling, 2004: 412–3). Trust in governors was shaped, just as it was by prisoners in staff, by treatment they received as individuals, and by judgements they made about competence, fairness, ethicality and opportunities to be heard. When good governors won staff trust and then became quickly promoted, staff were confirmed in their cynical original position: ‘We are just a stepping stone ... managers take the credit for good officer work...this is just how it works in industry ... this prison is used, as a means to an end. The governors have no long-term commitment to the place. There’s no trust...there’s a very big divide between uniform and suits here’ (officers). As another officer said, ‘The way the organisation relates to you affects the way you relate to each other, which affects the way you relate to your job’ (Officer). There are some tensions, then, between modernisation and the moral identity of the person, as argued by Feeley and Simon in the early 1990s. Government-at-a-distance, or management by target, involving strong central direction and future-oriented improvement, was experienced as alienating by many staff. These tensions need analysing at all levels of the criminal justice organisation.

There is, among senior managers in modern organisational life, a yearning for order and predictability, via control, without trust, as several critics have observed (O’Neill, 2002). Area managers and those above them, have an ‘unprecedented grip’ on establishments (Narey, 2003). Terms like ‘robust’ and ‘firm’ are frequently used by those working in senior positions about the current leadership. There are risks, for Governors and other senior managers, of governing-at-a-distance. There is a tension between new techniques of measurement and perceptions of fairness. Inappropriate measurement used in complex organisations can lead employees to ‘conclude that they are not valued or understood as professionals’ (Sitkin & Stickel, 1996) and can lead to non-compliance and disaffection (Braithwaite, 2002). Employees like to be treated as moral agents too. Individuals feel ‘wrongly accused’, for example, if they have been performing well in an organisation labelled as poor performing. The effects of this reorganisation of space and time, and work, are ‘existentially troubling’ for the individual (Giddens, 1991: 21). We can see then, that in an already low trust environment, some modern managerialist techniques (frenetic policy activity, unrealistic demands for compliance with irrelevant measures, and the concept of ‘contestability’) may make it harder for managers to generate trust among staff.<sup>7</sup> Increasingly senior managers are asking staff to trust in their future-oriented paper strategies. Officers, particularly in times of change, prefer to trust in what worked yesterday: their confidence is grounded in experience. We have embarked on a major experiment in the reorganisation of work in criminal justice and the public sector, based on faith and dissatisfaction with the old, rather than on evidence about any aspect of the new.

## 9. New fantasies about the prison’s role

The claims now made for the prison, explicitly and implicitly, are that it will reassure the public, satisfy their need to express rage, hold politicians in office, and sell newspapers, as well as cure crime. This renewed climate of penal optimism in relation to offending behaviour programmes and the teaching of basic skills resonates strangely with the post-war treatment period. As David Garland said in ‘Punishment and Modern Society’ (Garland, 1990), there are other

<sup>6</sup> Between 16 and 42% of staff agreed that they trusted their senior managers ‘very much’ or ‘quite a lot’ (Liebling, 2004). In a more recent study in 12 prisons, between 2 and 56% of staff ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that ‘I trust the governor grades in this prison’. The average was 16% in 2002, and 18% in 2004 (Liebling, et al., 2005).

<sup>7</sup> We need to distinguish here between interpersonal and organisational trust, and the use of ‘formal distrust’ mechanisms of accountability (see Braithwaite, 2002).

institutions which are far better placed to attempt this kind of ‘rebuilding of shattered lives’ (Cummins, 1994: 12). We know from the work of many criminologists that public opinion is more complex, and more divided, than politicians like to think (e.g. Roberts & Hough, 2002).

## 10. The emergence of a market, and a paradox

Finally, the role of the private sector. We have entered a new era of ‘contestability’ — that is, competition between providers, or expanded privatisation, as sceptics see it. It is a curious paradox, in my view, that in England and Wales, in Australia, and in some American States, the private sector sometimes provide better and more constructive regimes than the public sector provide, largely because they have better control of their workforce and they have set out to outperform the public sector in areas where it is weak (see, e.g., HMCIP, 2005; Home Affairs Committee, 1997; James, Bottomley, Liebling, & Clare, 1997; Liebling, 2004; Moyle, 1995; National Audit Office, 2003). So when prisoners are asked which they prefer, they sometimes say they are treated better and with more respect, and that they have greater opportunities to progress through their sentence, in private sector prisons. This is not always the case, however, and there seem to be more problems with safety and security in the private sector. But it is telling that the moral case against privatisation has to take account of the serious moral failings of public sector imprisonment. There is a paradox that whilst the public sector is characterised by sound and declared values at the highest level in the organisation, it has difficulty translating these values into practice at ground level. The private sector, on the other hand, motivated by profit and expansion, sometimes does a better job of securing good ‘moral performance’ at ground level in its institutions. It is a characteristic of our age that we resort to the profit motive to address one of the most serious interior difficulties of public sector prison life: the way that staff treat prisoners. Humanistic values mean nothing if they are not translated into day to day practices. If we have learned anything from the so-called privatisation experiment, it is that there are serious failings in the delivery and control of punishment by public servants.

My argument is that there is a moral economy to and in the prison. The ecology of prison life has changed, and there are new problems for criminologists and others to worry about and new questions we should be asking. These include the following:

- How might we bridge the gap between public and political aspirations for the prison, and its actual effects?
- What is driving the international scramble for human rights accreditation? Is it benign? Can it be, whilst prison populations climb?
- What are the risks of continued privatisation?
- What are the effects of the rapid and wide-ranging ‘experiment’ in the reorganisation of work in criminal justice and the public sector?
- How might an enlightened criminology engage more effectively with the prison, where effective means limiting its use, rendering prison less harmful, and conducting relevant research without unreasonable constraints?

We stand at a crossroads, concerned by a global imprisonment fetish, disappointed by the failure of the prison to accomplish its instrumental goals, and apparently blind to the power and appeal of its expressive and cultural purposes. We have demonised the offender and turned imprisonment into a ‘service’, two sleights of hand that are only possible without knowledge of its interior life. We have failed to consider the nature of the prison experience, or to recognise that there are significant institutional differences which mean that justice cannot be delivered, nor severity measured, by length of time alone. The ‘popular perception of imprisonment as the containment of an individual in a relatively innocuous and benign environment’ (Haley, 1990: 488) which adds to the attractiveness of increasing prison use, is misguided. When we consider the question of a ‘just measure of punishment’, we should take into account the possibility that most prison environments are distressing, some are especially so, and the most severe distress is often experienced at the earliest stages, and not in proportion to the length of time spent inside. Overcrowding makes surviving prison life all the harder.

Punitive prisons which treat prisoners, and possibly prison staff, unfairly and with little or no respect add to human suffering and do not address either the problem of crime or the problem of public fear. A re-evaluation of the role of the prison is urgently required, taking into account a realistic and critical assessment of its interior life.

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