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The Working Lives of Prison Managers:
Exploring agency and structure in the late
modern prison

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Declaration

This thesis has been composed by the candidate

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The work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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08 June 2012

Abstract

This study explores the contemporary working lives of prison managers. It attempts to understand the ways in which globalised changes in management practices have intersected with localised practices and occupational cultures. Through an ethnographic study of the lived experience of the practitioners of prison management, the research explores the ways in which the operation of managerialism in a prison environment creates a series of tensions, pressures and expectations on senior managers, and the ways in which these are experienced, understood and negotiated. This study is therefore concerned with the relationships between global and local, and between agency and structure that are characteristic of late modernity. The constraining and enabling features of contemporary prison management are considered in light of Giddens's account of 'the duality of structure'. Relevant work on transformation of working lives by Sennett and others are also considered in order to situate this discussion within the world of work more generally.

The original research involved ethnographic field work in two medium security prisons in England over a twelve month period, with data generated from observations, interviews and documentary sources.

Four aspects of prison management are used in order to address the central issues. The first is a consideration of performance monitoring mechanisms such as targets, audits and inspections; how these are understood, operated, and influenced by those using them and also how they reshape and direct the approach and thinking of managers. The second is a discussion of aspects of agency such as values, discretion, resistance and the use of power; in what ways these are idiosyncratic and individual and how far they are patterned across the organisation and shaped by wider factors. The third issue is a consideration of how people become prison managers and how they approach and understand key issues that face them in managing individual staff, teams and prisoners. The final

area considers the 'hidden injuries' of contemporary management practice, including how this is experienced by women, members of minority ethnic groups and others who experience themselves as having been marginalised. The study concludes by describing the confluence of global and local, and agency and structure that shape what is described as 'prison managerialism'. It also describes some of the effects of this and discusses alternatives.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study concerns the contemporary working lives of prison managers in England and Wales. No individual or organisation sits in isolation and any study of prison managers has to be located in an understanding of the prison system in which they operate and the broader social context in which that is situated.

The core of this research is a consideration, based in part on new empirical research, of the working lives of prison managers as these are experienced today. Prison managers were selected as a research subject for a number of personal reasons, which are explored in chapter 3. They were, however, also chosen because they are a set of professionals who have a distinct, socially significant and historically under-examined role. It has been argued that studying prison staff is important for three reasons (Crewe, Bennett and Wahidin 2008). The first is that they carry out an essential state function that has a human impact on those who are imprisoned; it is important to understand their effects. The second is that they are a distinct occupational group who experience particular pressures, stresses and tensions; it is important to understand the effects upon them. The third is that studying the work of prison managers can illuminate wider social issues including power, order, inequality and resistance as they are manifested in the contemporary prison. From this perspective, the experiences of those working in prisons are grounded in wider social transformations and processes. It is intended that this study will address all three aspects and that this will draw out the relationship between the particular local circumstances and the broader macro-level changes of late modernity.

Before returning to discuss and define the subject of this study more closely, it is necessary to introduce further the broad contours of late modernity as it has shaped prisons in particular and the world of work more generally.

The nature of the transformations in Western liberal society over the last half a century have been described in various ways, although the term preferred here is ‘late modernity’¹. There have been various attempts to encapsulate those changes, but their nature and form are difficult and problematic to define; “perhaps inevitably given the inexactitude of such large-scale generalization and periodization” (Garland and Sparks 2000 p.14). They are also changes that are uneven and incomplete so that their exact contours will vary from place to place and time to time (Kennedy 2010). However, in order to provide a broad introduction, ‘late modernity’ refers to:

“...the social, economic and cultural configuration brought into being by the confluence of a number of interlinked developments. These include (i) the transformative dynamic of capitalist production and exchange (the emergence of mass consumerism, globalization, the restructuring of the labour market, the new insecurity of employment); (ii) the secular changes in the structure of families and households (the movement of women into the paid labour force, the increased rates of divorce and family breakdown, the decreasing size of the average household; the coming of the teenager as a separate and often unsupervised age grade); (iii) changes in social ecology and demography (the stretching of time and space brought about by cars, suburbs, commuting, information technology; (iv) the social impact of the electronic mass media (the generalization of expectations and fears; the reduced importance of localized, corporatist cultures, changes in the conditions of political speech) and, (v) the democratization of social and cultural life (the ‘desubordination’ of lower classes and minority groups, shifts in power ratios between men and women; the questioning of authority, the rise of moral individualism.)” (Garland and Sparks 2000 p.15)

¹ Several terms have been used to describe the contemporary world, including ‘high modernity’ (Giddens 1991), ‘new modernity’ (Beck 1992) and ‘late modernity’ (Garland 2001). The term ‘late modernity’ will be used here because it implies that this is a phase in modernity, whereas Beck’s term implies that this marks a break with the past, and Giddens’s term implies that this is the end or pinnacle of modernity. These latter two terms therefore make greater claims than the more descriptive ‘late modernity’. However, it is not simply for reasons of modesty that ‘late modernity’ is preferred, it is also because, it will be argued, it is more empirically accurate. As will emerge in the remainder of this study, late modernity suggests a degree of continuity with the past; that this is the latest part of an ongoing process of modernity. As will be seen later, it is observed that the contemporary world is characterised not only by change and transformation, but also by continuity with the past.

It has been argued that these social developments raise important questions for criminology that demand an intellectual response (ibid). This study attempts to respond to this by locating an exploration of prison managers within these social transformations, as will be explained more fully below.

Prisons and late modernity

The late modern period has seen what David Garland (2001) has described as “underlying patterns of structural transformation” (p.7) in the practices of criminal justice in the UK and US. These transformations reflect and intersect with broader social changes. According to Garland, they include the decline of the rehabilitative ideal and its replacement with a more emotional and punitive orientation, fuelled by images of dangerous offenders and vulnerable victims. Criminal justice has ceased to be an area dominated by elite or professional expertise but is instead colonised by popular media and political discourse. Managerialism has also expanded with the adoption of business practices in public organisations and direct competition for the provision of services in an ever-expanding web of security and control both through the formal criminal justice system and private services. These streams of punitiveness, populism and managerialism have fed an expanding ‘culture of control’ both in public policy and private lives. However, these changes have been uneven and have not obliterated what has gone before, but instead:

“It has been a process not of inventing new institutions or instituting new practices but of redefining those that already exist, giving them different force and significance, putting them to different use.” (Garland 2001 p.174)

There are therefore elements of the past and of local cultures that persist and exist in relationship to the wider changes.

It is worth briefly discussing how these themes have developed in English and Welsh prisons over the last two decades. This is a brief,

contextual overview that summarizes as concisely as possible some of the leading themes of recent discussions of this period. The key issue for this research concerns how these surrounding events, and the ideological and cultural currents that have accompanied them, have served to shape the working circumstances of, and demands upon, prison managers.

Populism and punitiveness

Crime and punishment became increasingly contentious issues in the early 1990s. Spurred on by a signal case, the murder of the two year old James Bulger by two young boys in Bootle, the then Prime Minister John Major called for society to ‘condemn a little more and understand a little less’ (see Bennett 2008a). The resurgent Labour Party attempted establish their governing credentials through the then Shadow Home Secretary, Tony Blair, calling for an approach that was ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’ (Downes and Morgan 1997), This strategy attempted to encapsulate an approach that bridged both credible punishment and progressive social reform. The Conservative government, whose popularity was in terminal decline, responded by adopting a more populist stance towards crime, with the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard making his much quoted speech to the Conservative Party Conference in 1993 in which he argued that:

“Prison works. It ensures that we are protected from murderers, muggers, and rapists – and it makes many who are tempted to commit crime to think twice” (Howard 1993)

This political language shaped and was also shaped by public and media discourse. It has been noted that public concern about crime has grown, people experience greater insecurity and they have looked for certainty in more rigorous responses to crime (Pratt 2007). This has been given voice through an expanded and increasingly accessible media, whilst the status of expert opinion has been

eroded through a general decline in deference and trust (ibid). These changes have reflected an acceleration of a longer-term trend away from welfare-orientated approaches to more expressive and punitive ones (Garland 2001). Rather than being a reflection of a particular place or political campaign this is instead deeply implicated in the coming of late modernity. It has been argued that:

“It may no longer be the case that major actors in British or American politics can meaningfully be ranked as more or less ‘populist’, or indeed as more or less ‘punitive’. Rather, populism can reasonably be regarded as one of the inevitable modes of late-modern politics; while ‘punitiveness’ is a stance that no serious politician can safely disavow” (Sparks 2003 p.170)

As in many countries including the US and Australia, these developments were put into operation through specific policies such as zero-tolerance policing, greater use of indeterminate sentencing for incapacitating offenders considered dangerous, greater use of mandatory sentencing such as ‘three strikes’-style laws and minimum terms for particular offences (see Pratt et al 2005), and more onerous conditional release and more rapid recall to prison for violation (Padfield and Maruna 2006). All of these changes accelerated the growth in the prison population.

There was a gradual but somewhat inexorable rise in the prison population in England and Wales from 1945 onwards, growing from 15,000 to 45,000 in the late 1980s (Morgan 1997). There was a brief reversal following the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (ibid). However, the population again began to rise from 1992 reflecting more punitive public and political attitudes (Downes and Morgan 1997) and a number of adverse, if contingent, events. The prison population expanded to over 85,000, exceeding that mark during the 2010 general election. This made the UK one of the highest users of imprisonment in Western Europe (International Centre of Prison Studies nd).

Within the prison, however, there was not a move towards the brutal internal conditions and treatment seen in some other countries (see Pratt et al 2005). Indeed, the first half of the 1990s saw a focus on the improvement of conditions and humane treatment. This was prompted by findings of the judicial inquiry established after the extensive riots of 1990 (Woolf and Tumim 1991). This called for and led to improvements including the installation of integral sanitation in cells, reduced overcrowding, improved levels of activity and procedural protections for prisoners such as formal complaint mechanisms (Morgan 1997).

In the later part of the decade, and following high profile escapes from two high security prisons, the Prison Service commissioned an external inquiry to review control, order and security (Learmont 1995). This was not a public, judicial inquiry but instead a report commissioned by the organisation and conducted by a senior military officer. Amongst other recommendations, the inquiry proposed a move away from prisoner rights and entitlements to a more conditional approach through incentives and earned privileges. This meant that prisoners would receive services such as access to visits, private cash, telephones, televisions and time unlocked based upon how well they behaved and complied with prison staff; a move towards the responsabilisation of prisoners and the use of 'soft' power, encouraging self-regulation (Crewe 2009). This was strengthened by the introduction in 1999 of home detention curfew, which allowed compliant and low risk prisoners to be released early providing they were electronically monitored (Dodgson et al 2001).

The election of the New Labour government in 1997 saw increased investment in public services, including prisons. Material conditions improved with the extension of access to telephones, activities and in-cell televisions. There was also significant investment in services designed to reduce reoffending, including drug treatment, psychological interventions, education and work training (Bennett 2007a). Although these appeared to be more welfare orientated approaches, providing better conditions and opportunities for rehabilitation, their

purpose and application was subtly different. They were instrumentally directed, structuring the conduct of prisoners through ‘offender management’ (Crewe 2009). They were also more actuarially designed, with services being based upon research as to specific activities that are evidentially linked to offending² (see Feeley and Simon 1992). This reflects the observation of Garland (2001) that:

“The welfare mode, as well as becoming more muted, has become more conditional, more offence-centred, more risk conscious”
(p.175).

Whilst popular punitiveness is particularly evident in the political rhetoric, media representation and the growth of imprisonment in the UK, it has been an uneven and incomplete transformation. In particular, the inner life of the prison has retained, albeit in an altered condition, a concern with the care and rehabilitation of those incarcerated. These shifting expectations and changing practices have both been filtered through and filtered into the values and actions of prison managers, altering their working lives.

Managerialism

It has been widely observed that a hegemonic form of management now dominates contemporary organisations, particularly in the developed Western world (Parker 2002). This includes a movement towards larger organisations with hierarchical structures that attempt to monitor and control the behaviour of employees through target setting and the use of information technology. It also encompasses the use of Human Resource Management techniques such as recruitment, reward, appraisal, development, communication and consultation in order to shape the ways that employees think about their work, enlisting them as corporate citizens. This trend has sometimes been termed as ‘managerialism’.

² At the time of writing, this was based on the seven ‘pathways to reducing reoffending’: accommodation; education, training and employment; health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

Prisons in England and Wales have seen the proliferation of the technologies and techniques of target setting and monitoring in a quite pronounced form over the last two decades. This has included the introduction of key performance targets and indicators, audits, a star-rating system and league tables (known as the weighted scorecard) (see chapter 3). Historical forms of monitoring including Inspection³ and Independent Monitoring Boards⁴ (formerly known as Boards of Visitors) have also become more formalised (see Newcomen 2005 and AMIMB 2005).

These techniques were imported directly from the commercial sector by key personnel, including Derek Lewis, Director General of the Prison Service between 1992 and 1995, who was recruited directly from the Granada corporation without any previous prison or public sector experience (Lewis 1997). This was the first time such an appointment had been made. Commercial approaches were also promoted in internal management reports written by businessmen, in particular, Lord Carter⁵ (Carter 2003, 2007).

However, this was also a process that gained momentum within the public service as a means of improving efficiency and effectiveness. This broad trend within the public sector has been described as 'New Public Management' (Hood 1991, Pollitt 1993, Ferlie et al 1996). Within prisons, the processes of management monitoring and control were seen as the solution to a range of problems experienced in prisons including improving security (Learmont 1995,

³ HM Chief Inspector of Prisons is a statutory post under Section 5A of the Prison Act 1952 as inserted by section 57 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982. Their role is to inspect prisons in England and Wales and report to the government on the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons and to report on matters connected with prisons and prisoners.

⁴ These are comprised of volunteers from the local community who monitor the conditions in prisons and the treatment of prisoners and staff. This form of monitoring has a long history dating back to the Elizabethan era and has had a formal statutory basis that dates back to the nationalisation of prisons under the Prison Act 1877 (Haines 2008). Their contemporary authority derived from the Prison Act 1952.

⁵ Baron Carter of Coles founded Westminster Health Care in 1985, which he then sold in 1999. He has a wide range of private interests in insurance, health and information technology. He has acted as government advisor on a range of issues including offender management, sports, legal aid and health services.

Spurr and Bennett 2008) and increasing management control and direction, turning good intentions into reality (Wheatley 2005).

A further technique has been the introduction of competition, with the first privately operated prison being opened in 1992 (Lewis 1997). This was controversial and contested but replicated changes in other parts of the public sector and reflected the dominant ideology regarding public services reform (Nathan 2003). Although opposed to private prisons whilst in opposition, the New Labour government continued to support competition whilst in power (Coyle 2005). Initially this was used as a means of gaining value for money with newly constructed prisons and providing leverage for improvement in poorly performing public sector prisons. The public sector was also able to compete successfully for prisons when contracts were renewed. This period marked a slowing and amelioration of commercial competition rather than its elimination (Bennett 2007b). However, as the population continued to increase, there were corresponding budget pressures that led to a refocus on how prisons could be reformed. In his internal reports, Lord Carter twice called for increased and routine competition for the delivery of prison services (Carter 2003, 2007). This he argued would attract more players into the criminal justice market and would achieve innovations and efficiency. The strategy of competition was not only an economic one but also had the effect of generating uncertainty and promoting the logic of the market, aligning individual and organisational interests (Turner and Morley 1995).

Some managers mourned what they perceived as the loss of independence and creativity arising from these changes (Wilson 1995, 2000), but this process marked deeper shifts rather than simply clipping the wings of maverick governors. This process has been marked by a movement from a social to an economic style of reasoning (Garland 2001). This can be detected throughout the criminal justice system including in the development of actuarial methods to identify and target the use of imprisonment towards socially problematic groups (Feeley and Simon 1992) and in the way that services for prisoners inside are

focussed on instrumentally-orientated approaches such as ‘offender management’ and ‘reducing reoffending’ (Crewe 2009). It can also be seen in the growing focus that managers place upon the meeting and achieving of targets and performance measures (Bryans 2007). This economic rationale has therefore permeated into the fabric of the prison, its policies and practices.

There have been notable attempts to re-imagine the use of performance management, in particular, the New Labour focus on stakeholder and customer engagement (Blair 2010) was reflected in the development of a new measure of the quality of prison life (MQPL). This originated in research at the University of Cambridge (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004) and was later incorporated into the performance management framework. Individual managers have also sought to resist, subvert and adapt managerial methods for moral ends (see Carlen 2001, Cheliotis 2006).

The processes of managerialization facilitate what has been described as ‘management at a distance’ (O’Malley 2004). This is the process through which governmental control permeates social institutions and individuals giving rise to deeper and more intense forms of control. In prisons this is not only seen in the implementation of technologies of monitoring, but also in the ways that the thinking and actions of individuals and groups are re-orientated and brought into strategic alignment. Measurement and monitoring are means through which disciplinary power can be exercised but can also be legitimated through expertise, persuasion and authority. Through these processes, individuals and groups can be ‘responsibilized’ to act in appropriate ways (Garland 2001) and self-regulation and control can be developed (Foucault 1977, Rose 1999).

The size and scale of prisons have altered during this time. The growth of the prison population has been accommodated partly through opening new prisons, but also through the expansion of existing prisons (Carter 2007). In 2007, an internal report written by a former businessman, Lord Carter, argued that economies of scale could be achieved by building large prisons, which became

known as ‘Titan’ prisons, housing 2500 prisoners (ibid). These plans encountered significant resistance and were subsequently mitigated (Liebling 2011). Again, these proposals were motivated by economic style rationales and market based solutions (ibid).

Over the last two decades there have been powerful and pervasive changes that have recast not only the policy and practice of prison management, but have also sought to change the thinking and rationale of actors. These changes have been contested and uneven but have nevertheless have had a critically important place in shaping the working lives of prison managers.

The changing nature of work in late modernity

Work is a central aspect of social life and has been the subject of changes arising from the coming of late modernity. This has been widely discussed, in particular the way that the structures of work have changed including the mobility of capital; the replacement of the job for life with short-term, sub-contracted and part-time employment; rapidly changing technology and skills; and the replacement of the work place with decentred home and mobile working (Sennett 2004). This has been described as ‘new capitalism’ (Sennett 1998, 2004) and has brought with it a more fluid and less secure employment experience (see also Giddens 1991, Beck 1992, Bauman 2000). These broad changes are important as they provide a useful benchmark for understanding how the experience of work in prisons has changes but also how it has resisted or avoided some of those changes.

There are at least three ways in which a greater sense of fluidity, risk and insecurity has come to characterise the experience of work (Heery and Salamon 1999). The first is that this may be a property of the job itself. In particular, it has been argued that the ‘job for life’ is no longer a realistic expectation for most people. Instead this has been replaced by less secure forms of employment including short-term contracts, sub-contracting and part-time employment in

rapidly changing organisations which shift their capital from one location to another. Jobs themselves may also feel insecure as constant retraining and skill acquisition is required (Sennett 1998). The second is that the environment in which the job exists may be insecure, with rapidly changing markets and competition for the provision of services. Organisations and workers are therefore subject to the volatility of the marketplace. The third way in which insecurity is maintained is through the subjective experience of workers in terms of cognitive and affective attitudes towards security, in other words, they feel insecure. This may manifest itself in the ways that people are concerned about working hard and performing well and therefore regulate themselves. This is also raised in ways in that employees may worry about what may happen to their job or that they will become unskilled due to changing technology or expectations; they are haunted by a “spectre of uselessness” (Sennett 2004 p.86). The changes that have been described were not purely technical but also represented a shift in values and organising logic. They raise issues regarding power, order and inequality.

Has there really been such a dramatic transformation in employment or are these claims overstated? It has been argued that the case for ‘new capitalism’ has been exaggerated and instead traditional structures have persevered, for example long-term employment has remained the norm, and capital is less mobile than has often been suggested (Doogan 2009). As well as questioning the extent the technical changes, there have also been arguments presented that the nature of the changes socially and in terms of individual identity, have been over emphasised. In particular, it has been argued that local and traditional practices are often deeply embedded and globalised trends have had to adapt in order to accommodate these (Parker 2002, Kennedy 2010).

In prisons, long term, secure employment remains the norm, although some aspects of the work have been sub-contracted (see Bennett, Crewe and Wahidin 2008). Competition is also limited, as has been described previously. As will be described later, there are also deeply embedded local practices that have

persisted. Nevertheless, the coming of late modernity has raised questions for prison managers about job security and it has promoted a sense of uncertainty as a result of close management and visible performance. The late modern prison is not a 'new capitalist' work place and the full sweep of change has not occurred. However, a crucial feature of this study is to explore how these trends have seeped into prison work, to what degree, and how this has intersected with traditional, localised practices.

Local effects of global change

The central concern of this study is to understand the contemporary working lives of prison managers. In the context of late modernity, this requires an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between global change and local circumstances. This section, will attempt to place this in a theoretical setting, drawing together the issues of global and local, agency and structure.

The transformations of work and prisons are developments that reflect and are part of broader social change. As has been emphasised throughout this introduction, although there have been transformations that have had significant effects, the past has not been obliterated and the world has not been reinvented. This approach rejects the global-local binary, which:

“...encourages us to believe that the local and the global are pitted against each other in some sort of battle for survival or supremacy which the former will inevitably lose” (Kennedy 2010 p.141-2)

Instead, there is continuity with the past in the shape of local peculiarities and practices. As has been argued, the local is:

“ubiquitous and commonplace...It absorbs, diverts and distracts us. It surrounds and envelops us, filling our lives with huge volumes of detail, information, attachments, pressures, expectations and demands, patterns, routines, responsibilities,

pleasures desires but also familiar routes and special-social niches...The ordinariness of the local and its powerful centripetal tendencies and attraction, pulling us inwards, affects everyone to a greater or lesser extent and usually the former.” (Kennedy 2010 p.7)

The nature of late modernity is instead to be found in a duality between local and global, what has been described as a “dialectical phenomenon” (Giddens 1991 p.32) where they coexist and intersect.

This has been noted in studies of prisons, where it has been argued that:

“Imprisonment’s local terrain is shaped but not fully determined by the forces of macro-social change. It is also influenced by organizational politics, professional values personal priorities, and historical contingencies.” (Crewe 2009 p.20)

This observation picks up that dialectical relationship. This was also neatly encapsulated in another observation, which captured the perseverance of the local character of prison life:

“This tension between the forces of late modernity ‘out there’ and the micro processes of the prison, where staff and prisoners continue to exchange pleasantries, insults, disclosures, and deals is precisely ‘where the action is’...in prison. In most prisons still, the landing is the same landing; time and place matter; and the essential prison experience remains fully recognizable by those who have always been there. Meanwhile, the world around the prison landing has been transformed.” (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004 p.4)

Understanding the late modern prison involves nuanced and complex questions about how the traditional shape of prison life has persisted and provides continuity and how far this has been disturbed, altered or replaced by macro-level changes. It is in the interplay that the character of the late modern prison and the working lives of prison managers will be found. As Garland (2001) argued, criminal justice institutions have not been reinvented but have instead

have been redefined, given “different force and significance” and put “to different use” (p.174).

Making sense of late modernity: agency and structure

Having attempted to suggest some of the contours and dynamics of late modernity, why then does the title of this thesis give prominence to the concepts of agency and structure? According to Giddens (1984), agency refers to actors having the space to act differently at any stage during the sequence of action, whilst structure refers to the phenomenon of social practices taking on systematic forms across space and time. As with his approach to globalism and localism, Giddens argued that rather than being dualisms, these were two parts of a whole, they were a duality existing in a dialectical relationship. This was his theory of ‘structuration’. This approach emphasises the relationship between the individual and wider society. With the development of globalised practices in the late modern world, Giddens argued that:

“the level of time-space distancing introduced by high modernity is so extensive that, for the first time in human history, ‘self’ and ‘society’ are interrelated in a global milieu” (Giddens 1991 p.32)

Individuals are directly drawn into, implicated and affected by the circumstances of late modernity. Kennedy argues that understanding globality and social change is not solely a matter of tracing broad macro-developments, but is equally about understanding the role of individuals as ‘micro actors’:

“It is ordinary people in their everyday lives who cope with and sometimes react to the global forces penetrating their particular life spaces – threats to jobs, the casualization of work, the effects of climate change or the stresses of living in a multicultural city – even though they do not always understand or interpret them as global forces” (Kennedy 2010 p.13)

As has been discussed in relation to issues such as the strategic alignment of organisational aims and individual actions, the development of self-regulation and feelings of insecurity in employment, global developments play out in the actions and practices of prison managers as individuals. In this way, Giddens argued that:

“...modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience. Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self”
(Giddens 1991 p.1)

The nature of late modernity and the changing structure of society shapes the broader context but also intersects with individual agency. Individuals are micro-actors who interpret, adapt, implement, resist, ignore and facilitate the changes. These changes not only occur in the actions of individuals, but also in their sense of identity and self. It is therefore being argued that the way that the changes of late modernity have been both enabled and constrained can only be understood by exploring the ways in which individuals as agents have interacted with the local and global structures, making sense of the various pressures and tensions that are at play.

The central questions for this study explore these inter-relationships between global and local and between agency and structure. How has the role and function of prison managers changed? How have these macro-level changes penetrated into their working lives and reconstituted them? How have individual and traditional modes of practice persevered and been maintained? What have been the consequences for those people themselves and for those who live and work in prisons?

This context is not unique to prisons. Indeed it is a central preoccupation in the contemporary worlds of work and public policy. This can be seen in myriad controversies about public sector work. For example, there have been frequent

debates about the role of testing pupils in schools, with the tensions between the development of consistent, measurable national standards and the fostering of greater creativity and individuality amongst teachers and pupils (see for example House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee 2008). In the police, there has been a debate about the exercise of discretion, particularly with practices such as stop and search, where the requirement to account for actions through bureaucratic records has been criticised as disproportionate and counter-productive in that it may deter legitimate police action (See Flannigan 2008). Within the medical profession there has been considerable debate about the 'rationing' of expensive drugs, as doctors and supervisory bodies such as the National Institute of Clinical Excellence have had to make judgements based not only on clinical criteria, but also consider cost-effectiveness and budgetary restraints (*Society Guardian* 25th September 2007). These debates set out ongoing tensions between increasing centralised control and individual or local discretion, between traditional 'craft' and managerial prescription.

These tensions between the individual and the organisation, and concerns about security and identity have also been a feature of popular culture. Books such as *Brave new world* (Huxley 1932), *Super-Cannes* (Ballard 2000), *The maintenance of headway* (Mills 2009) and films such as *The Insider* (US Dir. Michael Mann 1999) have depicted workers battling with the constraints of corporate life and their attempts to maintain their independence, identity and integrity. This has also been a long-standing theme of science fiction writing, where the corporate world has frequently been represented as assimilating with the wider world into an all-controlling dystopia. It has been claimed that:

"Conformist utopias maintained by deliberate political effort are a cherished nightmare of contemporary science fiction...The machinery of oppression...is wielded...by businesslike managerial types well equipped with the latest technological and psychological techniques for the prevention and detection of heresy" (Amis 1961 p.84).

These are examples of the political, professional and cultural manifestations of the universal tensions in the contemporary world of work and expose the conflicts between old and new, local and global, individual and organisational that are a feature of late modernity.

Whilst this is a study of a specific group in a specific location, it is one that raises themes relevant to organisations around the world. This is a story of the intersections, tensions and dynamics of late modernity. In that sense it is a story about the world in which we now live.

The study

The study that follows is set out in seven chapters. In chapter 2, the literature on prison managers will be reviewed. This chapter will describe the main theoretical tools that will inform the study. It will also explore the different ways in which prison managers and their working world have been understood and explained. This will go on to suggest a new approach to the study of prison managers that draws together the dynamic interconnections that shape the working lives of prison managers including between agency and structure, and between global and local forces.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research and gives a sense not only of the strategies adopted but also why they were used and some discussion of the experience of conducting the research.

What follows are the four empirical chapters that set out the research findings. The first of these, chapter 4, explores performance measurement and how prison managers use, understand and work with these tools. This is not discussed solely in a technical sense but also considers how these become a lived experience and affect individual identity and practice. This is concerned with how the importation of globalised practices has interacted with local culture. Chapter 5 looks at how prison managers bring individuality and subjectivity into their

work, using examples including their individual style, use of discretion, acts of resistance and use of power. This examines not only how such actions are a way of retaining and expressing individual identity but also how this can be a vehicle through which conformity is advanced, so that practice becomes patterned and structured. This is followed by chapter 6, which is concerned with the influence of traditional occupational culture and how this interacts with globalised ideas in key aspects of prison management including managing staff, teams and prisoners. These three chapters are used in order to discuss how managers understand and operate within their working world. Whilst they deal with issues of structure, agency and culture separately, the chapters do not present them as separate but instead use these as starting points to illustrate the ways in which they overlap and intersect in a series of dualities. The final empirical chapter, chapter 7, looks at the hidden injuries of prison management. This chapter attempts to describe how particular groups are negatively affected, even harmed, through contemporary management practice. This includes gender and racial groups but also looks at non-operational managers and those who experience sick absence.

The study ends with chapter 8, a conclusion which attempts to summarise and describe the contours of contemporary prison management, the implications of this, and alternative approaches that could provide a different future.

Chapter 2

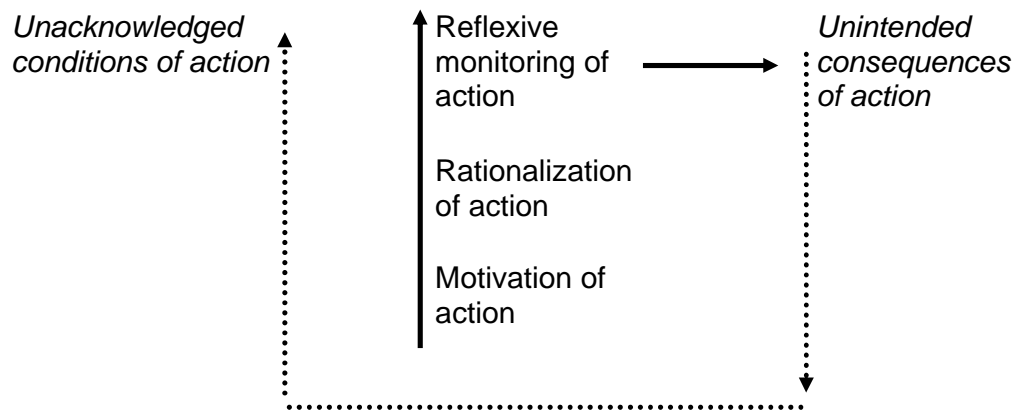
A new approach to understanding prison managers

This chapter explores the main literature that is helpful in understanding prison managers. It will start by describing and discussing Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration as that is such a core concept in this study. The chapter will then explore the ways in which prison managers have been discussed in previous studies. One approach has been based on emphasising the local features of the organisation, including traditional prison officer culture, and the ways in which managers have acted with agency and in ways that are idiosyncratic and individualistic. The second approach has focussed on the restructuring of prison management as a result of the coming of late modernity, in particular competition and new public management as a set of transformations that have homogenised and recast their work. The chapter will then close by suggesting a new approach based on Giddens's theory of structuration.

Giddens on 'structuration'

In his seminal work elaborating the theory of structuration, Giddens (1984) set out that there was a long-standing conflict in sociology between those who adopted a functionalist or structuralist perspective and those that adopted a hermeneutic one. That is that functionalists and structuralists focus on social systems and the social whole, in other words structure, whereas hermeneutics emphasises the subjective experience of individual actors, in other words agency. Giddens attempted to move beyond these ideas in order to understand the complex interplay between agency and structure. This section will briefly describe and discuss the main elements of his theory of structuration that are relevant to this thesis. It should be noted, however, that Giddens was not alone in exploring this interconnection. In particular, Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice addressed a similar social problem to Giddens and shared some features but was distinct (Parker, J. 2000). This will also be drawn upon in this section.

The term ‘agency’ was used by Giddens (1984) in the sense that the actor may have acted differently at any stage during the sequence of action. They may not necessarily have foreseen, appreciated or intended all of the consequences of those actions, but they exercised some choice in taking them. He proposed what he called the “stratification model of the agent” (ibid p.5), which was presented as follows:



In this model, reflexive monitoring involves individuals monitoring themselves and others, and expecting others to also be doing the same. This involves conscious and considered actions. Rationalization of action refers to actors having a continuing reflexive understanding of their grounds for action that links throughout their experiences and provides some coherence to their lives. These may not always be fully conscious but are comprised of the values, beliefs, attitudes, practices and processes that they accept or take for granted and which shape their conduct. ‘Motives’ are more complex and often cannot be articulated by most actors. This could be broken down into the following triad of thought:

- Discursive consciousness – these are motivations that can be rationalised and expressed, which the actor is aware of and able to articulate.

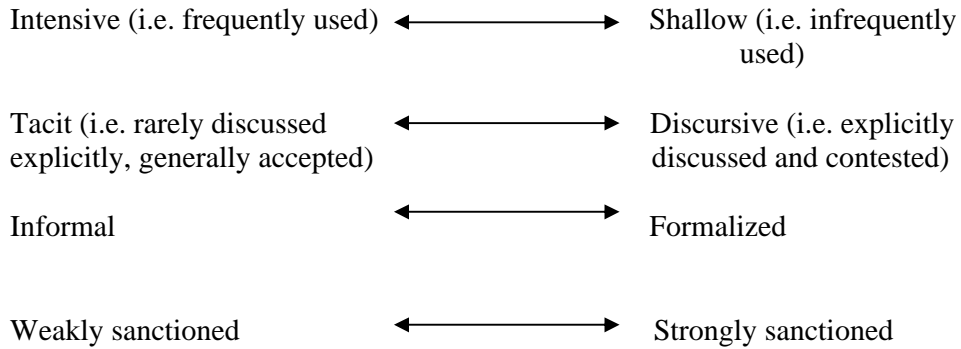
- Practical consciousness – These may not be consciously expressed, but are comprised of the taken for granted assumptions that shape their actions.
- Unconscious motives/cognition – these include intimate and personal or deeply rooted social practices that are entrenched and not consciously questioned or articulated.

From this perspective, there are three different aspects to individual action and agency, all of which are overlapping and interlinked. Firstly, this is characterised by what might be considered individual personality and character, through motives for action, which are deeply rooted in personal experiences and biology. The second aspect is the empowered, thinking and feeling agent who exercises a critical form of choice through reflexive monitoring and discursive consciousness. The third prioritises how the nature of agency is embroiled with that of structure as ‘practical consciousness’ and rationalisations for action. This reveals the many taken for granted acts that are part of the ongoing ‘flow’ of social life, including the use of language and gesture. For Giddens the vast bulk of social activity is characterised by this practical consciousness, which involves routinised, familiar and shared behaviours rather than heroic assertions of subjectivity (Parker, J. 2000).

The second element important in the notion of structuration is that of structure. Giddens defines this as “the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them ‘systematic’ form” (Giddens 1984 p.17). He rejects the structuralist idea of structure or systems as external to human agency but instead sees them as having a virtual existence when enacted through instantaneous practices and in memory traces.

Giddens argues that social rules are techniques or generalizable procedures that apply in the enactment and reproduction of social practices. These rules can be

described across a number of dimensions. In doing so, he illustrates that structure was not a single monolithic entity but instead structures can have discernibly different qualities. The dimensions he describes crossed four spectra:



Giddens therefore proposes that rules and resources vary in their qualities and intensity.

Drawing these ideas together, Giddens argues that agency and structure should not be viewed as a dualism where they are mutually exclusive positions, instead they should be reconceptualised as a duality – characterised by a dynamic and mutually inescapable inter-relationship. Giddens terms this the ‘duality of structure’. According to this, the structural properties of social systems are both the outcome and the medium of the practices they organise (Giddens 1984 p.25). This essentially means that commonly understood and observed rules and resources are part of the continuity and reproduction of everyday social life but these rules and resources are also created and recreated as a result of individual choices and actions rather than having an independent existence of their own. In this way, Giddens illustrates how the *duree* of day to day routine is linked to the *longee duree* of institutionalised practice. In other words, everyday social practices become embedded, eroded or altered through their repetition and observance by actors.

Bourdieu (1977) similarly draws a link between individual actions and the shared practices of the groups. As with Giddens, Bourdieu argues that people act with immediacy rather than with articulate consciousness and that their actions are shaped by dispositions, values, behaviours, attitudes and characteristics that are shared across members of a group. He argues that there are four elements to this. The first he calls 'embodied experience', or *habitus*, which has developed over generations and is comprised of dispositions and practices typical of the particular group. Second he identifies language and rationality, which includes both the specific words and phrases used but also the philosophy, morality and rationalisations commonly deployed. Third, he describes values, which means the moral imperatives and priorities held by that particular group. Fourth, he describes that the variety of practices are all implicated in the constitution of agency and structure, which means that the practices embody a complex relationship that crosses both groups and individuals. This work is particularly important for drawing out ways in which individual practices are patterned across groups and that shared practices and ways of thinking in groups become deeply embedded in individual identity.

Giddens provides a series of tools which explain the 'modalities' of structuration; the dimensions of duality of structure drawn upon to give depth and weight to the practices. These dimensions take three forms; domination (power), signification (meaning), and legitimation (norm). Domination describes the resources that are held by some in order to control economic matters (allocative resources), such as deciding how financial rewards should be applied or financial wealth distributed, and also to control people's lives (authoritative resources) through position, prestige and personality. Examples include the powers accrued by managers, professionals, the wealthy, or politicians. Signification refers to the use of persuasive power, for example because particular practices are considered more moral or more effective, and are therefore perceived as self-evidently good, similar to Bourdieu's idea that values and moral imperatives shape practice. Examples include support for charitable works, or more general social rules such as politeness and civility. Legitimation describes the process of articulating,

disseminating and justifying through which rules become widely perceived as acceptable, become the norm and are subsequently reinforced through sanctions. This applies to the majority of law or written rules in work or other associations.

Giddens also describes the directions in which the duality of structure can be utilised. For example, this can be an enabling force, in as much as it can provide a means through which intentions and needs can be realized. On the other hand, structures can be a constraining force in as much as they can set material constraints, sanctions to deter and punish certain actions, and structural constraints i.e. limits on the range of plausible options in any given circumstance. He again described this relationship as one that was dynamic through a 'dialectic of control' (Giddens 1984 p.16); a two-way relationship of influence and negotiation between the superior and subordinate. This dialectic is also particularly important to Bourdieu's (1977) formulation, in which he argues that the social world is characterised by a perpetual power struggle between different groups, collectivities and interests. For Bourdieu, the agency of actors is particularly expressed when they take sides in these struggles.

Finally in this section, it is worth reiterating how this links with the notion of late modernity, globalisation and localism, which was addressed in chapter 1. In particular this highlighted that local and global practices exist in a dialectical relationship. This can be seen as part of what Bourdieu (1977) might term a 'field of struggle'. However, this is not a dialectic that takes place independently of actors as some kind of abstract, theoretical, philosophical and political battle, but instead this is enacted between persons in everyday settings. As was described in chapter 1, individuals experience the pressures of globalisation through managerialism, diversity and technology, for example, and they have to interpret and make sense of this in their lives. The relationship between global and local is therefore given life through the duality of structure.

Giddens's crucial contribution, as well as that of Bourdieu, can be seen as his reframing of this fundamental sociological debate about agency and structure in

terms of a duality rather than a dualism. They highlight that individuals and groups interact in ways that are complex and mutually influencing. Rather than providing a comprehensive and scientific analysis of this, they provide a number of concepts that could be deployed to analyse and understand social life (Layder 2006).

Having briefly introduced the elements of structuration theory, it is necessary to turn to two different approaches that have been taken in discussing prison managers and how these reflect the dualisms that Giddens criticised. This chapter will then discuss how Giddens's theory in particular can be used to inform a new approach to understanding prison managers.

Prison managers, localism and culture

Much of the previous work on prison staff emphasises the distinctiveness of prisons, prioritising local, cultural idiosyncrasies (e.g. Bryans & Wilson 2000, Liebling and Price 2001). This section will outline the ways in which prison staff have been discussed in these terms and how this has presented them in isolation from global, structural trends.

Much of the previous research on occupational cultures within prisons has argued that there exist strong and distinct working identities. This has been applied to both prison officers (e.g. Liebling and Price 2001, Crawley 2004) and prison managers (e.g. Bryans 2007) but in contrasting and apparently mutually exclusive ways. For prison officers, research has generally described occupational culture as a homogenous set of practices, shaping and constraining the behaviour and attitudes of those concerned. For prison managers, occupational culture has been described as heterogeneous and as empowering them to act with agency. These two approaches will be described and discussed but at this stage it is worth noting that whilst it is accepted that localised tensions and dynamics exist and have an important place in working lives, the dualism

inherent in these studies, between officers and managers and between agency and structure, will later be questioned.

Prison officer occupational culture

There have been several important works produced on prison officers in the US (for example Kauffman 1988 and Lombardo 1989) and in the UK (for example Liebling and Price 2001, Crawley 2004, see also Bennett, Crewe and Wahidin 2008). These focus on officers as a distinct group, studied in their own right and distinguished from managers or other professions working in prisons. From this work, three major elements can be drawn that characterise the 'traditional' prison officer occupational culture, just as classic studies on police officers have identified an enduring culture (see Loftus 2011). The first element of this culture is insularity; that prison officers have an internal focus, strong bonds of solidarity with colleagues and are cut off professionally and socially from those outside of prisons. It has been argued that this is derived from a number of distinctive factors, including that prison staff work closely together physically and there is an intimacy and sense of shared reliance that comes from the need to keep each other safe (Crawley 2004, Crawley and Crawley 2008). As well as these factors that push prison staff together, it has also been argued that they are pushed away from those above and outside as they perceive that they are neglected and undervalued by the public, politicians and the media, and they are suspicious of investigations and other forms of external scrutiny (ibid). Some of the internal effects of this include that uniformed staff regard themselves as being distinct from non-uniformed staff and ground-floor staff distinct from managers (Liebling 2007). This distance is not merely a reaction to perceived neglect but is also a means through which they can preserve their 'discretion' and avoid intrusive accountability (ibid).

The second element is staff-prisoner relationships, where it has been argued that there is broad consensus about what constitutes the 'right' relationships with prisoners (or at least what are the 'wrong' sort); how interpersonal and

professional boundaries are drawn (Crawley 2004, Crawley and Crawley 2004, and Liebling and Price 2001). This consensus emphasises features that have important social and occupational effects. In particular, it is through these relationships that the antagonisms and conflicts of prison life are reflected and reproduced, but they are also the means through which power is exercised and order sustained. This consensus is grounded in perceptions that prisoners are unpredictable, potentially violent and therefore have to be contained, but also reflects a view that prisoners are socially inferior to officers (Liebling and Price 2001, Liebling 2007). This relationship has often been characterised as ‘them and us’ (Crawley 2004, Liebling 2007). Sim (2009) has argued that this “social production of distance” (p.145) between officers and prisoners creates an amoral climate where indifference flourishes (see also Scott 2008). These values and perceptions underpin a hierarchical structure that facilitates domination and control of prisoners by staff.

The third element is machismo; the “traditional male qualities of dominance, authoritativeness and aggressiveness” (Crawley and Crawley 2008 p.141) or what Sim (2009) describes as “untrammelled, corrosive masculinity” (p.145). This can be traced back to prisons being predominantly a male domain. It can also be seen in the nature of the work, or at least those elements that are given high status. For example, the use of force is seen as attracting a particular kudos. It can also be seen in the nature of relationships between staff and prisoners and amongst staff themselves. The most respected officers are those who were able to mix ‘bottle’, including confidence and courage, and ‘banter’ a form of combative humour (Liebling 2007). These particular masculine qualities are used to define a ‘good’ officer and to order the social relations amongst staff.

These three features create the basis of an occupational culture or ‘working personality’ (Skolnick 1966, Crawley 2004, Liebling 2007). This emerges from a combination of circumstances that prison officers face and the milieu in which they operate, and it coalesces into a cognitive lens through which their working world is viewed, and a set of expectations and beliefs that shape their emotional

responses. In other words their social position shapes their *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), or how they conduct themselves in their working world, how they see themselves as a group, and how they find themselves positioned in relation to their superiors, to prisoners and to ‘outsiders’. Such cultures can be deeply embedded, for example it has been argued that police officer culture has largely endured despite social and political changes (Loftus 2011).

Although earlier research has emphasised the coherence of this culture and the homogenous nature of the group, recent work has provided some corrective, suggesting that prison officer culture is not monolithic but can vary in its precise dimensions within and between prisons, and that individuals act with a degree of discretion and choice (Liebling and Price 2001, Crawley 2004). Nevertheless, the work described generally traces a distinct, local or ‘traditional’ occupational culture.

Prison managers as moral guardians

In contrast to the work on prison officers, the research on prison managers has emphasised diversity rather than homogeneity. These accounts suggest that prison managers shape the social climate of the institutions they command. It has even been suggested that prison management as an occupation is ‘sui generis’ or unique (Bryans and Wilson 2000) and that there is a distinct ‘prison management competence’ that is different from any other leadership or management competence (Bryans 2000a). This distinctive role was described by Wilson (2000) in the following terms:

“To work as a [prison manager], you had to understand prisoners, and be able to manipulate prison life to push it forward. This was not so much about management – or to further managerial ends – but to fashion and re-shape an essentially punitive structure into one that was positive and optimistic”
(p.12).

It seems here to be implied that the occupational culture of prison officers forms part of the “punitive structure”. This depiction of prison managers suggests that they are distinct from – even perhaps in conflict with - other groups within the prison as well as from managers in other organisations. The idea being presented here is that it is prison managers who are the heroic guardians and agents of moral progression in prisons.

This view is not uncommon and has found wide support from a range of commentators and academics coming from widely different perspectives. For example, it has been suggested that the approach of a prison manager can be positive, leading to a ‘remoralization’ of a prison, encouraging prison staff to act humanely and value prisoners (Carlen 2001). However, others have argued that leadership can be negative, for example failing to give sufficient attention to human values, but instead over emphasizing management targets, can sanction inhumanity (Coyle 2002).

This appreciation of prison managers can be contextualised within wider organisational studies, particularly a body of research on human services, which are services where interactions and relationships between people are central. Prisons can be said to be a human service as it is widely recognised that prisoners rely upon staff in order to get their basic needs met but also rely upon interactions with staff as a normative experience, making the prison feel more or less legitimate (Liebling and Price 2001). Research on human services has suggested that the way staff are managed has a direct impact on the service they provide (Gronroos 1984, Berry 1989, Brody 2000). This has been replicated in prisons research, which has pointed to the impact that managers have upon the staff they manage. This can be direct and harmful. For example a study of 89 prison officers in a UK prison found that managers could be a source of stress for them (Launey and Fielding 1989, see also Schaufeli and Peeters 2000). In a broader and more positive way, it has been argued that managers model relationships to officers and inform their use of discretion (Liebling and Price 2001, Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004).

Some previous research has presented a view of prison managers as crusading, heroic moralists, battling against regressive prison officer cultures and an essentially punitive institution in order to craft a positive, reforming organisation (e.g. Wilson 2000). Such a view holds strong sway, perhaps partly because so much of the work is produced by prison managers themselves (e.g. Bryans and Wilson 2000, Coyle 2002) and therefore identify strongly with their role and aspirations. This representation of prison managers may be best seen as a normative prescription.

Individuality and heterogeneity amongst prison managers

Other research on the practice of prison managers has suggested that they do not act uniformly but instead there is a diversity of values and approaches. In his ethnographic study of American prison managers, DiIulio (1991) concludes that; “there is no one theory of organizational leadership...and certainly no management formula that guarantees success” (p.54, see also DiIulio 1987). Instead it has been suggested that there are a range of values, motivations and approaches. Two important studies of criminal justice managers in the UK reflect this idea, namely Rutherford (1993a and 1993b) and Bryans (2007).

Rutherford (1993a) conducted his research at an early stage in the development of New Public Management (NPM) in criminal justice. He suggests that criminal justice management is “an arena characterized by competing ideologies” (p.26). Based on interviews with 28 managers he argues that there are three clusters of values or ‘credos’ that shape individual practice (Rutherford 1993a). These are:

Credo one – “a powerfully held dislike and moral condemnation of offenders, and the beliefs that as few fetters as possible be placed upon the authorities on the pursuit of criminals who, when caught, should be dealt with in ways that are punitive and degrading” (p.11)

Credo two – “*to dispose of the tasks at hand as smoothly and efficiently as possible*” (p.13). This is referred to as ‘expedient managerialism’.

Credo three – “*empathy with suspects, offenders, and the victims of crime, optimism that constructive work can be done with offenders, adherence to the rule of law so as to restrict state powers, and an insistence on open and accountable procedures*” (p.18). This is referred to as the ‘humanity’ credo.

Rutherford argues that these views are often shaped by early experiences such as family, religion, influential people or experiences, education and training, and professional development. These can alter or become concrete when entering the work arena as the result of using practice as an expression of personal values, watershed experiences or recognising the damage of criminal justice work. This research was conducted as the criminal justice field was in the early stages of NPM, however, Rutherford noted that expedient managerialism is becoming the dominant credo particularly in prisons and this is marginalizing moral concerns (Rutherford 1993b).

More recently, Bryans’ (2007) conducted interviews with 42 governors in the late 1990s, taking a similar approach to research and analysis as a previous study of police chief constables (Reiner 1991). Bryans identifies four ideal types of prison governor. First, ‘general managers’ are those that have little concern for the morality of imprisonment, but instead focus on performance management and their own personal career. Second, ‘chief officers’ are those that work their way through the ranks and adopt an approach based upon their operational experience, providing high visibility, an appreciation of shop-floor work and often get involved in the minutiae of daily operations. ‘Liberal idealists’ are concerned with the morality of imprisonment, have an academic background often in the social sciences and are engaged in wider penal reform. Fourth, ‘conforming mavericks’ are charismatic individualists who develop innovative practices whilst also achieving the majority of the conventional targets but do so in ways that are individualistic. Bryans accepted that most individuals are likely to be a mixture of the ideal types. This does raise the question of how valuable it

is to focus on such constructed types if they do not reflect the reality of practice but instead are abstractions. There is a risk that they obscure as much as they reveal by attempting to impose a neat typology of rather 'fixed' roles on a world comprised of tense and complex social relations.

Together, these works represent prison managers as diverse individuals and emphasise the distinctiveness of prisons from other organisations and the distinctiveness of prison managers from prison officers. These works also suggest that they act with significant discretion and control over their working environments. In short, and in contrast to the prevailing depiction of prison officers, they are presented in ways that place agency in the foreground.

Reconsidering localism and agency

These approaches to understanding prison officers and prison managers do raise a number of problems. The first is that in emphasising the distinctive, local features of prisons and prison management, this overlooks those aspects that show continuity and consistency with other organisations including global trends such as managerialism. The second is that emphasising the distinctiveness of prison managers from other staff, particularly prison officers and prison officer culture, this ignores the ways in which there may be intersections and links created through dialectical relationships and how prison managers may be shaped and constrained by this. In other words, both global and local structures retreat to the background in these studies. The emphasis on diversity is also exaggerated by the creation of ideal types, which neatly but artificially construct imaginary figures that may not exist so distinctly in reality. Instead, complexity is lost including the ways that different values, approaches and styles are mixed and intersect, and are brought to the fore or retreat to the background at different times and in different places.

That is not to suggest that the local features of organisations and occupational cultures are not important but these limitations suggest that an alternative

approach is needed that situates prison managers within their professional and social context rather than lifting them out of it. It also suggests that an approach is needed that reconnects with the complex, lived experience rather than creating a simplified and imaginary one.

Prison managers, globalism and managerialism

A second approach to understanding prison managers is a perspective that presents prison management as being fundamentally transformed by the rise of managerialism, a globalised approach to organisational management introduced in chapter 1. From this perspective, prison managers have become a homogenised group, moulded and reshaped to a new set of expectations and demands.

In the prisons of England and Wales, the development of ‘new’ managerial practices were seen in changing practices such as the opening of a competitive commercial market for prison services, the use of techniques imported from the private sector including quantitative performance targets, and professionalisation of managers in fields including finance and human resources. The development of performance measurement has been the most extensive and important development in that process (Armstrong 2007). Many commentators have come to suggest that this new approach marginalises traditional forms of management and creates a more homogenised and tightly controlled institution with less space for localism and individuality. For example, Sparks et al (1996) argues that:

“...managerialism – with its reliance on abstract systems and categories – will typically not be too interested in the more ‘dense’ social relations, and the sensitivity to local historical traditions and past events, implied by the concept of ‘a sense of place’.” (p.78)

This is not solely a change in management practice, but is located in wider changes in criminal justice. These changes include the greater use of actuarial

approaches, using quantitative research evidence in order to target the use of criminal justice resources towards socially problematic groups (Feeley and Simon 1992). Examples of this include policing techniques and sentencing policies being changed by innovations such as zero-tolerance policing, minimum sentences and intelligence-led policing. As was described in chapter 1, there has emerged what has been described as a ‘culture of control’ in criminal justice (Garland 2001).

The legitimation of managerialism

Initially, there was significant resistance to managerial developments. The introduction of commercial competition led to strike action (Bennett and Wahidin 2008). Managers complained that the use of targets and audits changed the nature of their role undermining their moral aspirations and instead making them amoral general managers (Wilson 1995), or that it changed them from leaders to bureaucratic managers or administrators (Godfrey 1996). Such arguments suggest that the ‘craft’ of prison management is being undermined, an argument that has been made more broadly in relation to changes in the world of work (Sennett 1998, 2004). There have also been general criticisms of quantitative performance measurement including that they are technically flawed (Cave, Kogan and Smith 1990, Smith and Goddard 2002) and that the work of complex social institutions cannot be credibly reduced to performance measures (Hennessy 1990).

Despite this initial resistance, these managerial approaches have taken hold and by the turn of the century, Bryans (2007) noted that:

“More recently, Governors have been required to adopt a more managerial ethos. Prisons have to be managed in a more passionless and bureaucratic manner. Efficiency and compliance have become the administratively defined goals. Governors are increasingly seen as general managers and held to account for the total operation of their prisons, through more comprehensive line management” (p.63)

This description suggests that this has been a disciplinary process in which reluctant prison managers have been 'required' to change through tight accountability using transparent performance measurement. This form of control was described by Giddens (1984) as 'domination', and utilises power through allocating resources and the use of positional power.

The idea that the growth of managerialism is exclusively a top-down, imposed change, forced upon unwilling professionals is not tenable. Such a system would not be sustainable. It is important to recognise the processes through which this has been legitimised so that managers see this not simply as something they have to do, but something with which their own desires, interests and ambitions are aligned.

Some managers willingly embrace the managerial techniques, finding them to be an empowering force. For example, a former Director General of the National Offender Management Service described managerialism making it easier to get things done and turning the good intentions of liberal predecessors into reality (Wheatley 2005), whilst his successor (Spurr and Bennett 2008) has argued that performance measures are a means to achieve good works and that compliance is a means of managing risk, avoiding disasters such as the escapes that occurred in the 1990s (Woodcock 1994, Learmont 1995), or the racist murder of Zahid Mubarek (Keith 2006). Others argue that managerial practices such as enforceable standards can promote human rights (Livingstone et al 2003, Penal Reform International 1995, Whitty 2011) and enhance public accountability (Riveland 1999). Some academics also use managerialism as a means to engage with prisons and promote humanising practices (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004, Liebling 2005). From this perspective, managerial practices play a role in the legitimisation of prisons.

Some managers have even become evangelical about the potential of management. For example, Wright (1994) produced a guru-style book for prison

managers based upon the once fashionable 1980's corporate 'excellence' literature (Peters and Waterman 1982), which suggests that there is an optimal approach to management that can achieve success. This has been taken up in the UK where similar approaches have been advocated by serving prison managers (e.g. Powls 1991). Even those who ostensibly resisted the changes, recognise the importance of general management competence and skills in prison management (Bryans and Wilson 2000, Bryans 2000a, 2007). From this perspective, this new approach is not only enforced through what Giddens (1984) described as 'domination' but also benefits from 'signification', where the practices are given meaning and moral force, enlisting willing support.

'Governing the souls' of prison managers

Whilst some managers were compelled to conform and others willingly did so, for the majority there are more subtle processes through which they have become embroiled in managerialism. Some of these changes relate to structures of prison management. In his study of managers' use of discretion, Cheliotis (2006) describes that these changes have been reinforced by social processes or what he calls the:

“three basic managerial forces that, together, serve subtly to rigidify the nature and scope of criminal justice work, and to mould professionals into patterns of conformity to systematic goals, while also playing attention to the human consequences of these forces” (p.316).

First, there is an increasingly hierarchical division of labour, particularly between headquarters and establishments, so that establishments are focused on service delivery rather than engaging in wider cultural, moral or strategic development. Second, there is intensive inter- and intra-agency competition, fuelled by commercial competition and publicly available performance information. Third is the breeding of a new, up-and-coming generation of blasé professionals who

are less concerned about moral aspects of imprisonment and see their work as a general management role.

For many workers, these changes have brought about not only a shift in how they work but also how they think and feel about it. It has been argued that this is a feature of contemporary organisations, where “the personal and subjective capacities of citizens have been incorporated into the scope and aspirations of public powers” (Rose 1999 p.1), and that “the management of subjectivity has become a central task of the modern organization” (ibid p.2). This process of enlistment has been described as ‘governing the soul’ and suggests that the contemporary organisation attempts to engage with both what employees do but also with what they think and feel (Rose 1999).

The combination of surveillance through performance monitoring and measurement, and the enlistment of corporate citizens to align their thinking with that of the organisation and act with self-control, has been described as facilitating ‘management at a distance’ (O’Malley 2004). Such an approach reduces scope for individualism and instead promotes a homogenisation of practice. This routinisation and acceptance of practice is described by Giddens (1984) as utilising the approach of ‘legitimation’, where it is accepted as the norm and underpinned by widely accepted and understood system of rules and sanctions.

It has been argued that this intensification of control and managerialism has distorted the nature of prison management. In particular it has been suggested that some prison managers focussed on measurement rather than the lived experience of imprisonment. This could mean that they construct a ‘virtual prison’ based on performance figures rather than seeing the reality of what is being provided to prisoners and what their experience is (Owers 2007), or such figures are used to present the idea that prisons are reformatory and moral places whilst masking the pains of imprisonment and the deeper issues of power and inequality they reflect (Carlen 2008a).

Rethinking managerialism

These works collectively present a picture of a set of globalised practices sweeping through and reconstructing the practice of prison management. Whether by domination, signification or legitimation, it is suggested that all managers have become enmeshed in the practices of managerialism, perhaps even to the extent that they have become detached from the realities of their work. From this perspective, prison management has become less distinct, with localism and idiosyncrasy excluded in favour of a more rigid, consistent and predictable form. However, this also raises a number of problems. Firstly, this presents a picture of a process that has attained a degree of domination and control that is virtually complete. Is it realistic to suggest that managerial practices cover every situation and circumstance that can be produced in a complex institution like a prison? Do responses not vary at different times and places? Is it realistic to suggest that individuals are so tightly controlled as to have such little choice and discretion in their actions? Finally, is it realistic to suggest that ubiquitous, deeply held and long standing local features such as occupational cultures could be so completely eliminated in such a relatively short period of time? It is therefore argued that although there is a trend of growing managerialism as both a set of practices and a set of emotional and cognitive responses to the working environment, the works described above push this too far and give insufficient account of the complexities of individuals, cultures and variations of time and place.

A new approach to understanding prison management

So far, two distinct perspectives have been presented. One set of perspectives emphasise a localised occupational culture. This approach suggests that prison officers are a distinct and homogenous group, but that prison managers stand aside from this, acting with greater diversity and individuality, in many ways wrestling with the constraints of these localised cultures. In contrast, the second

perspective locates prison management within wider global developments, in particular the emergence of managerialism. From this perspective, prison managers are constrained by, or even promote the expansion of this hegemonic tendency within organisations. These two approaches set up a series of dualisms between agency and structure, and between local and global. The work of Giddens can be usefully drawn upon to question the assumptions that underpin this previous work, and to propose a new way ahead.

A new approach to understanding prison managers would involve moving away from the dualisms inherent in previous work and instead to explore these dynamic inter-relationships as dualities; globalism and localism, agency and structure. In common with Giddens, such an approach would be interested in how structures were both constraining and empowering; how individuals are not only subject to rules and structures but are also participants in their creation, maintenance and adaptation; the dialectics between the holders power of power and the subjects of it; and the dialectical relationship between the local and the global.

This section will discuss the ways in which this new approach has started to emerge in recent discussions of prison managers. It will also examine how the issue of organisational culture is important in moving this new approach forward.

Excavating dualities in prison management

A new approach, which draws out duality, can be detected in some comments that have been made about prison managers in wider studies. For example, the dynamic nature of these inter-relationships is illustrated by Sparks et al (1996) in their study of order in prisons. In this, they argue that in prisons “power is not untrammelled” but instead there is a process of negotiation between different players (p.136) and that prison management involves “‘balancing’ or walking tightropes...reconciling competing priorities and concerns in the face of different kinds of constraint” (p.137). This starts to reveal some of the complex tensions

that prison managers have to negotiate both local and global. More recently, as part of a wider study of the moral performance of prisons, it was argued that good governors are not necessarily successful in any prison and instead there is a complex 'establishment-leadership fit', where different establishments require different styles at different stages in their development (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004). This again reveals the interplay between organisational culture, biography and individual style. From a temporal perspective, both Rutherford (1993b) and Bryans (2007) argue that managerialism is becoming more dominant in the practice of prison managers, illustrating that individuals and organisations change over time. These studies suggest a more complex relationship between the agency and structure, over time and in different places, slowly revealing an intersection that can usefully be pursued further.

Two particular writers, namely Pat Carlen and Leonidas Cheliotis, have developed research on prison managers that directly addressed issues of agency and structure. Carlen's (2001, 2002a) research on prison managers was part of a wider study of women's imprisonment. In the first of these papers, she analyses the transformation of Cornton Vale prison under a new governor who was brought in to reduce suicides. Carlen describes how this governor encouraged a shared sense of responsibility, where prisoners and staff were empowered to provide support and improve quality of life. She describes that:

"this strategy did not involve a displacement of responsibility from more senior to less senior or even junior staff, but it did extend shares in the ownership and shaping of innovation to the staff who actually had to operationalize it" (Carlen 2001 p.465)

This is termed as 'remoralisation'. Carlen criticises quantitative performance measures as inadequate within this context, arguing that it is not possible to reduce complex social issues to such measures. However, this is not an example of agency alone, but is a process that is led by a governor who deploys structures including the delegation of authority, the development of staff, communication and to some degree performance measures (i.e. suicides were reduced). This

research provides a living example of what Wilson (2000) described as ‘fashioning and reshaping’ the prison. However, by 2009, the Inspectorate of Prisons in Scotland described that the prison was again in a state of crisis, with many aspects of the service unacceptable, and that there was a rapid turnover of managers meant that there was a lack of strategic direction (HMIP 2009). This highlights the need to constantly make, maintain and remake the reform process.

Carlen’s second work focuses on the relationship between women’s prisons and a newly established Women’s Policy Group in HM Prison Service headquarters (Carlen 2002a). She argues that prison managers are constrained by budget and security considerations which make it impossible to implement over-ambitious new policy initiatives, and that there are a plethora of unprioritised and sometimes opposed policy directives that are often unmindful of the realities of prison life. The consequences of this are that often there is non-compliance and there is a gap between performance measurement, which presents an image of effective and reformatory prisons, and the reality of prison life. Her recommendations for addressing this focus on a rebalancing of professionalism and managerialism, so that prison managers can deploy their professional expertise more effectively, as the governor at Cornton Vale had the opportunity to do.

These two articles draw a picture of managerialism as essentially dysfunctional due to overuse and its own inherent limitations. However, they also reveal a complex interaction between structure and agency, where managers are not automatons but instead resist, adapt, and engage with the structures they operate within. They do this for a variety of different ends including mitigating negative consequences, promoting morally progressive ambitions, but also presenting complaint appearances.

The most explicit attempt to explore the issues of agency and structure in the working lives of prison managers was conducted by Cheliotis (2006) in an ethnographic study of discretionary decision-making regarding temporary

release. In his accomplished analysis, he criticises work on managerialism such as Feeley and Simon's (1992) on the basis that they assume that managers are docile bodies, trapped in an iron cage of bureaucracy. Whilst acknowledging a trend towards greater conformity, he argues that insufficient attention has been given to the role of agency. He suggests that individuals may engage in acts of resistance, charismatic people may inspire change and staff exercise discretion in their work. Rather than being simple automatons, he argues that individuals negotiate a position between revolutionary resistance and blind conformity, and that they are sophisticated consumers able to discern between competing messages and make choices about what they do. Cheliotis closes by making a statement that is both an observation and a normative prescription, that:

“...if properly limited by responsible agents, and thus, if used as a means to clearly predefined humanitarian goals, rather than as an end in itself, managerialism can facilitate the ‘delivery’ of justice” (p.354).

This opened the door to using structuration theory as a means through which to understand prison managers, exploring the impact of managerialism but also recognising the interplay with agency. However, that door may have been pushed too far, and in reclaiming the role of agency, the effect has been to minimise the importance of structure as a form of constraint. In particular, discretion and choices are not free but are restricted and those that are willing to actively resist or have natural charisma are always limited. It also proposes a limited view of agency, giving particular prominence to resistance. Although this is clearly important, agency is not only expressed through resistance but can also be expressed in other forms including compliance. It can also be argued that Cheliotis's conclusion suggests that it is the failure of managers to reshape and reinterpret managerialism that is responsible for any moral weaknesses in practice, rather than any inherent weaknesses in managerial practice itself.

These writers have attempted to locate a new approach to understanding prison managers in a duality between agency and structure. From this perspective

managerialism is a constraining and enabling structure; managers do not simply have their freedom of choice restricted but can creatively engage in order to achieve desired ends. These works illustrate how managers do not robotically conform but they can enforce and ignore rules as well as having some choice about the degree and rigour to which they act. There is latitude for interpretation and adaptation, which in itself acts to shape and reshape the way rules and practices are realised. This suggests that prison managers are not overwhelmed and controlled by either the global hegemony of managerial practice or the local grip of traditional occupational cultures but instead there is space for individual choice.

Rethinking organisational culture

The issue of organisational culture has been discussed in relation to various groups within the criminal justice system including the police (Skolnick, 1966, Waddington 1999, Loftus 2011), prison officers (Crawley 2004, Liebling 2007, Arnold, Liebling and Tait 2007) and youth offending teams (Souhami 2007). It is also a staple of management texts, both academic and popular (e.g. Peters and Waterman 1982, Schein 1988, Mullins 2002). However, the notion of ‘culture’ has significant ambiguity and what it means is contested (Parker, M. 2000). This section will briefly summarise the different ways in which culture can be understood and discuss why this is important in understanding the key issues being explored in this study of prison managers.

It has been argued by Joanne Martin (1992) that there are three distinct but inter-related perspectives from which organisations can be viewed: integration, differentiation and fragmentation. Each perspective will be discussed below.

The integration perspective has three defining characteristics: all cultural manifestations mentioned are interpreted as consistently reinforcing the same themes; all members of the organization are said to share in the organization-wide consensus; and the culture is described as a realm where all is clear. This is

a world in which ambiguity is excluded and culture is seen in monolithic terms. An example of this is Watson (2003) who describes culture as a “set of meanings and values shared by members of an organisation that defines the appropriate ways for people to think and behave” (p.83). Such a formulation presents culture as clearly defined, understood and uncontested. Such ‘functionalist’ accounts (Parker 2000) do not account for conflict or multiple realities. This can particularly be seen in descriptions of traditional police or prison officer cultures, which have focussed on dominant features and constructed ideal types (e.g. Liebling and Price 2001), characteristics (e.g. Kauffman 1988) or ‘working personality’ (Skolnick 1966).

The differentiation perspective describes cultural manifestations as something inconsistent (for example, when managers say one thing and do another). Consensus occurs only within the boundaries of subcultures, which often conflict with each other. In this model, culture is seen as a dispute between large sub-cultures or a dominant and sub-culture. This reflects to some degree Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of ‘field struggles’ between contested ideologies. However, this reduces this to a dualism between opposing choices rather than emphasising diversity, inconsistency and dynamic inter-relationships. This approach can be particularly seen in the ways that criminal justice managers (Rutherford 1993a) or prison managers specifically (Bryans 2007) have been said to fall into discrete and competing categories. It can also be seen in the way that some writers such as David Wilson (2000) have suggested that prison managers heroically grapple with the leviathan of traditional prison officer culture. From this perspective, there is a competitive diversity of values, attitudes and priorities that characterise occupational cultures.

The fragmentation perspective focuses on ambiguity as the essence of organizational culture. Consensus and discord are issue-specific and constantly fluctuating. No stable organization-wide or sub-cultural consensus exists. Clear consistencies and inconsistencies are rare. This is similar to the view of Martin Parker (2000), who sees organisations as in a state of perpetual tension,

competition and flux. From this perspective, organisational members have multiple identities for example, gender, location, profession, particular building, management/worker, and individuals may emphasise different aspects at different times. However, Parker does argue that consensus emerges around what the important issues are within an organisation, but not about how they should be approached, as a result, he suggests that culture can be characterised as a “contested local organization of generalities” (Ibid p.214). This is a view that has started to emerge from recent work on prison staff (e.g. Crawley 2004) and managers (e.g. Cheliotis 2006), which reveal a degree of individuality, discretion and diversity of approach.

The particular contribution of Martin (1992) is to assert that in order to understand organisational culture it is necessary to deploy all three perspectives so as to reveal the dynamic interplay between them. Equally importantly, it is essential that culture is not constructed as an insular, hermetic phenomenon. Organisational culture is both influenced by and is an influence upon wider society. This includes the importation of ideas about issues such as gender and ethnicity but also the spill over of organisational, economic rationality into social life. By taking multiple perspectives, the idea of organisational culture starts to reflect the relationship between structure and agency. The different perspectives encompass actors deploying choice and individuality, but also the ways that dominant ideas shape behaviour and the ways in which individuals collectivise in order to co-operate or conflict over issues and ideas. These perspectives can provide a lens through which culture can be seen as both an outcome of the relationship between agency and structure, but also a medium through which it is expressed.

The issue of organisational culture raises a number of questions when viewed from multiple perspectives. What are the values, attitudes, interests and practices that shape the working lives of prison managers, including global practices such as managerialism and local occupational cultures and practices? What are the issues of conflict between managers or between managers and other

organisational groups? How do these forces influence managers in varying ways across hierarchy and role? How do managers make sense of these competing pressures and sustain a personal narrative or identity? These questions attempt to reveal the dualities that prison managers navigate between individuality and conformity, between global and local forces, and between agency and structure.

A new approach

A new approach to the study of prison managers is being proposed which attempts to capture something of the duality that Giddens described in his theory of structuration. From this perspective, prison management is not a set of rigid prescriptions or untrammelled individualism, but is instead a complex set of negotiations. This new approach attempts to capture something of the kaleidoscopic variety of pressures and forces that play upon prison managers and emphasise how they individually and collectively respond to that. It also attempts to reveal the dialectical and interconnected relationship between global and local practices as interpreted and mediated through individuals as micro-agents (Giddens 1991, Kennedy 2010). This approach offers a more nuanced and complex approach to understanding the everyday world of prison managers.

Conclusion

A new approach to understanding prison managers has been proposed that focuses on the dualities of agency and structure and global and local. This is used as a theoretical basis for exploring the working lives of prison managers in the era of managerialism, and is particularly concerned with how this is manifested in the way that managers engage with the local structures of traditional prison officer occupational cultures and global structures of managerialism. This final section outlines the key questions and area of inquiry that will be used in order to systematically reveal these inter-relationships that characterise the late modern prison and the practice of prison managers. Although aspects of structure, agency and culture are discussed separately below, they are not intended to be seen as

separate, instead it is intended that by examining in detail different aspects of prison management, the inter-relationships, overlap and dualities can be illustrated and explored.

The first way in which prison management can be considered is through the technologies of managerialism, in particular performance management and monitoring. These are a prominent part of the globalised practices of managerialism and their introduction in prisons has been of particular importance (Armstrong 2007). In this sense they provide the example *par excellence* of the transformations that have been said to have taken place in prisons. The task is not simply to describe those tools or to discuss them in narrow instrumental terms, but instead to explore them in a social context. How do prison managers view these measures? How often do they use them and for what purposes? Are all management measures viewed equally or not, and if not, why are there differences? How far do they feel constrained, or stuck in what Weber (1914) famously described as an 'iron cage' and how far do they feel empowered by using these as a means to attain power and express themselves in creative ways reflecting their values and individuality? How has this affected their sense of personal and professional identity? This will also consider how different individuals or groups may have different or similar views about these measures and how these play out wider contested values about prisons. In asking these questions, the research attempts to better understand the operation of managerial structures as a human experience and to understand how these structures are mediated through local circumstances.

The second area considers the individuality and subjectivity of prison managers, as expressed through management style, the use of discretion, acts of resistance and uses of power. How are these acts of agency used? How far are they individualistic and idiosyncratic and how far are they informed by other factors, both local and global? For what purposes is individuality exercised? In what ways are prison managers given free rein over these areas and in what ways are they constrained or directed to act? Is their discretion patterned through formal or

informal expectations and practices? This will attempt to probe into the ways in which acts of agency reflect both individual choices and are shaped by structures such as rules, processes and culture, taking on discernable characteristics.

The third area to be examined is the role of traditional culture on prison managers. What are the elements of occupational practice that are replicated across groups? How do different elements of occupational cultures come into conflict? How do individuals make sense of those conflicts and tensions? This is intended to reveal the dualities of agency and structure and global and local as played out across critical aspects of management practice including the approach to staff, teams and prisoners.

The final area that will be explored relates to the relationship between prison management and wider social power and inequality. This will examine some long-standing and embedded issues such as race and gender. This will also involve looking at non-operational managers who in traditional approaches towards prison management are marginalised and excluded by the dominant occupational group, but have been given greater prominence as part of the global managerial agenda. This section will also look at those who suffer from ill-health whilst at work and are therefore vulnerable. In examining these areas an attempt is being made to consider the effects of contemporary prison management as situated in a wider social context.

The aims of these questions are to explore the world of prison managers from a sociological perspective, to understand this as a lived and living experience, located within the broader social transformations of late modernity. This will provide a novel and more nuanced exploration of contemporary prison managers than has been previously attempted.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The origins of this research lie in my own personal experiences. With the intention of extending my interest in social justice into a career, I joined the Prison Service on a fast track management programme in 1996 and in 1999 became a governor grade. During my time managing prisons I have wrestled with complex and unresolved moral dilemmas. How far can I progress issues of social justice within prisons and how far does that have a broader impact on society? Does the structure of society mean that imprisonment merely entrenches, legitimates and enforces power and inequality? What is my role as a public ‘expert’ on criminal justice issues – to advocate on behalf of an optimistic approach to prisons or to problematize it and argue for its abolition? The origin of this research was therefore internal rather than external and was driven by a desire to explore and understand in a more systematic way my own working world and indeed myself. From the outset the research and my role as a working prison manager have been inextricably linked.

This chapter sets out the research methodology and the problems of carrying out ‘insider’ research. The style differs from the rest of this thesis as it provides a reflexive account and therefore necessarily involves the use of the first person. I will attempt to explore the technical aspects of conducting the research as well as systematically examining the tensions, problems and challenges that I experienced.

As has been noted previously in relation to prison research, it is essential to understand “the precise position from which it is written” (Sparks et al 1996 p.344) in order that the power relations between researcher, subject and sponsors can be appreciated. This is particularly important where the researcher is, like me, a prison employee (ibid). This dual position of being both an insider and a

researcher is a constant thread running through this methodological account and is essential to understanding this research.

This chapter will start by setting out the background to the research including how the topic was identified and what the main questions were. It then goes on to describe the main research strategies deployed. There then follows an account of the field work, starting with gaining access and entering the research sites. The account of the field work continues with a discussion of the problems and challenges including discussions of identities, power and confidentiality. The chapter concludes with the process of leaving the field.

Starting the research

In order to explore the working lives of prison managers, I decided that an ethnographic approach was required, one that was “grounded in a commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation” (Atkinson et al 2001 p.4). There were some specific features of both the subject that had been identified and the setting in which it was taking place that made this approach relevant. In relation to the subject, ethnography has been identified as being particularly relevant to exploratory or ‘pathbreaking’ research (Fielding 2001) and this project fitted that in as much as it involved a relatively unexplored area with a broad agenda. The nature of the research was to address the lived experiences of work, including how rules and routines were understood and enacted. Ethnography of work has been able to explore this whilst also linking this with broader sociological questions such as the relationship between agency and structure (Smith 2001), organisational and occupational culture (Frow and Morris 2000, Parker, M. 2000) and issues of power and inequality (Smith 2001). Ethnography also has an established track record in prisons (e.g. Sparks et al 1996, Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004 and Crewe 2009), and specifically in researching prison staff (Liebling and Price 2001, Crawley 2004). This work has revealed the complex social interactions that shape the prison world, shed light

upon what are often obscured and hidden aspects of the institution, and has connected this with wider sociological problems (Wacquant 2002).

I considered who the subjects of the research should be, in particular whether it should be restricted as it has been in other studies to those in charge of prisons, the governing governors (e.g. Bryans 2007). However, as was discussed in the previous chapter, this focus has led to an over-emphasis on these individuals and a representation of them as heroic shapers of prison life. Such a view, I have argued obscures the deeper social processes taking place in the organisation. I therefore concluded that what was required was a broader perspective encompassing other managers including governor grades, uniformed managers (senior officers and principal officers) and non-uniformed managers (such as those working in finance, human resources, learning & skills and psychology). This approach reflected changes in prison management generally where there has been an expansion in the importance and role of non-uniformed managers as greater managerial and specialist expertise has emerged (e.g. see Crewe, Bennett and Wahidin 2008) and there have been attempts to develop first-line and middle managers so as to deepen managerial control and influence (e.g. see Brookes, Smith and Bennett 2008). This resonates with observations from the world of work more generally, in particular how strategies have emerged designed to control the actions and subjectivities of managers deep into organisations (e.g. Rose 1999, O'Malley 2004). Whilst uniformed managers such as senior officers have previously been situated within studies of prison officers (e.g. Crawley 2004), they do undertake line management responsibilities, have increasingly had to take on responsibilities for the delivery of key performance targets and audits, and have been subjected to increasing management scrutiny. It therefore seemed appropriate to also consider them as managers. By focussing on a wider and deeper range of managers than previous studies of prison management, the intention was to open up a vista onto the penetration of new ways of working into prison life and illuminate wider social processes.

The data was generated in two category C men's prisons of broadly similar size and age. These types of prisons were selected as they represent the bulk of the prison estate and could therefore be considered broadly typical of imprisonment in the UK (Crewe 2009). Part of the reason for choosing two sites was pragmatic, it was about the time that was available and striking a balance between examining more than one site in order to strengthen the case for generalisation, whilst not diluting the experience in individual sites to the point where it lacked depth. I was also interested in the idea of local cultures and how these intersected with global developments, immersion in a locality was therefore necessary in order to access this. This design also had a theoretical explanation as it was intended to provide intrinsic case studies, using them in order to draw wider generalizations (Stake 2000).

Having set out how the broad research agenda was established, it is now necessary to turn to the specific research strategies that were deployed.

Research strategies

This section will provide a largely descriptive account of the research strategies deployed and the process of ethical consideration. A more analytical account of the research process will be delayed whilst this necessary foundation is laid.

The central approach taken in ethnography is the use of participant observation (Fielding 2001). However, approaches to observation vary along a spectrum from participant to non-participant and even within one study, such as this one, the role and identity of the researcher will be unstable and vary according to circumstances at different moments. A range of other strategies are also deployed in ethnographic research such as formal and informal interviewing, systematic counting, and examining documents. Such a wide range of strategies are now being used that it has been suggested that there is "a carnivalesque profusion of methods, perspectives and theoretical justifications for ethnographic work" (Atkinson et al 2001 p.3).

In this particular study there were three sources of data generated in the two sites; observations of managers in their day to day roles, formal interviews with them and documentary evidence. Each of these will be discussed below.

Observations require the researcher to attempt to engage in and understand the everyday world of the people being studied, including the symbolic meaning they apply to experiences and patterns of behaviour (Fielding 2001). As Goffman (1961) stated:

“any group of persons – prisoners, primitives, pilots or patients – develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and normal once you get close to it, and...a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject.” (p.ix-x)

The observation stage lasted for approximately three months in each site, comprising 31 days in each. Most days lasted from around eight in the morning until half past three in the afternoon. The days would usually start with attendance at the ‘morning meeting’ where each day the managers on duty would meet to review the previous day including any incidents, plan for the day ahead and account for any staff absenteeism. This was useful for finding out what the important events in the prison were, generating issues for discussion and maintaining visibility and relationships with managers across the sites. From that meeting I would usually have pre-arranged to shadow an individual for the day, watching them carry out their duties such as attending or chairing meetings, completing paperwork, meeting with staff and prisoners, and carrying out ‘rounds’ where they toured their areas of responsibility and completed management checks. In these roles I was able to observe and discuss their interactions with others, decision making processes, styles, and the constraints placed upon them. Given that most of these observations were with people I had not met before, it was only natural that I asked background questions and informally interviewed them about themselves and their role (Fielding and

Thomas 2001). Occasionally where managers were together in groups I was able to ask them questions collectively, which could be described as spontaneous focus groups or group interviews (Fontana and Frey 2000). During these observations I was also able to integrate observations of particular processes including adjudications on prisoners who had committed offences against prison discipline, early release and recategorisation decisions about prisoners. I was also able to observe audits being carried out. On a number of occasions in both sites I attended not to shadow individuals but instead to attend specific meetings including the senior management team meetings, and meetings with the local branch of the Prison Officers Association. I would take notes throughout the day in an exercise book that I carried with me and at the end of each day I would write these up in the form of field notes (Van Maanen 1988).

This was followed by interviews with 30 people in each site. These interviews focussed on managers, but also incorporated a random sample of five officers in each prison in order to consider their perspective and the impact of management. Due to the smaller numbers, the governing governor (in overall charge of the establishment), all governor grades (senior operational managers), and principal officers (uniformed middle managers) were interviewed. Most non-operational senior management team members were also interviewed (such as heads of learning and skills, finance, psychology, regimes, or human resources), although some such as the finance managers were only interviewed informally in the observation phase. With senior officers (uniformed first line managers), there were too many to interview them all and therefore a sample was interviewed. These were selected opportunistically based upon who was available at the time, although in each prison this did include all senior officers that were members of minority ethnic groups and at least one female. The interviews were semi-structured and the questions were informed both by the literature review and the observation phase. The questions included the backgrounds and motivations of prison managers as well as aspects of their work including the role of performance management, the use of discretion, models of good management,

and how they were influenced by the internal dynamics of the organisation including prison staff culture and external factors such as politics and society. I also explored issues of power and inequality by looking at gender, race and ill-health. These interviews therefore followed up in detail the main areas of interest and focused interviewees on the critical areas (Cohen and Taylor 1980). The interview schedule was not formally piloted but was designed and checked through supervision, then redundancy eliminated during early interviews. The interviews were tape recorded and no one had any objections to this or expressed any concerns. This may have been because the process of talking to people frequently and about a range of different subjects in the observation phase built trust (Sparks 2002) but is more likely to be that many people in prisons are familiar with research, issues of confidentiality and have been tape recorded at some stage during their career. Following the interviews, I made a verbatim transcript of the interview.

The third source was documentary data. At each site, documentary evidence was generated including publicly available performance information such as KPTs, audits, staff surveys, measuring the quality of prison life results, independent monitoring board reports, inspection reports. Internal information was also collected where this was relevant including the minutes of meetings, local information notices and personnel data. With such information providing an 'official' portrait, there were clearly issues regarding authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (MacDonald 2001) and therefore the documents were not in themselves considered conclusive. However, they were useful for providing that 'official' perspective, which could be contrasted with the full account of what happened in meetings. This could also be used in order to triangulate some data (Denzin 1978) and clarify issues.

Ethics

There are a number of formal ethical frameworks available in order to assist with the design, planning, undertaking and reviewing of research (e.g. Murphy and

Dingwall 2001, Christians 2000). One of the most widely recognised is that produced by the Economic and Social Research Council (2006). This covers six key principles, which are:

- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality.
- Research staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.
- The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.
- Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion.
- Harm to research participants must be avoided.
- The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.

Ethical issues cannot be simply ticked off but instead are organic, complex and ongoing issues, as will be discussed later in this chapter. However, it is necessary to account for some of these formal issues in the planning and design of research. In this case, the project was subject to approval and supervision by the School of Law at Edinburgh University. An information sheet was produced describing the researcher, the research, how confidentiality applied and the uses of the research. This specifically highlighted my position as a serving prison manager. This form was given to any individuals who were shadowed during the observation stage and to all participants in interviews. In other situations during the observation stage, such as when I encountered people interacting with those I was shadowing or when I attended meetings, I would verbally introduce myself as a researcher undertaking a project on prison managers. Those who were observed during shadowing or who participated in interviews also signed a consent form. This

explained that they could withhold consent, or withdraw it at a later point should they wish to do so.

The contributions of participants to this study were stored securely physically and electronically and where used are anonymised. They are coded by establishment, by grade and then assigned a number within that group. The two establishments were assigned letters, one W and the other S. Each participant is then identified by role as officer, senior officer, principal officer, governor grade, or non-operational manager. There were sufficient numbers of staff in the officer, senior officer and principal groups in order that contributions would be anonymous. The governor grades including the governing governor and deputy governor were grouped together in order to reduce the risk of their being identifiable. Similarly, non-operational managers were grouped together rather than being identified as 'finance manager', 'HR manager' and so on, for the same reason. As a result, each contribution is identified by an establishment letter, grade and then an allocated number, so for example 'S5 senior officer' indicates the fifth senior officer at one of the prisons. Field notes are also indicated with an establishment letter, the letters 'FN' to indicate that they are derived from field notes and a number to indicate the day. For example 'WFN 30' indicates field notes from the 30th day at one of the sites.

There were three occasions when individuals may have been identifiable, all of these are in chapter 7. The first was in the discussion of ethnicity as in each prison there was only one manager from a minority ethnic group, the second was in the discussion of Heads of Learning and Skills as there was only one in each prison, and the third was the discussion of female managers as there were low numbers of female managers at each grade. In relation to the managers from minority ethnic groups and the Heads of Learning and Skills, further consent was sought from the individuals and the details were obscured to reduce the risk of identification. With the female managers there was less risk and therefore it was considered sufficient that the details were obscured.

So far, there has been a descriptive account of the research strategies and the ethical framework applied. However, as was noted earlier this is a more dynamic, organic and complex issue that has so far been presented. It is now necessary to embark upon a more analytical and reflexive account of undertaking the research.

Entering the field

Gaining access to prisons can be “a time consuming and problematic process” (Smith and Wincup p.335) and certainly there have been many examples of researchers being denied access or having their ambitions curtailed in the process of negotiating access. However, as an insider negotiating access was less time consuming and was not problematic in the same way.

Indeed, gaining entry to the prisons was straightforward. Personal contact was made with the senior managers in the two prisons, the research explained and they immediately consented. Neither of the Governors made any requests other than asking for sensitivity as to the time and resources that would be required to support the research. I was not asked by either of the Governors for a formal Prison Service research application, although this was completed and forwarded to them. Although not directly articulated or explored, this ease of access arguably reflected a range of assumptions that could have been made about me and the work. This included that I may have been seen as being a recipient of benevolent comradely support but equally that could be accompanied by an unspoken assumption that would be repaid through a benign set of findings. I may also have appeared less threatening, more predictable and controllable than an outsider, in other words seen as less of a risk.

One of the sites selected was a late replacement; originally another prison had been identified as a research site but after the untimely death of the Governor I decided that it would not be appropriate to conduct the research there, although it had been made clear that the offer was still open to me. Another prison was then approached as an alternative but the Governor there had only recently taken up

post and felt that he did not want to have such research conducted until he was more established. This did expose that ‘insider’ research was not necessarily viewed as entirely benign, particularly by those who felt vulnerable or insecure due to circumstances.

On entering the research sites, I attended a weekly senior management team meeting and briefly introduced myself and the research. Both Governors made an effort to send a message regarding co-operation and openness. One did this directly by stating that everyone could be honest, whereas the other made a risqué joke and when challenged by a member of the team about making such comments in front of a “guest”, he responded by saying that anything could be said in front of me. This senior level sponsorship came from my being an ‘insider’.

Entry into the field contrasted with other accounts of gaining research access; official barriers were easier to navigate and there was some instant and senior sponsorship. However, as shall be explored, gaining this initial support with the absence of overt constraint did not describe the whole picture and indeed the process of undertaking the research raised complex issues about identity and power.

Conducting the fieldwork: Problems and challenges

This section will explore some of the problems and challenges of carrying out the research. In particular it will draw out the ways in which my position as an ‘insider’ shaped the research process. Whilst some other research studies by insiders have simply stated their personal experience and affiliations and treated it as a declaration of interests (e.g. Bryans 2007), I will attempt to provide a more reflexive account of conducting ‘insider’ research. This section broadly covers three issues: identities; power; and confidentiality and interventions.

Identities

Identity is the idea that individuals have a concept of the self, a sense of who they are and their place in the world, what has been described as the “sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives” (Giddens 1991 p.5). In the process of carrying out this research there were shifts in my own sense of identity, but there were also responses from subjects regarding who they thought I was and how they understood my identity. These two aspects will be discussed below.

My own sense of identity was intimately bound up in the research methodology. In classical anthropology, the detached observer coming into the particular field for the first time was seen as the purest expression of this method, whilst those who were ‘insiders’ were seen as having insufficient distance and detachment (Angrosino and Mays de Perez 2000). However, this view has been eroded with the development of what is called ‘anthropology at home’ where researchers enter more familiar fields (Jackson 1987, Okely 1987) and indeed the use of insiders has even been deliberately used as a form of empowerment for those being studied (Sarsby 1984). For an ethnographer studying a field they are familiar with, the challenge is identified as achieving sufficient critical distance, a process of “getting *out*, of distancing themselves from their far-too-familiar surroundings” (Lofgren 1987). In that way a position is sought which is intimate enough to gain access, empathise and understand but at the same time sufficiently detached in order to reflect and analyse, what has been described as walking a tight rope between “empathy and repulsion, home and strangeness, seeing and not seeing” (Sarsby 1984). It is this position between distance and intimacy that has been described as the essence of ethnographic fieldwork; “it is out of this experience of being simultaneously an insider and an outsider that creative insight is generated” (Fielding 2001 p.151).

There were some ways in which I tried to create distance through the research design itself. In particular, I selected prisons that I was not familiar with and therefore they and the people who worked there were largely unknown to me. By

having sites that are separate from my direct personal experience, this helped me to see things anew and to feel some unfamiliarity in a familiar environment (Strathern 1987). The planning of the research and background reading gave some shape and structure to the observations, shifting me from my work identity or at least providing me with a reflexive appreciation of it, and helping me to view the environment from a sociological rather than a managerial perspective. The use of field notes, the constant carrying of a notebook and frequently writing observations and entries also anchored me in the purpose for which I was there. In these ways I was trying to manufacture a sense of disciplined subjectivity (Wolcott 2005).

There was also a more intimate, intense and personal experience that I went through in order to achieve a sense of detachment. I can now: “reflect on the self that [I] had to become in order to pass in the setting, and how that temporary, setting-specific self differs from the person that [I] normally [am]” (Fielding 2001 p.151). The most visible and outward manifestation of the changes in my identity were in my personal appearance. Before entering the first research site I had to decide what I was going to wear. This was a more challenging and complex issue than simple vanity. This struck at the heart of my identity and the change that I was undertaking. Clothes are not merely for discretion or warmth but are also related to identity: “Essentially people use clothes to make two basic statements: first, this is the sort of person I am; and secondly, this is what I am doing” (Ross 2008 p.6-7). In prisons, clothing has a particular meaning and is used in order to communicate distinctions of rank and purpose. There is a long history of prisoner clothing being used as a reflection of changing penal philosophies from the uniformity of arrowed and striped clothing to the liberalism of prisoners wearing their own clothes, and on to new punitive practices using high visibility clothes (Ash 2010). For staff also, the use of prison uniform and military style insignias of rank are used in order to convey a sense of order, status and discipline, with governor grades distinguished by the fact that they wear suits, sometimes even being referred to as ‘suits’ and promotion into their ranks being described as ‘getting your suit’. My decision about what clothes

to wear therefore took on a particularly potent texture and felt that it went to the essence of both who I had been and who I was attempting to become.

I decided to wear casual but reasonably smart clothing but avoid suits and ties. This decision was intended to convey a difference from my previous identity as a prison manager and to mark myself out as someone who was not in the prison as an employee. This change in status and role did not go unnoticed by others. One officer directly asked me what it was like going from a “high powered job” to coming in speaking to staff wearing a t-shirt and jeans (I was wearing a polo shirt and chinos, but the question was still a good one). Other staff, including senior managers did occasionally comment on my casual attire, usually in a light-hearted way, but also in sufficient numbers to indicate how important this was in defining my change in role and perceived status.

I also found myself going through changes that indicated a personal journey I was undertaking. I became increasingly comfortable in casual clothing and increasingly uncomfortable in a suit, so that those occasions outside of the research when I had to wear a tie, I found it strangulating and almost impossible to wear. I grew my hair longer, and even at one stage sported a beard. The way that research can have an impact on the researcher and is manifested in personal appearance was graphically illustrated on the cover of Malcolm Young’s *An Inside Job* (1991), where two photographs of the author contrasted the clean cut police officer with the hippyish researcher. These changes are not superficial, but reflect a deeper questioning taking place as a result of the temporary role in the field. Young observed that there is an intense, intimate and personal experience, a “radical reflexivity” (ibid p.25), that is required in order to create the distance required:

“It requires a conscious act of experiencing a reflection of yourself and of how you have become what you are. It can be quite painful, for the insider is studying his own social navel, with the potential always present that he will recognize this to be only one of a number of arbitrary possibilities and perhaps also find

that many practices are built on the flimsiest of moral precepts”
(ibid p.9).

In my experience, the research led me to question my profession and my own role, reflect on the morality of practices I engaged in, choices I made and accommodations I accepted. These are not always comfortable considerations. I particularly questioned the role of prison in society; its role in maintaining and reinforcing power and inequality (for example see Bennett 2008b). This also led me to question my role as a prison manager, as well as those of other prison managers, whether I and they reinforce, resist or ameliorate these conditions. This questioning is difficult but is also creative and rewarding as part of the process of exploring the field from a space that is both intimate but also sufficiently detached in order to facilitate meaningful observation.

Whilst these changes in my own identity mark the journey I was undertaking, no researcher acts in isolation. Those who are the subject of the research also have a sense or perception of my identity. This is often intertwined with organisational culture and structures as it is related to any personal identity I projected. There are seven predominant ways in which I felt that I was perceived by those in the field.

The first is as a *colleague*. As has been described earlier, the fact that I was an insider meant that access was easier and also meant that I understood the language, acronyms and technicalities of processes in prisons. This is useful in enabling staff to speak to me with some degree of confidence that their perceptions would be understood and empathised with. I did not face any resistance as an ‘outsider’ or have to undertake any rites of passage in order to be accepted. In fact, that acceptance was often instant, for example one senior officer went as far to describe me in a team briefing as “one of us”. This sense of shared experiences and belonging did create some challenges in focussing on the research issues. Some outside researchers can adopt a position of naivety which would allow them to explore what were taken for granted assumptions and

practices. I had to manufacture this sense by explaining to people that although I was familiar with the technicalities or mechanics of prison management, my role as a researcher meant that I was looking at it from a different perspective. Generously, everyone was willing to do this, although it did illustrate that the first perception that many people had of me was as a fellow member of prison staff rather than a researcher.

The second identity is that of *superior*. As those I was interacting with knew my background and previous roles, some were conscious that I held a formal rank and status within the organisation. For example, occasionally I would be called “Sir” or “Governor” and one interviewee asked “is it okay to call you ‘Jamie’ since you’re an ex-Dep⁶?”. Such forms of address convey a sense of the importance of status and hierarchy within the organisation. However, such forms of address also perform a function for those who are using them, acting as signals that they should be cautious about what they say and do. A third, and related, identity is that of *expert*. I was sometimes asked by individuals or in meetings to comment on policies, practices or provide feedback. I studiously avoided doing this, always explaining that I was there in a particular role of researcher. This was never pushed by the questioners and was accepted on the face of it. However, this did disclose a degree to which participants were aware that I was not a naive observer but instead carried a professional history and knowledge.

The fourth identity is that of *mentee*. Some managers, notably some who were older, more experienced and particularly those that were more senior than me in the organisational hierarchy, adopted a mentoring role towards me. They were willing to spend additional time with me, ensuring that I had support and access, willing to share their thoughts and experiences and also offer unsolicited advice on my future career. This benevolent interest was helpful and appreciated but was also an assertion of hierarchy and control.

⁶ i.e. Deputy Governor

These first four identities are linked in as much as they all relate to hierarchical position, rank or status within the organisation. They reveal that whilst I was not in a formal position, I was perceived by many to carry residual status and identity as a prison manager.

The fifth identity is *auditor*. Some managers asked about how the outcomes of my research will be used within the organisation. Although I explained that this is not the purpose of nature of the work, some managers found this difficult to comprehend. For example, many people asked about or referred to the ‘report’ I was writing, a term that implied that it has some official purpose. Another example is where one governor grade approached me anxiously saying that he had been told I was completing “a cost-benefit comparison” between the two prisons. Although I had previously explained the nature of the research and reiterated this, there remained a residual anxiety from that individual, reflecting a concern about the purpose and uses to which the research may be put by the organisation. Some managers also responded to the research by putting on a performance as if they were being tested and were anxious to pass. These individuals would often use management phrases and clichés in order to respond to questions and would constantly seek to give positive examples of what they had done, claim credit for innovations and provide ‘spin’. Given that I had spent some considerable time in the field by the time I carried out the interviews, these distortions were relatively easy to detect and were themselves telling about the individuals and sometimes about wider prison management. Nevertheless they also reveal one of the ways in which I and my research were understood and approached by the participants.

The sixth identity is as a *curiosity*. For some people, I was difficult to understand and to pigeon hole and they appeared bemused as to what I was doing and why I was doing it. This was revealed in some of the comments that were made about my personal appearance as described above. Indeed, one senior manager, during the stage that I had longer hair and a beard, described me in a joking way as “Che Guevara”. Whilst this may just have been a reference to my appearance, it may

also have indicated that beyond curiosity, there may have been suspicion or discomfort about my motives or that I deviated from and subverted cultural expectations by undertaking this research role.

The final way in which I was understood was as a *researcher*. However, this was not discrete from my organisational identity and in many ways was a manufactured identity. There were some managers who had themselves undertaken research and were able to discuss meaningfully the research process and my role. They particularly understood what I was doing, how I was doing it and some of the complexities. As the research progressed, other managers also seemed to accept that I was there in a particular role and started to become protective of that. For example, when I was asked in meetings to comment on issues, other managers would step in on my behalf explaining that I was there as a researcher. Whilst this may have also been about protecting their own status and position, the fact that this appeared to happen more as time went on, indicated that this at least in part reflected that they accepted my role as researcher. However, for some there was an inherent problem with being a manager and a researcher. On more than one occasion I was asked penetrating questions about my motives and any personal or career advantage that I may accrue from conducting the research. One manager took a different angle and asked candidly whether it was possible for me to be unbiased given my background and describing how they felt judged by my observing them. My identity as a researcher appeared manufactured, incomplete and inextricably bound up with my organisational position, although it did form part of how I was understood and viewed by others.

The preceding discussion has attempted to unravel some of the complex issues of identity in conducting ethnographic research. Every researcher imports aspects of their existing identity and it is not possible to be a pure, detached observer. However, it is essential that there is reflexivity and sensitivity to the ways in which ones own identity shapes observations and understanding and how it affects those participating in the research.

Power

Power in its most general terms refers to the production of causal effects (Scott 2001). This is not only a subject of this research, but is an ethical and practical problem in its conduct. As an ‘insider’ I am someone who potentially holds power, but I am also the subject of power, and potentially the medium for it. There is therefore a particular issue about the potential effects of the research for myself and for others.

I will start by discussing the ways in which I may have been the subject of power. This has been described as the “special problem” of prison research where access and funding are restricted and therefore there are risks regarding the control and shaping of research (Sparks et al 1996 p.339). There are both formal and informal ways in which organisations can attempt to shape and control research outcomes (Whyte 2000, King 2000). However, the argument that organisations will overtly control research can be overplayed and it should be recognised that the process of gaining access and conducting research is negotiated, meaning that the researcher themselves exercise significant power (Hammersley 1995, King 2000). In my specific case, the research was funded initially by the Leadership and Development team of the Prison Service as an individually negotiated personal development opportunity. The head of that particular team was keen to promote innovative development opportunities and was willing to make funds available to support this. Although that individual asked me to include in the research some analysis of data that had already been generated on prison managers using Myers-Briggs personality assessments, this was quickly forgotten as that individual moved on from that role and it has not been part of the research project. Each year I have had to resubmit an application for funding which has asked for little more than an update on progress. As has already been described, access to the prisons was straightforward without any attempt to alter or shape the research agenda. There was not therefore the

intimate scrutiny and collaboration in establishing the research agenda that have been discussed elsewhere (Sparks et al 1996, Smith and Wincup 2000).

During the conduct of the research there were not any overt attempts to control or shape what was happening. There were rare comments made including an offer to keep a senior manager “informed” about a prison being researched, occasional requests to ignore or overlook comments that may have been seen as inappropriate or unprofessional (‘don’t write that down’, ‘you’re not making a note of that?’), and a prodding desire that the outcome of the research would be ‘favourable’ to a particular prison. However, these comments were never made with a sense of any meaningful pressure and were never taken seriously by me or followed up by those who made them. Later questions about the research by those people were satisfied (or deterred) by general feedback about which stage the research was at or sociological concepts that may be relevant, no information was directly asked for or disclosed that would have breached confidentiality. Similar comments frequently crop up in methodological accounts, and should not be considered indicative of any serious attempt to corrupt or distort the research findings, but were instead a reflection of the natural uncertainty and nervousness of research subjects who surrendered considerable power to a researcher.

However, overt power is not the only way in which control can be exercised and there are often soft forms of power that achieve the same outcomes. There are more subtle ways in which the values of funders and researchers can become inexorably interlinked through their relationship (Cheek 2000) and this can be a particular issue where, like me, they are an employee (Sparks et al 1996). I have acquired a certain amount of organisational trust and have accepted the obligations and responsibilities that come with that, having occupied senior posts and represented the Prison Service externally and in the media (see Warren 2006 for a particularly insipid puff piece). However, I have also cultivated an alternative identity as a commentator on prison issues, being editor of the *Prison Service Journal* since 2004, a member of the editorial board of the *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Criminal Justice Matters*, the author of a number of

articles and the editor of three books. Some of these articles have been critical of prisons generally or Prison Service policy in particular. As such, I have a developed and practiced critical appreciation of the work that I do and the field in which I operate. This detachment was reinforced through supervision and whilst the final thesis is not polemic, it does include observations that are critical of or are at odds with official accounts.

At the time the initial funding was agreed and the research initiated, a prison governor having this kind of hinterland did not appear to cause any organisational concern, perhaps because these articles were not widely read and perceived as being safely contained in academic journals. However, in 2008 the attitude towards publications changed following publicity given to a pamphlet published by a prison governor grade which criticised government policy on knife crime (Marfleet 2008). This resulted in rigorous enforcement of the rule that prison staff had to have publications authorised by the organisation prior to publication. At the time this happened I had a number of articles in press and was the subject of a formal investigation and disciplinary proceedings as a result of the publication of one of the articles, which was critical of Conservative Party crime policy (Bennett 2008a). This shift in attitudes towards research and publications did not result in any direct interference in this project but, it does mean that any subsequent publications will be produced in an environment that is potentially more controlling and punitive.

As an insider, my experience as the subject of power was different from that of external researchers. In the design, funding, approval and fieldwork stage, there was an absence of formal control and I was able to proceed with minimal scrutiny. Indeed, the most striking feature has been the absence of control rather than the exercise of it. However, at the other end of the process, the publication stage, there is more significant power available and the potential for the exercise of control by the organisation is more pronounced.

I will now turn to the ways in which I may have been the facilitator of power. My intention was to carry out research on prison managers, who are people who themselves hold significant power over others. In his work, Bryans (2007 p.6) described prison governors as a powerful “criminal justice elite”. Pahl (1980) has argued that sociology has largely ignored the powerful in favour of the powerless and addressing this deficit could have significant value:

“If the everyday worlds with which we are most familiar are mainly those of the underdogs or, at best, the middle dogs, we are forced to fall back on the accounts of non-sociologists for an understanding of the top dogs...If one argues that our understanding of the powerless has been greatly improved through sociological analysis, surely our understanding of the powerful could also be improved” (p.130-1).

However, are prison managers really a powerful elite? Gouldner (1973) also argued in favour of undertaking sociology of the powerful but argued that prison managers, school head teachers and hospital administrators were not the powerful but were also underdogs. He described that these ‘local caretaking officials’ were generally depicted in sociology as ignorant and poor managers. He went on to say that these depictions carried: “a political payload. For it is this discrediting of local officials that legitimates the claims of the higher administrative classes...and gives them an entering wedge on the local level” (ibid p.50).

A study of prison managers therefore has to be conscious of the risks of being used in unintended ways and for reasons that are not approved or supported by the researcher (for a poignant example see Sparks 2002). As a result, this study attempted to avoid appearing as a formal evaluation of effectiveness and instead was an attempt to provide a sociological exploration. By the very nature of the subject of agency and structure, prison managers were explored not only as the holders of power but also as the subjects of it. It was therefore not attempting to place prison managers in the position of being elite or the sole holders of power. It is as much about their powerlessness as much as it is about their power.

Finally, I will address the ways in which I was the holder of power and others were the subjects of it. I have already touched upon some of these but they are worth reiterating. The first was that any researcher holds some power in as much as people exposed themselves and their work to the scrutiny of someone who would analyse and write about it without them having control. This was a significant act of trust by the participants and an accumulation of power and responsibility by the researcher. As has been previously mentioned, my role as an insider may have carried with it expectations about comradeship and may have facilitated access, it was therefore important for me to structure expectations by being clear about the nature of the research, the areas being considered and to provide commitments about confidentiality. The second aspect of my power related back to my role as a serving prison manager. This was brought sharply into focus on the one occasion when a member of staff declined to be interviewed. I had intended to go back to the manager in charge of the prison on that particular day and arrange an alternative interview, as they assisted me by making staff available. The interviewee expressed concern about this and stated that they may be challenged or criticised for refusing to take part, not by me but by the manager I would be speaking to. As a result I decided not to arrange an alternative interview and went home for the day. Although on this occasion the risk was managed and avoided, it nevertheless highlighted that I was perceived by some as having power through the support of senior people within the establishment. Although I did not sense that others were concerned about this, it was an issue that I became increasingly conscious of as a result.

As an insider, the complexities, challenges and risks of research display both similarities and differences compared with external researchers. In some ways the process of the research was eased and the logistics were more straightforward. There were the same risks of control and misuse of findings. However, there were more subtle challenges both in the ways that organisational power flowed in shaping the researcher and the response of the participants. As

an insider researcher it is essential that one is alert to this and open to ways in which this can be manifested and managed.

Confidentiality and intervention

Many researchers report ethical dilemmas presented where they have to ask themselves whether they should maintain the mask of the neutral and passive researcher or whether they should intervene (for particularly vivid examples see Crewe 2009). This was a dilemma that I faced on several occasions throughout the research, again my insider status made these challenges at least feel different to those situations presented in other research.

As was mentioned previously, the only time in which there appeared to be a request to breach confidentiality was when a senior manager asked me to keep him “informed” of the research. This appeared to be an implied invitation to do more than simply discuss the sociological findings but instead to pass judgement and nuggets of information about the organisation and individuals. As I have said previously this was not followed up and subsequent conversations and feedback were in the most general terms regarding the progress of the research and I was not directly asked to breach any confidentiality.

There were a number of occasions during the research where people made comments that I felt were distasteful and were sometimes racist or sexist. One in particular had a strong impact. On that occasion, a manager shared an anecdote about a conversation he had with a more senior, female colleague at a previous prison. In this he said that he had described overweight women as “pigs in knickers”. This left me feeling sickened at the degrading language and attitude displayed. Many researchers have reported having ‘well bitten tongues’ from remaining silent when comments are made (Crewe 2009). However, this left me sharing Crewe’s feelings of shame at the “collusive silences” (ibid p.475) that were maintained. In my circumstances, I was particularly concerned as my organisational status may have conferred a greater degree of tacit approval to

what was said, but I had to balance that with the potential benefits of gaining a rounded picture of the world I was examining.

During the research, people appeared to become increasingly relaxed, testing me with disclosures about their views about managers, and once established that I would listen and hold confidences, opened up to disclosures about a range of issues. As ever, it was the disclosures of breaches of formal rules that provide a barometer of the honesty and openness of participants. Some revealed experiences of witnessing the abuse of prisoners in the distant past, many disclosed practices such as manipulating performance information, and others disclosed more individual, but deeply held personal beliefs about issues such as religion or politics. As with the comments described above, the balance seemed to lie in maintaining openness rather than shutting this down and breaching confidentiality.

On one occasion I felt that the balance lay differently. In this situation, I was shadowing a manager who had to carry out a series of checks in the reception area of the prison. A prisoner had arrived who claimed to have been assaulted by prison staff at the prison he had just left. Initially it was not clear that there was going to be any follow up on this. I decided that the risk was serious and immediate and therefore wanted to be assured that the prisoner was receiving medical attention and that the matter was properly recorded. In the event, the manager I was shadowing did ensure that these things happened without the need for me to intervene. I am sure that the questions I was asking betrayed more than a research interest at the time and that my concern was clear, but I was satisfied that was necessary in the circumstances.

There were other occasions where my presence appeared to have a potential effect on those around me. For example, in one of the prisons I will later describe how they received a request from a nearby prison to hold a disruptive prisoner for the duration of an inspection. Before the management team decided to decline this request there were a number of glances thrown in my direction and whilst the

same decision may have been made whether or not I had been there, my presence was certainly something that they became conscious of at that moment.

One issue that is often raised in research is about loyalties and taking sides, again a particular issue in prisons where the divisions between groups are sometimes marked. In one of the sites, I was present during a one day strike by the Prison Officers Association. Some managers were members of the union and therefore joined the strike (most senior and principal officers) whilst others were not and therefore operated the prison during the day. I decided that I would cross the picket line and enter the prison. I did not feel compromised by this as a result both of the fact that I was researching managers and was therefore interested in how they would deal the situation, and also that as a governor grade I would not be expected by those on the picket line to join a strike and instead would be expected to go in. My dual identity acted as a protection on this occasion. During the day I was able to talk to managers on both sides and afterwards was able to discuss the strike openly with those who took part without any adverse reaction. Whilst in the prison, I also made it clear that should the need arise I would be willing to assist with the operation of the prison. This assessment was based on the immediacy of the risk as in a strike situation with small number of people on duty the safety of staff and prisoners can be compromised. However, in the event I was only asked to cover a unit during a meal break.

These dilemmas about when to stand back, when to intervene, when to keep confidentiality and when to break it are always presented in the field. However, there were occasions when my dual role had an influence, in shaping these dilemmas.

Leaving the field

In each prison there was a fixed period in which I was due to be there (six months) and a set programme of work that I intended to carry out. It was therefore a straightforward logistical task to end the research. I offered to return

in due course to present back some of the findings but that would be some years later.

Leaving the field was not, however, simply a technical task but was instead part of a personal journey or “rite de passage” (Young 1991 p.63) which had seen me change in many ways. As I prepared to leave the second research site, my casual clothing started to become smarter, my hair shorter and ties felt less constricting. Within two months of completing the fieldwork I had taken up a post as Governor of a prison. Although I outwardly returned to my previous occupation, I did not feel like the same person who had gone into the research. I felt more questioning, less attached to the organisation for its own sake, more conscious of the social web that imprisonment formed part of, and more conscious of the strengths and limitations of managerial practices. This made me a different prison manager, although I make no claims to be a more effective one, but that after all was never the purpose.

On taking up my new post, I became immediate colleagues with the Governors of the two prisons I had conducted the research in. We had to re-establish our relationships in new roles and were able to move on. However, the need for me to maintain confidentiality was apparent and they both respected that my research would develop at its own pace and in its own way. Apart from the occasional polite question about when it would be completed, neither has ever wanted to know more about it or asked to intervene in any way.

Having undertaken this research, it also meant that I would now be marked not only in how I saw the world, but also how I would be perceived. Although there may not be the open and intense hostility towards inside researchers as there has been in the past (Young 1991 see also Mascarenhas-Keyes 1987), there is a degree of antagonism that could arise from being so publicly identified as a prison manager with an interest in research, intellectual inquiry or academic study. This is an antagonism that was, in itself, revealing about the culture of prison management. There is a cultural tension within prison management in

which some prison managers define the world of prison management as being made up of two mutually exclusive groups, the first was described using terms such as 'academic' or 'process-orientated' or 'strategy', in contrast to the second group that were described using terms such as 'practical', 'people-orientated' and 'operational'. Whilst such distinctions were false and incomplete, the language and tensions are important in understanding culture (Parker, M. 2000), but were also part of my own personal story.

On leaving the field I completed a phase in the research, but I also entered into a new phase of my personal and professional life. In this phase I certainly didn't claim to have the answers but I did have a better understanding of the questions, issues, complexities, tensions and problems of the world in which I worked and researched.

Chapter 4

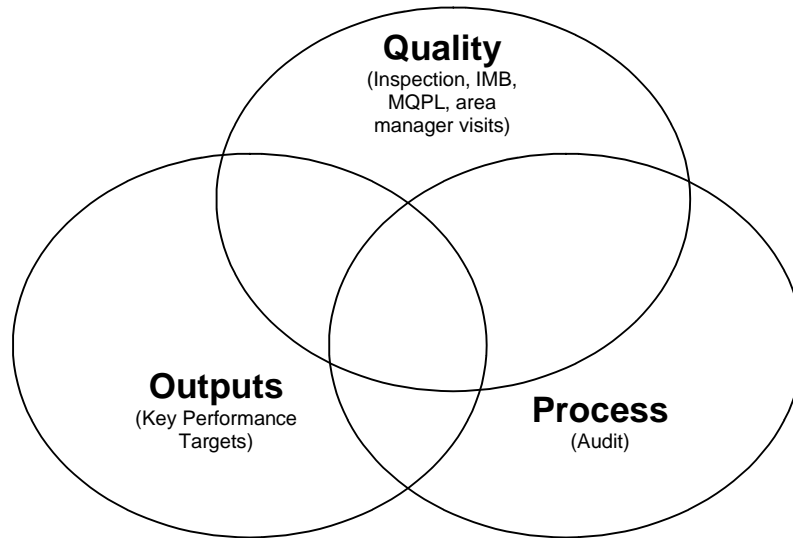
“Our core business”: Prison managers, performance monitoring and managerialism

This chapter is the first of four that present and analyse the empirical research. These chapters explore different aspects of the working lives of prison managers in the conditions of what has been described as ‘late modernity’. Together these chapters attempt to realise the aim of the study to understand how individuals make sense of and interact with the various competing forces that play upon them including local traditions and practices such as occupational cultures, as well as global changes such as the growth of managerial practices. This study is particularly interested in the negotiation of the dualities of global and local, agency and structure, and the ways in which they enable and constrain prison managers.

This chapter focuses on the use of performance management measures in the Prison Service and their place in the contemporary lives of prison managers. These measures have a central and emblematic position in the managerialist or New Public Management (NPM) approach and are particularly revealing about the ways in which this has become situated within the prison and the practice of managers. A brief summary of the development of managerialism was provided in the introduction (chapter 1). This attempted to illustrate how the contemporary performance management framework has emerged as a response to a series of problems, in particular about how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of prisons. The solutions were partly sought in greater use of monitoring as a means of exercising management direction and control. This was not an isolated initiative but instead reflected changes within the public sector as well as wider social and political developments.

This chapter will provide a detailed exploration of each of the performance measures, and will endeavour to understand them not as a technical resource but

as a social phenomenon. The model for the performance management system at the time of the research, was set out in the report *Modernising the Management of the Prison Service* (Laming 2000). This describes the inter-relationship of different methods:



(adapted from Laming 2000)

This model identifies six methods for monitoring performance: key performance targets (KPT), audits, area manager visits, HM inspectorate of prisons (HMIP), Measuring the quality of prison life (MQPL) and Independent Monitoring Boards (IMB). Each of these will be described and analysed, focussing primarily on how they are used and experienced by managers as part of their working lives. The structural qualities of each measure will also be discussed using analytical tools produced by Giddens (1984)⁷, as these qualities are important in examining how they are understood and interpreted. This chapter will particularly consider how managers experience performance measures as both a form of enablement and constraint, and how they themselves facilitate, resist, adapt or interpret the requirements placed upon them. The way that prison managers interact with these measures and make sense of them through their working lives is critical in

⁷ For a description of these structural qualities see p.28

illuminating the intersections of agency and structure, and local and global forces.

Key Performance Targets

Quantitative measures were the most visible form of performance management and as such they had a particular resonance in discussions regarding managerialism; they were the performance measurement *par excellence*. Although touted in the mid-1980s (Dunbar 1985), they were introduced to prisons in the early 1990s, imported from the commercial sector by Director General Derek Lewis (Lewis 1997). They were at the vanguard of the introduction of NPM techniques and whilst they were contentious they also had a powerful influence in changing prison management.

During the period of the study, there were approximately 45 KPTs although not all of these would apply to each prison; approximately 40 would be relevant to each prison. These covered five categories: 'Decency & Health' (such as suicide and self harm audit score, time unlocked); 'Organisational Efficiency & Effectiveness' (such as completion of staff appraisals, timely responses to prisoner complaints and public correspondence); 'Regimes' (such as purposeful activity and the attainment of qualifications by prisoners); 'Safety' (such as assaults and accidents); and 'Security' (such as escapes, breach of temporary release and completion of searches). Producing this range of measures created difficulties in creating an overall picture of performance, making comparisons over time or between prisons difficult, and obscuring differentiation between more or less important targets. In order to address these issues, an analytical tool was developed known as the 'Weighted Scorecard', based on similar principals to the 'Balanced Scorecard' (Kaplan and Norton 1996, 1998). This gave each prison a numeric score calculated by taking account of performance against target and the relative importance of the various targets. The Scorecard generated a report which combined scores relative to the target set for the current financial year and performance against 'standard', an expected performance for similar

types of prisons. The Scorecard was available in an IT package, which allowed analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Prisons were also listed in rank order, which led to it being compared to a 'league table' (Wagstaffe 2002).

These measures had a high visibility, being discussed at all levels. They were formally monitored at least monthly at senior management team meetings, and informally every week at performance meetings attended by senior and middle managers. They were a visible assessment of individual, team and prison performance and were constantly in the consciousness of managers. They also provided a means of inter-prison comparison, particularly through the Weighted Scorecard. Many managers therefore viewed them as the performance measure *par excellence* and that appeared to be reinforced in the way they were produced and disseminated.

This section explores how prison managers viewed and understood KPTs: how important were they in their working lives? What values did they ascribe to these measures? Why did they comply with or resist their implementation? Through these questions, it is intended to explore the role of these practices in shaping managers' working lives and the role of prison managers' in shaping practice. This section will also consider the practice of prison managers and how they felt about themselves and their work, how these measures influenced the way that prisoners and staff were treated, and how they shaped the organisation. In other words, there is a question here of the effects on the organisation and the people within it. Finally, this section will attempt to analyse the structural qualities of KPTs, in order to question whether this provides some explanation for the way they were used.

Practices, perceptions and effects

In the two fieldwork sites, managers talked about how KPTs exercised a powerful role within their working lives. The phrases they used to express this included: "The whole day is affected by key performance indicators", "KPTs rule

my life”, “they dominate my life”, “they rule my working life”, “we are governed by them”, “I’m very aware of them all of the time”. Such terms conveyed both the pervasive role that these measures were perceived to have in shaping the workplace and the depth to which they penetrated, becoming an all embracing, continuous and conscious presence. They often described these measures as fundamental to the practice of prison management: “they underpin everything we do”, “they’re my bread and butter”, and “they are our core business”. In general, managers saw these measures as having a dominating presence.

The reach and power of KPTs, however, was not uniform but instead varied. One reason for this was differing levels of competence. Whilst some managers were clear on how to analyse figures and translate them into action, others were less confident and competent. In some meetings, performance information was read without any analysis or follow up. At one meeting, a manager directly challenged other attendees by saying: “We look at this every month but we don’t do anything about it, we just say it’s a bit up or it’s a bit down”. In other meetings, performance information was produced that was badly designed and of limited use, for example in one prison figures on the number of prisoners involved in violent incidents did not distinguish those involved as victims from those involved as perpetrators. This issue of competence should not be underestimated in shaping the effects of performance measurement. Where competence was limited, the measures had less value or credibility and had a more superficial impact.

Their impact also varied depending upon the number of targets that groups or individuals held and the difficulty of achieving them. For example, some managers had few targets and they were easily achieved as there was sufficient staff resources allocated and the practice was routinised. Examples of this included the conduct of voluntary drug testing, mandatory drug testing and cell searching. These were seen as largely managing themselves, requiring management checks during each month but limited intervention. However, other targets such as classroom efficiency (the % of available classroom activity places

that were utilised), delivering offending behaviour programmes and purposeful activity were often more difficult to sustain as they required cross-department co-operation. As a result, these were more prominent in the working lives of those responsible, requiring them to expend more time and energy ensuring that they were met.

The role of KPTs in the manager's working life also varied with a person's place within the hierarchy, so more senior staff including governor grades generally saw them as having a dominating role. Officers and senior officers generally saw their role as managing day-to-day interactions and events rather than directly achieving targets. Many were conscious that what they did on a daily basis fed into the achievement of targets over a longer period of time, but this was not seen as the core purpose of their work. The only time they would be more conscious of targets, would be when more senior managers intervened if a target was not being met, or towards the end of each month when there was pressure to ensure that targets were achieved. These issues were summed up in the words of one officer:

"I always feel that they're dealt with one step back from me. I go out and do my tasks, I go out and deal with the guys, talk to the guys, handle what's going on, do my duties for the day. I understand that that fits into that system of KPTs but I don't always truly feel responsible for them. I go and do what I've got to do for the day. If I'm not meeting the target a manager would have a word with me. I don't go around with that in my head, whereas I imagine at management level you're always thinking about it." (W3 officer)

Whilst in general terms managers saw KPTs as having a powerful and pervasive role in their working lives, this was not uniform but varied both vertically along the hierarchy, and also varied according to the structural characteristics of the measures and the competence of individuals.

Some managers ascribed a range of values to KPTs, seeing them not only as something they had to comply with unwillingly, but instead a system that was

appreciated. The most prominent values were instrumental. From this perspective, targets were tools that improved managerial effectiveness and that of individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole. At its most primary level this was seen as a means through which work priorities could be established and management could be objectified and quantified so providing a rational basis for action such as praise, punishment and the allocation of resources. This was a source of empowerment for managers; a means through which their skills could be applied. They described that this had beneficial results including increasing productivity and accountability. This came about as it was believed that workers would push themselves in order to meet targets as this provided a positive sense of achievement or a negative desire to avoid failure. There were wider social benefits reported, in particular improved team working. Within teams people would collaborate in order to achieve goals and there were also cases where goals such as purposeful activity or classroom attendance required cross-departmental co-operation and the fact that these were KPTs enabled this to take place. The proponents of quantitative performance measures have long argued that they provide benefits in terms of organisational effectiveness (for example HM Treasury et al 2001), but it should be recognised that this sense of effectiveness means increased hierarchical control and visible accountability for managers, it is therefore a partial view of what constitutes an effective organisation.

These measures were also seen as having some normative value or moral benefit by enabling progressive change. In areas outside of the traditional custody duties such as education or rehabilitation, targets provided a source of leverage, enlisting wider organisational support. They were also seen as moving prisons away from idiosyncratic management towards rational decisions based on needs assessment. For example, one manager described:

“Prisoners would come in who could not read and write it was almost a bee in my bonnet I became incensed by it because the

education team at that time only wanted to know about lifers⁸ that would be taking on their open university or long term prisoners that wanted to take A level. That's all they were bothered about. There were no key performance targets and the like. They would not bother with these poor people who could not read and write. To me these were the people that needed it most. The arguments I used to have with them; "oh we haven't got the time" "yes you have got the time, you can have twenty lifers in a classroom, but you can't have a classroom with twenty teaching them the basics?" That's the way it always has been, but you need to look at the needs. That's something that I have always steadfastly and been a firm believer in". (W7 governor grade)

Therefore it was being asserted by this manager that KPTs have enabled the process of addressing the needs of the most socially excluded and given the powerless an importance that they have not previously enjoyed. The argument that there has been a moral dividend from quantitative performance measures has been made by several senior prison managers (for example see Wheatley 2005, Spurr and Bennett 2008). One former Director General of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, went as far to say:

"...show me a prison achieving all its KPIs and I will show you a prison which is also treating prisoners with dignity" (Narey 2001 quoted in Liebling assisted by Arnold 2005 p.68)

This view presented that not only have performance measures improved effectiveness but they have also had a humanising and moral effect. On this view, measurement has been a civilising process through which a morally sensitized service has emerged. This is a highly contestable view, as will be discussed below, but nevertheless it was one that was held by many.

Attachment to these output measures was reinforced through a network of rewards and sanctions. Many perceived that KPTs were backed up by a punitive mechanism that would ensnare them should they fail to achieve. This was summed up in phrases such as: "KPTs are the word in this jail, you've got to

⁸ Life sentence prisoners

meet them every month and God help you if you don't", "[if] we don't deliver the right numbers, I personally get a kicking", "[If they are not met] you get absolutely hammered", "if we don't meet them, we get our arses kicked if it's our fault", "[If they are not met managers will] throw a few fucks into them", "[I will have to] face the wrath of my boss", "[they are] used as a stick", and "my focus is on KPTs because if I don't it comes back to me". There was a belief that harsh sanctions would arise from non-attainment. In reality, managers who did not succeed in meeting targets were not dismissed, managed as poor performers or treated in harsh ways, and indeed many would have their reasons for non-attainment which would usually be accepted as legitimate. However, managers were concerned about this and felt that the experience of accounting for non-compliance was uncomfortable and that this caused them anxiety about the security of their position, reputation and future career. It was considered that failure would undermine their credibility with their managers, peers and their own staff and that it could result in transfer to less desirable posts or result in the denial of promotion opportunities. It was also an outcome that would play negatively with their sense of worth and self-identity. In contrast, success brought with it a sense of personal attainment and the prospect of extrinsic rewards. Formal mechanisms such as the award of 'high performing prison' status did entail small financial payments that could be used to reward the staff group, but this was limited and only available to a small number of prisons. Nevertheless, managers in the prisons that did achieve this status expressed pride in the achievement. There were other indirect and informal rewards available. Informally, discretionary resources could be allocated to establishment from headquarters departments or area offices and this was sometimes linked to how well an establishment was perceived to be performing. There were also informal rewards available such as praise, developmental opportunities for individuals, and the hosting of prestigious visitors.

Most managers were not slavishly uncritical of output measurement and indeed many were conscious of their limitations. First, they recognised that they did not always reflect what was important. Some managers described that the critical

work of their departments did not feature in performance measurement and that the measures in place did not reflect their priorities. They were therefore seen as being incomplete and opportunistic (see Smith and Goddard 2002). Second, they were described as inflexible, examples of this included that in the field sites, measures were not altered to reflect changed resources such as reductions in budgets or even increased prisoner population through the opening of new accommodation. As a result these were seen as uncontrollable, unrealistic and they placed great pressure upon staff to achieve them. Third, it was claimed that these measures did not take account of quality. This was cited for example in relation to staff appraisals where it was suggested that the measure was to complete these in a timely manner but this did not address their quality, and also in relation to searching where it was described that these were carried out in a less thorough manner in order to fit them into the limited time available. It was also suggested that this had an impact on quality in militating against more in-depth work, for example it was suggested that because targets were set, certain courses such as drug treatment had to be filled and this was done even if for the prisoners allocated to these were not the highest priority. This reflected the arguments made by Anne Owers (2007), former Chief Inspector of Prisons, who stated that in some establishments there existed 'virtual prison' where managers had a view based on performance measures that was out of kilter with the reality of the lived experience.

Although many managers were conscious of these limitations, their criticisms were largely reserved for the backroom or for the occasional comment in open forum. Revolutionary rejection or ignoring of output measures did not take place and instead managers accepted compliance as a necessity, albeit a sometimes unwelcome one. There was a sense that resistance was futile. For example, one manager described that in relation to KPTs, some people "don't believe they are necessary", but that they are "here to stay", and another suggested that whilst he might not agree with some KPTs, "that's neither here nor there". This indicated a form of dull compulsion where managers felt powerless to do anything other than conform.

Having considered the place of KPTs in the working lives of prison managers it is now necessary to turn to consider the effects of these measures on prison managers and the wider organisation. The first observation relates to self-worth and wellbeing. How managers performed in attaining KPTs was important in how they felt about themselves. Whilst some managers expressed a positive desire to achieve, many more expressed a negative desire to avoid failure. For most managers, they were unswerving, using phrases such as: “you don’t miss a KPT, you just don’t do it”; “I don’t like to fail things”; and “I guard them with my life”. However, sometimes this was expressed in ways that appeared extreme. For example, one manager described how he found it “devastating” that he had failed to meet a target despite the fact that this was caused by a large increase in the prisoner population. Another manager described that the thought of not meeting a target “makes me feel ill thinking about it”, whilst a third described that they had been burned out and had become “fraggled” as a result of chasing a target in difficult circumstances. These intense, physiological feelings were elicited by the drive that these individuals had regarding targets. It was clear from these comments that these measures played a powerful and dominating role in how managers viewed themselves, their self worth and it potentially affected their well being.

There was also an impact on relationships both internally and externally. As was described above, these measures had the ability to encourage collaboration between departments in order to achieve targets. However, there was also a negative side to this in as much as many managers described that these targets had the effect of making them more individualistic and more competitive (see also Cheliotis 2006). For example, some managers focussed on only those targets that they were assessed upon or that they could be made to account for. This was summed up by one manager who said:

“I will pursue the ones that I have an interest in because it will reflect on me, but I’m not too bothered about things like C[ontrol]”

and R[estraint] because I don't manage [that]...As long as I send back my correspondence when I get it, I'm not bothered whether we reach 100% or 90% in actual fact. I've done my bit. If it was only 75%, I'd say how many letters did I get, how many have you had from me on time, 100% well that's all I'm bothered about. I've got enough on my plate without worrying about everyone else's beefs" (W12 governor grade).

This contrasted with the collaborative ideal often presented regarding prison culture and managerialism (see further chapter 6).

Many managers saw themselves as participating in a competitive environment both internally and externally. Within prisons, individuals and departments wanted to be perceived as performing well, and there was also a rivalry between prisons particularly those that were geographically close. The prison's position on the Weighted Scorecard was presented at full staff meetings and other meetings as the primary measure of prisons performance and the current position was usually prominently displayed at the entrance to the prison and widely known around the establishments. Although officially, the Scorecard was not used as a league table, instead it was used as one part of the performance management toolkit, to many people this was a facade and it was frequently described in terms such as: "it's a league table, well it's not a league table"; "they say it's not league tables, but they are"; "it's not a league table but it is", and "you can look at it however you like, but they are league tables and they show you in a better or worse light". Many managers elevated this to a prominent sporting competition.

It was described above that there was a perceived positive effect of KPTs that they improved effectiveness. However, it was also the case that they caused distortion. The first way in which this happened was that they caused myopia where managers focussed on the attainment of targets without considering the longer term impact. They also focussed on these measures to the exclusion of other factors and this could mean both that important issues of quality were ignored, for example drug treatment places being filled by prisoners who were

not the highest priority, as described above. In addition, good performance on these measures could mask the wider performance of prisons or departments. For example, one prison was performing well on its KPTs for race equality⁹, but was criticised in this area by external inspectors (see also Carlen 2008a).

Another significant example of the distorting effects of these measures was in the instances of falsification. There were clearly examples in both sites where performance information was submitted that was not accurate. For example, purposeful activity figures were submitted on a standardised form without reflecting the real time spent working; official start and finish times would be recorded rather than actual times and interruptions would not be captured. Other examples included offending behaviour programme completions being carried between accounting years in order to meet targets; there were criticisms of inaccurate recording of accidents and serious assaults in some prisons; it was stated that prisoners were moved around the prison at the end of each month in order to meet overcrowding targets (i.e. they were moved out of doubled cells); staff who had left one prison were still counted as part of the control and restraint team; and the dates on late complaint forms were amended so that they appeared to have been submitted on time. These practices were widely carried out and accepted. It was generally viewed that such practices were necessary in order to ensure that the official performance of the prison as expressed in KPTs was maintained. Managers were also conscious of the mechanics of measures such as the Weighted Scorecard, so for example gave particular attention to the most highly weighted targets, “a ten-scorer”, and worked out ways in which the Scorecard could be manipulated, such as overachieving on certain targets or completing work earlier in the year than officially planned. In all of these ways, performance information was managed and massaged in order to create a positive appearance rather than to make real changes to the lives of prisoners,

⁹ There were two race equality KPTs: one relating to staff and one relating to prisoners. Both were composite measures. The staff measure included audit results and the percentage of minority ethnic staff employed. The prisoner measure included audit results, outcomes from visitor surveys and monitoring of whether key areas such as activities, use of force and disciplinary measures reflect the ethnic mix of the population.

staff and visitors. This distortion and falsification has been noted on a widespread scale in relation to time unlocked figures (HMCIP 2008) and has been described as a chronic feature of managerial practices in prisons (Carlen 2002a). Whilst these could be seen as subversive acts that resisted the official purpose of output measures, in practice they acted to legitimise these by presenting an appearance of attainment and reinforcing the requirement to comply above normative values such as honesty and integrity.

Structural qualities

These measures exercised a powerful social control over managers and had significant effects upon them and the organisation. It is now worth addressing the question of why that was the case. Some of this could be ascribed to the structural properties of these measures. Whilst it is recognised that they were uneven and varied in practice, using Giddens' (1984) analytical tools it could be said that output measures in prisons were generally intensive, tacit, formalized and strongly sanctioned. They were intensive in as much as they were frequently used with managers checking these at least weekly. They were tacit in as much as they were accepted and are not subject to any significant challenge. They were formalized in their definition, operation and monitoring. They were strongly sanctioned both within the internalised self-control exercised by individuals and through the external actions of more senior managers. Their source of power could be said to involve domination (power), signification (meaning) and legitimation (norm), with the most prominent source being legitimation; that these measures were widely accepted and absorbed by managers in their practice, identity and values. In terms of structures they had the qualities of strength, solidity and rigidity. However, what was also apparent was that it was not solely the structural qualities that gave these measures their prominence, it was also the social context and the way that they were understood, internalised and practiced by the group and individuals, in other words their position within the *habitus* (Bordieu 1977). They were seen as a means through which individual attainment

could be achieved, they were a measure *par excellence* and they were the measure that individuals invested greater commitment in.

Audits

Process audits were a prominent element of the managerialist project. They were intended to provide an “independent evaluative practice” (Clarke et al 2000). In prisons they were focussed on ensuring that policies were being implemented as specified in Prison Service orders and instructions. During the fieldwork there were 65 auditable performance standards applicable to the research sites, covering a diverse range of issues including violence reduction, security, catering, health and safety, industrial relations, race equality and suicide prevention. Each standard contained a number of ‘baselines’ that specified the processes that should be in place. Each prison had its own in-house audit team, which conducted audits of all standards over a three-year period, although some high priority standards, such as security, would be audited annually. There was also a national Standards Audit Unit, which visited annually to check the quality of in-house auditing, every two years to cover security and every four years to cover other standards. Every audit conducted by both in-house and external auditors resulted in a percentage score being awarded and an action plan being developed to address non-compliant areas.

The growth of audit in prisons followed the escapes of category A prisoners from Whitemoor and Parkhurst in 1994 and 1995, where the cause was linked to basic security procedures not being followed (Woodcock 1994, Learmont 1995). It has been claimed internally that the ‘success’ of audits has been integral to the transformation from non-compliance to compliance, from insecurity to security and from failure to success (for example see Clarke 1996, Wheatley 2005, Spurr and Bennett 2008). Due to the consequences of these escapes for the public, officials and politicians (see Lewis 1997) this new technology of compliance was seen as an important weapon in the risk management armoury. Audit has played a crucial role in the recent history of prisons and was a powerful barometer of the

changes that have taken place and their social consequences. In this section, these claims will be explored. This section seeks to explore the role of audits in the working lives of prison managers, considering issues of enablement and constraint, and professional identity. This section will also seek to explore their effects on the organisation and the people within it, including managers themselves. Finally, this section will also attempt to analyse the structural qualities of audits.

Practices, perceptions and effects

Audit standards provided in-depth prescriptions of the processes and procedures that should be in place and were a means by which they could be tested in practice over a period of time. This was a more in depth scrutiny of processes than provided by KPTs, which focussed on outputs. However, these were not measured constantly but instead were measured on anything from an annual to a three-yearly cycle; there was not the constant reporting and monitoring there was with KPTs. Management meetings would include updates on the most recent audits and the action required to address deficiencies. Those that were undergoing audits were therefore the subject of intense, visible scrutiny. However, as audits would check processes over a long period of time there was a constant, low level awareness by managers that their work would be subjected to auditing. They constantly conducted checks for audit purposes such as scrutinising the frequency of entries in ACCT¹⁰ documents, violence reduction documents, observation books and there were written logs in each area structured in order to capture information required by audit standards. Whilst less constantly intense than KPTs, this provided a method of surveillance that was pervasive. Managers were conscious of their weight and control:

“standards are a way of policing us. Someone comes in and says here are the standards are you adhering to them? It can be used

¹⁰ i.e. Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork. These were the formal documents used to record the management of those who were identified as being at risk of self-harm.

as a tool for challenging staff on how they go about their work...it's like someone looking over my shoulder about how we operate". (S8 governor grade)

Some described this as “overbearing” or even “audit madness” or “action-planitis”, illustrating the extent to which they felt controlled and constrained.

Some managers considered that audits provided benefits, in particular they enabled them to improve compliance (for example see Clarke 1996, McDonnell 2000). Some talked about audits as a way of ensuring that work was being done correctly and preventing drift where over time processes stopped being operated properly or at all. Comments of managers included: “[it] give[s] me good assurance”, “keeps us focussed”, “It’s an excellent way of ensuring you’re doing things correctly and by the book”, “it lets managers know that what they are managing is being done properly”, “ensures you are doing the job”, “Audit is a safeguard in case you are merrily going along thinking everything is being done correctly but it shows perhaps we’re not doing everything correctly”, and “the only way that we can ensure that we are delivering what we are supposed to be delivering”. It was also described that they provided consistency between departments and prisons, what was often described as a “uniform” approach. Audit was seen as a process that maintained management control through transparency, accountability and uniformity.

There was a widely held view that the system of audits was backed by sanctions. For example managers commented that they felt “jumpy about audits”, that it was underpinned by “a blame culture” where failure would mean “their name would be next on the list”, or it would “come back and bite you”. One manager after an audit result that did not live up to their expectations joked, but with some serious intent, about whether he would be removed from his job. Managers were also sometimes concerned about embarrassment and criticism in the eyes of peers that could result from the visibility of poor audit results. Sanctions were not solely internal; there were also concerns that non-compliance would leave the prison vulnerable to litigation. Comments were frequently made about solicitors,

coroners' courts and a "blame and claim" culture as providing a justification for audit. They were seen as a means through which risk was intensified and managers themselves became vulnerable and subject to domination, but they were also a means through which they could control risks such as personal reputation, employment security, control of their workforce, and litigation.

In general, managers were not necessarily unwelcoming of audits and indeed many legitimised the process. They argued that this was good organisational practice and even that there were moral benefits as audits protected individual rights and humane treatment. Historically, the use of defined minimum standards has been supported by prison reformers (for example Casale 1984) and these have provided the basis for international conventions on prisons (Penal Reform International 1995). However, the critical difference was that reformers have generally called for standards not as an internal managerial measure but as a means of securing public accountability, being set and reviewed in the legislature, enforced through the courts and widely used by non-governmental organisations in order to inform their scrutiny of prisons (Gostin and Staunton 1985). Others claimed that local innovation was disseminated through audits. For example, methods of recording cleaning used on one wing were promoted by auditors in one of the prisons as an exemplar of how to do this. They were also seen as providing a means through which managers could encourage teamwork between departments. The conduct of routine checks also led managers to interact with staff and prisoners at key times, such as serving checks being carried out at meal times. The process of audits was therefore described by some as encouraging both vertical integration, between people in hierarchical relationships, and horizontal integration, between departments or individuals who work alongside each other.

At the same time, many managers were not uncritical of audits and would question and challenge them, although this was usually restricted to backroom discussions and only occasionally emerged in public discussion such as meetings. Criticism often focussed on audit as a form of petty bureaucracy. They

were frequently described “tick boxing” or “dotting the I’s and crossing the t’s”. Such phrases indicated that they were seen as bureaucratic and detached from the reality of what people were doing. Their pettiness was often illustrated through the myriad of stories about pedantry, for example in one instance it was claimed that a search was conducted by two members of staff where one person did the searching and the other talked to the prisoners, but this was criticised because only one person should do it, not because any element of the search was missing. Other examples included a criticism that a baseline stating that prisoners should be offered a shower on reception was not met because prisoners received this on the wing even though this meant that they were settled into their new accommodation quicker and could bathe in greater privacy. In these stories, the criticism was that there was a technical approach rather than a substantive one. This argument has been made more broadly in relation to audits:

“audits are ‘rationalised rituals of inspection’ which produce comfort, and hence organizational legitimacy, by attending to formal control structures and auditable performance measures. Even though audit files are created, checklists get completed and performance is measured and monitored in ever more elaborate detail, audit concerns itself with auditable form rather than substance.” (Power 1997 p.96)

From this perspective, audits can become myopic and self-serving exercises and managers were conscious of this.

The second area of criticism was that audits drew managers away focussing on people. This was not simply that their time was taken up by paperwork, but also that managers became alienated from the human aspects of their work. One officer described:

“It’s not a true reality for me...I like to be with the guys on the wing, the prisoners, dealing with their issues, sorting things out for them, but I keep getting dragged off into a paper trail but it’s taking me away from the humane task...I want my work to be prisoner-based, not paperwork-based”. (W3 officer)

Again, this reflected broader criticisms of audits where they have been described as becoming a dominant practice in the working lives of managers. It has been suggested that this reduced professional discretion and instead replaced this with compliance (Power 1997, Clarke et al 2000, Ryan 1993), but also shaped broader attitudes and values. It has been described that:

“...the values and practices which make auditing possible penetrate deep into the core of organizational operations, not just in terms of requiring energy and resources to conform to new reporting demands but in the creation over time of new mentalities, new incentives and perceptions of significance.”
(Power 1997 p.97).

Some managers sensed that audits had a subtle psychological effect of shifting their focus from a concern with the individual human experience of imprisonment towards a managerial outlook. This could be seen in the management of areas such as race equality, which was discussed by some managers not in terms of the human experience, but in terms of being “politically heavyweight” audits. Cell sharing risk assessments were introduced following the racist murder of Zahib Mubarek by his cell mate (Keith 2006), and were described in one management meeting in purely managerial terms:

“this is auditable through three or four different baselines...I’ve got it up to a three [on audit] but I want to get it up to a four”.
(SFN 31)

Audit was therefore a managerial practice that could shift focus from the normative values of prison management and redirect them towards instrumental ones (Power 1997, Clarke et al 2000). Auditing was not a purely technical tool but instead had broader social effects (for example see Bennett and Hartley 2006). This created a sense of alienation where some individuals felt a dissonance between their own values and experiences of prisons and those promoted by audit. This feeling was starkly described by one manager who said: “I always have two things in my mind: the audit point of view and the real prison” (see also Owers 2007).

Beyond verbal forms of resistance, many managers attempted to manage the process of audits with sometimes distorting effects. There were many ways in which this was claimed to happen such as in-house auditors marking generously, selecting samples with an eye to those that performed better, being selective about the evidence that was generated, those being audited putting on a 'performance' that was different from their usual practice, and managers applying pressure to auditors to revise their marking. The manipulation of audits was a chronic feature of this system of management and has been observed across sites (Clarke et al 2000).

The actual conduct of audits was observed, and it confirmed some of the comments by managers. Audits did provide a means of checking whether certain work was being completed in a manner that reflected the standards. Auditors would use a number of methods including checking paperwork, asking questions, and making observations. However, this was often dominated by paper-based assessment rather than being a qualitative and experiential means of assessing outcomes. For example, in a hygiene audit posters and records were checked but there was no observation of actual cleanliness. This meant that there may have been a gap between what was audited and the reality of the lived experience (see also Bryans 2000b). Auditors acted with a degree of discretion, for example one auditor described that assessment of searching, although prescribed in a national policy, would vary according to the category of prison.

Those being audited were not passive recipients, but interacted with the process in a number of ways. First, there was a great deal of preparations made, including conducting pre-audit checks and taking remedial action, such as getting missing signatures and documents completed. Managers described how before an audit they would be running around like "headless chickens" or "blue-arsed flies" and that auditors would find that "everything smells of paint" or "the ink's still wet on the paper". Second, during the audit there were negotiations and interactions with auditors in an attempt to influence their findings. When the results of an

audit did not match their expectations, managers would often ask for further areas to be checked, would produce counter-evidence or would provide rationalisations for the failures. These were all attempts to manage up the results. Managers would also use relationships in order to try to manage auditors, spending time visiting and talking to them, providing good accommodation and refreshments and playing to their egos by asking advice and paying deference. It has been suggested that this process of negotiation is common in audit structures (Power 1997). Finally, where the results were not positive, there were attempts to delegitimise the process in order to minimise the damage. This could be done through highlighting individual findings that indicated that audits were petty, or claiming that audits were narrow and instead appealing to less precise benchmarks such as “a safe and secure prison”. Claims were also made regarding having lower expectations than the final marking, and stating that changes in results were due to auditing becoming more stringent rather than performance deteriorating. These were attempts to reframe the success criteria (Clarke et al 2000).

Structural qualities

Audits share many structural characteristics with output measures but also had several differences. As with output measures they could be described as ‘intensive’ in as much as they were frequently used with sometimes annual audits taking place and some baselines requiring daily checks, however, this was not always the case as some audits only took place every three years. Overall though, the process of audits had a place in the consciousness of managers that gave them this intensive quality. Whilst audits were generally accepted as a fact of life and could therefore be described as ‘tacit’, their effectiveness and meaning was more contested and managers were generally more critical of audits than they were of output measures, although forms of resistance were generally contained. In terms of their form, as with output measures, audits were heavily formalized through detailed published standards, baselines and guidance on evidence. The operation of audits was underpinned by a strong set of perceived internal and external

sanctions without the balance of more positive commitment through a sense of attainment or potential rewards. Audits, in comparison to output measures, were less strongly legitimised by managers and more strongly supported by domination or power.

Overall, the practice of auditing in prisons reflected that of auditing in other organisations. It has provided a pervasive form of control which has not simply provided a technical management tool but has acted in ways that have reshaped the values of the organisation, in particular by facilitating managerial control. However, this has not been uncontested or enjoyed uncritical acceptance.

Area Manager's Visits

At the time of the research, prisons in England and Wales were divided into ten geographical areas that were coterminous with the police. In each of these there was an Area Manager, usually an experienced former governor. They acted as the line manager of the prison governors and also had a support team who managed areas such as performance management, developed links with other organisations such as probation and the police and they had policy leads for prisoner regime areas such as drugs and resettlement. The origin of this role can be traced back to the 1970s, when four regional managers were appointed in order to improve the management and control of prisons. However, with their wide span of control they were largely ineffective and were therefore replaced with Area Managers in 1991 (Bryans and Wilson 2000). Their role was contested: Area Managers themselves were often confused as to whether their role was advisory or whether they had directive management control (Lewis 1997, Laming 2000) and governors resisted the imposition of control (Bryans 2007, see also Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004). Over time the arrangements became more accepted as the roles became clearer and new personnel had more sympathetic views. It has been described that these changes "...resulted in a redistribution of power and resources from Governors to area managers" (Bryans 2007 p. 86).

This section particularly focuses on the regular, documented visits made to prisons by Area Managers. These formed an important part of the way prisons were assessed. The reports from these visits attempted to look beyond the performance information, to get a sense of what was often described as the ‘feel’ of the prison (Wagstaffe 2002, Wheatley 2005). This section will explore the role of the Area Manager’s visits, including how prison managers’ discussed, understood and interacted with these. This section will also seek to explore the effects on the organisation and the people within it. Finally, this section will attempt to analyse the structural qualities of these visits.

Practices, perceptions and effects

In the two prisons, the Area Manager visited approximately every two months and followed up with a written report. The character and approach of the Area Manager was important in shaping how they carried out their role and how they were perceived. Managers were able to differentiate between individual Area Managers and were aware of their strengths and weaknesses, priorities and expectations. There was intense preparation prior to visits and the subsequent reports would be widely distributed in an edited form so that staff were aware of their contents. They would also be discussed at senior management meetings and full staff briefings in order to motivate action. The Area Manager was regularly cited in meetings in order to provide weight to particular points and to act as a driver for actions. In one prison, a manager so frequently cited the wishes and observations of the Area Manager in meetings that it appeared to replace local strategic planning. The Area Manager was a continual presence through these actions.

During the field work at one of the prisons, a new Area Manager was appointed and this had a noticeable impact. The senior management team were immediately aware that the individual focussed on performance management and wanted to see improved Weighted Scorecard positions. This was widely discussed and as a

result performance was more intensively monitored; a weekly senior management meeting was introduced focussing on KPTs, using powerpoint presentations, charts and lists of data. Managers also carried out covert preparation and research, for example they contacted managers in other prisons to ask what the Area Manager had focussed on. They identified preparatory steps and communicated these priorities around the prison. There was intense preparation put into the build up to his first visit with extensive cleaning and repainting taking place. As a result, many mockingly compared this to a “royal visit”. This preparation was a feature of the build up to all Area Manager visits, where managers perceived, in a similar way to audits and in identical language, that they would “run around like headless chickens”, or “blue arsed flies” or would be “flapping like a good ‘un’”. Preparation would focus on issues that the Area Manager was known to examine and issues highlighted in previous reports.

These visits focussed on performance management and compliance. This was seen in four ways. The first was that part of the visit would be dedicated to reviewing performance measures with the Governor of the prison. The Area Manager would draw upon a variety of information provided by their support team and they would use this to focus discussions. This was particularly important for the Governor as this was an arena where their reputation with the Area Manager would be forged and this would form part of their own performance appraisal. As the Area Manager visited other parts of the prison, they would discuss performance measures with others and would therefore act to promote their importance.

The second way in which performance and compliance would be promoted was through the communication of key strategic messages. They would do this partly by talking to people about wider issues. For example, they would often attend the daily morning meeting, which most prison managers attended, and would provide a briefing of major national and area wide issues such as population pressures, building programmes and performance results. They would also promote strategic issues by focussing on particular matters such as resettlement

or education by visiting those areas and examining them in more detail. In this way, visits would be used in order to provide visibility to areas that were sometimes marginalised in traditional prison culture but were managerially important. This was appreciated by some managers, for example one commented:

“What is really nice is when he walks around the prison and he comes and spends half an hour and chats through programmes... how is this working and what isn’t working. That is really, really healthy...particularly with the group I manage, which is non-[uniformed] on the whole...the Area Manager is not just interested in [mandatory drug testing] finds or all the regime type stuff, he is genuinely interested in how things are working in this part of the business as well. I see that as very important.” (W21 non-operational manager)

These elements appeared to be aimed at orientating managers towards central priorities and concerns.

Third, the Area Manager would disseminate good practice. They had an intimate knowledge of the prisons in an area and had extensive personal experience. They could therefore refer managers to practices that would assist them in dealing with problems.

The fourth area, and perhaps the one that generated the highest profile and the most controversy, was personal inspections conducted by the Area Manager. This involved visiting areas of the prison and checking compliance with procedures including security, health and safety and cleanliness. This was compared by many managers to a military inspection. Examples of issues highlighted included colour coded cleaning equipment being used in the wrong areas, wedges being used under office doors, posters in cells on outside walls, server doors being left unlocked, lights or televisions being left on, drawing pins being used on prisoner notice boards, and small graffiti marks on notices. Some people saw this as petty, whilst others dismissed this as an individual idiosyncrasy that reflected their “pet hates”. It was the case that the Area

Manager considered the same limited range of issues in every prison. Others also criticised that this distracted from more important areas and that in focussing on the detail, the bigger picture was often missed about the experience of prisoners in the prison. However, for some managers, this reflected a deeper purpose: “It’s a kick up the backside where you get rid of complacency”, “it does keep you on your toes”, and it provides “managerial grip”. Some managers were impressed by the perceived attention to detail and many felt that this created a façade of panoptic observation, where the Area Manager was seen as being able to spot any blemishes or flaws in the prison or department. This may have stimulated the intensive preparation that preceded these visits and therefore promoted a form of Foucauldian self-control (Foucault 1977). As well as this managerial aspect, these inspections also reinforced traditional culture. In particular they emphasised a hierarchical and heroic view of management with the most senior person being presented as being imbued with exceptional powers of observation and judgement. The issues that were focussed upon also emphasised security and appearances, so reinforcing ideas of institutional control and orderliness, rather than examining other issues such as human and interactional experiences. This element of the visits was idiosyncratic in style, but in substance it took both managerial and traditional cultural concerns, combining them in a craftsman-like way into a mode of practice.

A frequent justification for the role of the visits, presented in both official accounts (Laming 2000) and the views of many managers, was the opportunity to gain a subjective professional judgement, often referred to as a “feel” for the prison. In practice, this was not an assessment of the moral climate and relationships, but was essentially an assessment of managerial control. As has been described, the focus was largely on performance monitoring and compliance rather than qualitative, emotional and relational aspects of the prisoner experience. On their initial visit to a prison, one Area Manager said to the senior management team: “I know the dry facts...I haven’t seen you or what you do” (SFN 9). This suggested that the focus was on understanding managers: who was contributing and who was not, who was having an impact and who was

not, and understanding the actions, styles and characters of those working in the prisons. The ‘feel’ of the prison assessed by the Area Manager was therefore largely an assessment of managerial performance.

These visits legitimised the process of monitoring and control as the Area Manager provided a personal embodiment of managerial practices. Managers acknowledged this, for example one said:

“[T]hey’re good in as much as you do see someone, they’re not just a person at a desk somewhere out of the way. They are around and about and that’s good for staff morale...” (W29 senior officer)

The Area Manager could have an impact through their control of rewards and punishments. As rewards, they could allocate discretionary funds to those prisons that were performing well:

“...if there is any money flying around at the end of the year, as there usually is, you’re more likely to get it if the Area Manager is reasonably satisfied that the establishment will use it wisely and is performing to a good standard.” (S4 governor grade)

They could exercise considerable power over the careers of senior managers. They were able to transfer those who were seen as not performing sufficiently or had outlived their useful tour of duty. Conversely, those that performed well could attract patronage and make career progress.

The Area Manager visits had a strategic purpose in aligning the prison with organisational priorities and encouraging a culture of compliance and managerialism. These visits also inter-twinned aspects of traditional practice in the ways that they were internally focussed and hierarchical. They acted to strengthen, intensify and legitimise these practices, focussing on KPTs, audits and the minutiae of rule compliance. This acted to reinforce and entrench the responsabilisation of managers and Foucauldian self-control, where people felt

that they could be observed at any time. It also used softer forms of power through influence, status and charisma to bond managers in to a dominant mode of governance.

Structural qualities

As a form of structure, the Area Manager's visits were relatively intensive as they took place every two to three months. They were also discursive in as much as they were widely discussed by people either positively or negatively and they were prominent. They were less formalized than audits or KPT but were not entirely informal, but instead were loosely structured around broad themes and issues. They were strongly sanctioned as the Area Manager was the line manager of the Governor and could exercise influence over resources and career prospects. This form of structure was therefore looser but nevertheless powerful in the lives of prison managers. The main forms it took were a mixture of domination and legitimation, combining elements as it did in order to create an intimate, personified form of intensive control and compliance. They were important events for managers and provided a means to close the gaps and enhance other structures of performance management.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons is a statutory post under Section 5A of the Prison Act 1952 as inserted by section 57 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982. The role of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) is to inspect prisons in England and Wales and report to the government on the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons and to report on matters connected with prisons and prisoners. There is a specific responsibility to submit an annual report to be laid before Parliament. Their programme is based on a mixture of routine and risk assessed inspections. Full inspections run on a five year cycle and all unannounced follow-up inspections run on a risk-assessed basis. They also publish thematic reviews on specific aspects of imprisonment. The Chief Inspector is appointed from outside

the Prison Service and is assisted by an inspection team made up of people with a range of experiences including prison managers on secondment.

The published aim of HMIP is:

“To provide independent scrutiny of the conditions for and treatment of prisoners and other detainees, promoting the concept of 'healthy prisons' in which staff work effectively to support prisoners and detainees to reduce re-offending or achieve other agreed outcomes” (HMCIP nd)

Reports are informed by published standards, called *Expectations*, derived from the United Nations ‘healthy-prison’ criteria (HMCIP 2006). This criteria covers:

- Safety – that prisoners, even the most vulnerable, are held safely.
- Respect – that prisoners are treated with respect for their human dignity
- Purposeful Activity – that prisoners are able, and expected, to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them.
- Resettlement – that prisoners are prepared for release into the community, and helped to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

There are three stages to each inspection. The first is the pre-inspection visit which includes the collection of preliminary information and the conduct of a confidential survey of a representative proportion of the prisoner population. The second stage is the inspection itself, assessed against the published *Expectations*. Sources of evidence include prisoner survey groups, individual interviews carried out with staff and prisoners, the prisoner survey results, documentation and observation by inspectors. At the end of this the prison is awarded a numeric score for each of the four healthy prison tests, from one (“The prison is performing poorly against this healthy prison test”) up to four (“The prison is performing well against this healthy prison test”) (Newcomen 2005). The third stage is the post-inspection action, including the production of an action plan, based on the recommendations made in the report and subsequent progress reports. It has been reported that 97% of recommendations are accepted with

83% being accepted fully and 70% were found to have been implemented fully or partially on follow-up inspections (Owers 2009).

There has been significant debate about the role of inspection. In particular, there has been a question about whether this should be independent in its purpose and methodology or whether this should be tied to organisational objectives. There has been a general trend in public sector inspection to emphasise organisational objectives and to enlist inspection as part of the managerialist framework (see Davis and Martin 2008). There have been attempts to take prison inspection down this route, for example a report commissioned by the Prison Service recommended this (Laming 2000) and in 2005, the government announced plans to create a merged Inspectorate for Justice, Community Safety and Custody, which would include prisons. It was intended that this be more 'joined up' but also more focussed on managerial accountability. In opposition to this approach, it was argued that the success of HMIP is due to its independence and its distinctiveness from organisational and managerial accountability (Owers 2007). These arguments eventually prevailed when it was decided in 2006 that the proposal for a unified inspectorate would not be taken forward. The inspection process has therefore maintained its distinction from the managerial agenda and instead has provided a form of assessment based upon human rights standards.

This section will explore managers understanding and response to the process of inspection. This will consider the ways in which it was viewed and used by prison managers and the effects that this had on individuals and the prison. As well as exploring these social perspectives, this section will also analyse the structural properties of inspection.

Practices, perceptions and effects

In the two research sites, prison managers appreciated that inspection provided a more qualitative evaluation. This was described in terms such as "they look at the overall stuff", "it's more of an overview", "the whole package", and "the big

picture”. They described that HMIP were able to provide an assessment that excavated a fuller understanding of qualitative issues such relationships between staff and prisoners, the treatment of prisoners, the basic conditions, ‘decency’ and rehabilitative opportunities. It was seen as wider and more in-depth than KPTs and audits, something more than compliance with organisational objectives. In other words it was not a process of ‘managerial accountability’ focussed on internal measures and audiences but was instead a form of ‘public accountability’ based on an externally defined human rights standard and communicated to an external as well as internal audience (Davis and Martin 2008).

Some managers appreciated that inspection had this Janus-faced quality looking both inside and outside. The value of this was summed up by one former Chief Inspector of Prisons:

“...[prisons] are also places that can and do easily become self-referential, lacking the external checks and balances that make institutions ask difficult questions, rather than revert to a default setting of institutional convenience...there is the ‘virtual prison’ – the one that exists in the governor’s office, at headquarters or in the minister’s red boxes – as compared with the ‘actual prison’ being operated on the ground. The Prisons Inspectorate picks up that ‘inspection gap’ between what ought to be and what is.”
(Owers 2007 p.16-17)

Managers appreciated that inspectors provided “a fresh pair of eyes” that could identify areas that those working in the prison on a day-to-day basis simply accepted or ignored. Inspection could be seen as a form of consultancy useful to managers (Ramsbotham 2003, Raine 2008). The externally focussed role included improving public accountability; having a preventative and protective role in relation to human rights, preventing abuse and maintaining standards; and progressing standards by providing a means for professionals and others to evidence the need for improvements and through thematic reviews giving guidance and direction (Owers 2007, Raine 2008).

Most managers described that they were not continuously conscious of HMIP, but instead became more conscious of this in the build up towards planned inspections when they would undertake preparations such as increasing staff awareness and checking policy and practices for compliance with *Expectations*. This focus would also be maintained through the aftermath where follow up actions were planned and implemented. Some of the preparations made by managers were distorting and misleading, for example in 2009 a public scandal erupted as a result of prisons transferring difficult prisoners prior to inspection visits (HMCIP 2009a, 2009b). During the fieldwork, one of the sites was asked by a nearby prison to temporarily locate a difficult prisoner for the duration of an inspection. Although in the circumstances they refused to do so, this did indicate that the practices revealed in 2009 were perhaps not isolated. However, for many the inspection was a process that defied preparation and instead the prison could only demonstrate its usual practices.

Inspection was described as a more uncertain measurement than other approaches such as KPT and audit and less amendable to management control. Although there were attempts to cultivate relationships with inspectors or manage impressions by providing favourable information and building positive relationships. The way in which the assessment took place was described by many managers as subjective, based on “perception”, “opinion” and “feelings” rather than hard facts, and based on individual inspector’s personal views. As a result inspection was sometimes criticised as not being “methodologically trustworthy” (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004 p.142). Many managers preferred forms of assessment such as KPTs and audits and they would use outcomes on those measures to challenge and contradict specific inspection findings. This showed an organisational bias towards more quantitative and malleable measures. The process as a whole was also described as being ‘political’. This was seen in the nature of the recommendations, which it was claimed were patterned across different reports so as to reflect concerns that the inspectorate had about prisons nationally, such as the size of the prison population or race equality, rather than reflecting genuine local findings. The

reports were also seen as political because they were high profile both within the prison system and in the wider public through the media. Such observations revealed a discomfort with the difference between managerial and public accountability. Together these perspectives revealed a lack of appreciation and understanding of the inspection methodology, which was structured professional judgement taking place within a broader ethical framework (Evans and Morgan 1998). They also revealed the dissonance between the interests of internal management and an external human rights process.

There was another aspect to managers' critical perspectives on inspection. This did not focus on managerial issues and interests, but instead had its root in traditional prison occupational culture. From this perspective, the inspection process was criticised for having a focus on prisoners. The perceptions of prisoners were sometimes painted by managers as being illegitimate, for example it was suggested that prisoners would be critical of security, drug supply reduction and tackling bullying, or that their views would be fickle and unreasonable, simply responding to whether they had been recently challenged for their own poor behaviour. These views acted to undermine the legitimacy of prisoners' role in evaluation and the inspection process. This also reflected and perpetuated a particular cultural view of prisoners as the 'other' (Sim 2009) and as a result, the process was seen as tainted by association. The inspectors themselves also came in for criticism for their perceived elitism, idealism and naivety. For example, one manager complained that he would not get a job with the inspectorate because he was a "beer drinker" while inspectors were "wine drinkers", suggesting cultural and class elitism.

In terms of effects, the inspection process had an impact at certain points in the inspection cycle. In some cases the public nature of inspection reports meant that they could make and break careers. A poor inspection report was described as having brought to an end the career of some governing governors, whilst for others it could provide an important benchmark demonstrating the progress they had made. For most managers, the positive outcomes would be communicated

and the negative effects mitigated by either criticising the inspection process or reframing the success criteria in the ways described previously in relation to audit. There were some managers who tried to use inspection more positively as a means of pushing forward change and deriving power. Some managers argued that as a result of inspection reports, additional resources could be attracted by increasing the profile of certain areas and creating a pressure to remedy deficiencies. For example, in one prison a report highlighted the length of the waiting list for the enhanced thinking skills course and this prompted the conduct of a needs assessment that could potentially have led to an increase in the number of courses resourced. These were issues that would not be identified in an audit or through KPTs. For some, criticisms in inspections were an opportunity to seek additional support and resources. As one manager described:

“I feel we have slipped back since the last HMCIP in lots of ways so I’m expecting a rough ride from them. I feel positive about that because I feel that is a way I can move forward because there are things that need doing but I can’t do, I’ve failed in because either people don’t take it seriously enough or are not supporting that area. It will be driven by them and things will get done”. (S8 governor grade)

Overall, inspection was an important measure due to its independent and public nature. However, it was contested by managers and its effects were limited to those times and places where inspections were taking place.

Structural qualities

Inspections differed from the measures described so far in relation to their structural qualities. Inspections were less intensive and more shallow as they were conducted in full once every five years. However, when they did take place they were felt intensively. As a measure it was rarely discussed largely because of this infrequency but when it did take place it was discussed extensively including in the critical ways described. It therefore was discursive rather than tacit in as much as the nature of inspection was not routinely accepted but was

constantly questioned and challenged by prison managers. It was widely seen as being less formalized than audit or KPT but as this was based upon structured professional judgement, it was not informal. The sanctions attached to inspection could be dramatic for senior managers, but for most there would be few direct consequences. The main forms that that this structure took were signification or meaning, and legitimation as inspection was perceived as having a moral foundation, albeit one that was contested.

Inspection was a more uncertain and complex assessment. It stood aside from the general forms of managerial accountability and instead provided an externally-based and independent form of public accountability. This did not sit easily with prison managers and although some individuals appreciated it, many felt a sense of dissonance that derived from both managerial and traditional cultural interests.

Measuring the Quality of Prison Life

At the Prison Service Conference 2002, Phil Wheatley, subsequently Director General of the National Offender Management Service, set out the importance of ‘decency’ in prisons. As well as some specific measures, he also set a general test as; “whether or not staff would be happy with their relatives being held there” (HM Prison Service 2001 p.27). This was a deliberate, strategic attempt to reinvigorate a moral dimension of prison performance. This followed revelations of abuse and poor conditions in a number of prisons including HMP Wandsworth, HMP Wormwood Scrubs and HMP Holloway (Ramsbotham 2003). This also conformed to a New Labour agenda that sought to re-moralise imprisonment through investment in improving conditions and providing more rehabilitative opportunities (Bennett 2007a).

At the time this was emerging, Professor Alison Liebling from the University of Cambridge was researching a quality measure for prisons. Her work led to the development of a tool to assess the moral performance of prisons, which she described as ‘measuring the quality of prison life’ (MQPL) (Liebling assisted by

Arnold 2004). The tool utilises survey data using over 100 questions scored on a five point Likert scale covering relationship dimensions including respect, humanity, relationships, trust, and support as well as regime dimensions including fairness, order, safety, well-being, personal development, family contact, and decency. The authors describe the ‘moral performance’ of prisons as:

“those aspects of a prisoner’s mainly interpersonal and material treatment that render a term of imprisonment more or less dehumanising and/or painful” (ibid p.473 original emphasis).

Although broader, this is linked to notions of legitimacy and decency, and has been described as ‘legitimacy-plus’ (Liebling 2005).

The research was developed using a methodology known as appreciative inquiry, which is based upon providing “a way of looking at an organisation, which concentrates on strengths, accomplishments, best practices, and peak moments” (ibid p.133). Through understanding these positive aspects of individuals, and organisations, it seeks to uncover the ‘truth’ which is overlooked in problem-centred research methodologies. It is also intended that this approach provides a corrective to critical accounts of prisons and prison staff. This approach is generally deployed as an organisational change management tool rather than an academic research methodology (Elliott 1999).

On a practical level, this tool has now been adapted and developed as a means of assessing prison performance. A national Standards Audit team carries out a MQPL assessment at each prison every two years. This involves surveys being completed by a random representative sample of 10-15% of the prisoner population. They meet in groups of approximately ten prisoners in order to complete the survey and discuss issues that are important to them. Following the assessment a report of the results is provided to the Governor, including comparative data about the results and details of the main concerns of prisoners.

It is for prison managers to then decide how to respond as there is no formal requirement to do so.

Theoretically, critics of MQPL argue that the appreciative perspective is partial and privileges the values of staff and managers, painting a more positive picture than others would see (Carlen 2005, Wilson 2005). These critics also argue that rather than revealing a deeper truth, MQPL provides a means of legitimising and defending the interests of insiders. In a converse and narrower sense, the authors reveal that the MQPL approach may be unbalanced. Specifically, they state that in one prison where the score on MQPL was high, revealing a positive culture of relationships and humane treatment, there was subsequently a series of security breaches. This indicates that ‘trust’ may have been given and abused or cordial relationships maintained at the cost of not maintaining appropriate security. The authors acknowledge that the measure is not able to provide an appropriate balance of quality of life and security. This is, of course, a major limitation of the tool and concedes any claim to comprehensiveness.

The development of MQPL has been marked by polarised responses from academic commentators. This section will seek to explore these issues through the eyes of prison managers. In particular, how managers discussed and understood MQPL and what effects it has on them, on prisoners and the prison generally. This section will also consider the structural qualities of this measure.

Practices, perceptions and effects

The most striking feature of managers’ views of MQPL was how little they knew about it. Many had not heard of it or had only a vague understanding of what it was or how it was conducted. It was the least visible and least understood of all the performance measures. Those that were aware of it generally described it as a measure of “prisoners’ perceptions” and considered that it related to issues of “respect”, “decency” and “staff-prisoner relationships”. Some saw this as having value as a measure of “the feel of the place”, as a tool to assess and manage

prisons, and a means by which the views of prisoners could be elicited and considered. Some also valued the independence of the measure. The normative value that this had was summed up by one manager who said:

“...it puts it in another perspective, because sometimes we are too focused on how we manage staff, how we manage as a prison, but forget how we manage prisoners, and it puts in a flavour of how prisoners feel they are being managed in the prison. I think we should take it very seriously” (S8 governor grade).

Although a perspective held by only a small number of managers, those individuals reflected the view of academic commentators who argue that MQPL is more sophisticated than the blunt instrument of KPTs (van Zyl Smit 2005), can reduce the distorting effects of hard managerialism (Liebling 2008), can promote a similar human rights agenda to inspection (Harding 2005) and can provide a means to humanise prisons (Bennett 2005, Newell 2005). The author of MQPL herself admits to “mixed feelings” about the adoption of this methodology within a managerialist framework, but supports this pragmatically (Liebling 2005) as it introduces an “explicitly moral element” into performance management (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004).

On a more instrumental level, some senior managers stated that they had to pay attention to MQPL because it was a measure that senior echelons in the Prison Service, in particular the Director General, took account of in forming a view about individual prisons.

Managers had significant scepticism about MQPL, based on a mixture of concerns about the nature of the measure as a managerial tool and a cultural response to the direct involvement of prisoners. The first question raised by managers was whether this could be a valid measure. They felt that the very nature of imprisonment militated against honest appraisal. For example, one manager said:

“...prisoners will say things that are not really the way they are, it will be their perception and maybe they’re getting a lot better conditions, things are maybe a lot better than they are portraying...That worries me sometimes, you never get a true picture from them. Prisoners will be prisoners and they will complain to complain.” (S13 senior officer)

These comments indicated a concern that the measure served the interests of prisoners, painting a partial and untruthful picture. They also described that prisoners will inevitably be critical due to some ingrained identity or pathology, described as “prisoners will be prisoners” or as another manager commented: “You ask any prisoner, he’s going to moan because he’s in prison” (W9 non-operational manager).

Many managers also described that the methodology was unreliable because of its inclusion of critical prisoner voices:

“...they select 100 prisoners to gain their views on various parts of the establishment on how they feel. Those views are then fed into a report, but they are perceptions of the prisoners, so the perception of the 100 prisoners they speak to may not be the perception of the other 500 prisoners. There are certain perceptions in this year’s MQPL that were only the perceptions of three prisoners in their report, but they’ve put it down...a group of prisoners, ten I think, [said] that the staff were rude and arrogant and negative. I don’t see that. That’s a perception of a small minority of prisoners. I don’t see that as I go around.” (S24 governor grade)

This manager therefore suggested that critical voices were given disproportionate prominence. Other managers saw the outcome as being unreliable as they believed it was simply the luck of the draw as to who was selected to take part. As one manager described:

“It can be extremely subjective because they will come in and pick up a percentage of the jail...they could come in this week and find one set of results and come in next week and find a

completely different set...It's good luck or bad luck as to which prisoners they select randomly from a computer. It's just how it goes.” (S6 principal officer)

Some managers went further to describe prisoner contributions as unreliable due to bias or dishonesty. One manager described their view:

“MQPL I find that frustrating because that's a prisoners' perspective of what's going on but there's nothing in there, as far as I can see, that addresses any vindictive actions that a prisoner might take, some prisoners might say something and half a dozen prisoners say something completely different and radical, perhaps because they've got an axe to grind.” (W6 governor grade)

Other phrases used to sum up this perceived bias by prisoners included that they may have responded to being “rubbed...up the wrong way” or that it simply provided “a good place for them to have a go”. Some went further to suggest that prisoners were dishonest. For example some managers described that: “Unfortunately prisoners, they do tell lies...” and that “...you have to take them with a pinch of salt”.

These views about MQPL revealed that it was a controversial measure. This was partly due to a lack of understanding about research methodologies such as sampling. What also underpinned the scepticism was a cultural response to the foregrounding of the interests of prisoners. This was represented by managers as an unreliable source of information. Of course, such views revealed more deep seated perceptions of prisoners and their appropriate position. This pathologised prisoners as untrustworthy and delegitimised them as a focus of concern and instead suggested that they should be the silent, passive and powerless subjects.

As described above, some senior managers saw MQPL having an instrumental importance as it was taken into account in organisational assessments. As a result, some attempted to prepare for MQPL as they prepared for other external assessments. For example, one manager described:

“We did a lot of work here before they arrived in August, making sure that the prisoner was in the right temperament and you can do that by generating the right atmosphere in the prison, we had competitions in the gym and things like that, little things that created a good atmosphere in the prison. When MQPL came in we got an exceptional report. I think a lot of it was the work we did beforehand and that was generating a good atmosphere so when prisoner groups went to see the psychologists they were in the right mind to talk about the benefits of being [here]” (S9 governor grade).

However, for most managers, the measure was beyond preparation.

In terms of how MQPL was followed up and its effects, it was seen by many as having a limited impact. Managers described that the report would be read, discussed and published, but there would not be rigorous analysis and follow up:

“It seemed more like another paper exercise... You send them back, you get some feedback sent out or published on the intranet and its end of story.” (W22 senior officer)

The only exception was that one manager suggested that as with other reports, if there was a particularly good or bad assessment, it would have an impact but beyond these polar outcomes it was often seen as marginal. There were four reasons given for this. The first was that the MQPL report was complicated and difficult to interpret and turn into clear action (Bennett 2007b). Managers described how they were presented with “all these graphs and charts” which they struggled to understand. The reports were composed of a myriad of statistical information using means and standard deviations. This has been applauded by academics who have described that:

“In contrast to her subtle analytical instruments, the performance indicators used by the Prison Service seem extraordinarily crude” (van Zyl Smit 2005 p.766)

However, for many prison managers, in comparison to the simplicity of KPTs, MQPL appeared to be extraordinarily complex. The reports also did not

immediately lend themselves to practical action. The report would say what prisoners had said, what their perspectives were and how they rated aspects of the prison, but it did not identify any specific issues that shaped this perception or any changes that could be made in order to improve. This meant that they were of limited practical value without significant further analysis and action planning.

The second blockage to effectiveness flowed from the scepticism managers reported regarding prisoners' involvement. As a result of this, the perceptions and assessments reported were often dismissed. For example at one of the research sites, nine of the twenty critical areas from the MQPL report were rejected because they were considered to be factually inaccurate. However, for some managers this represented a misunderstanding of the value of the report:

“The other thing is they’ll say...the prisoners’ perception is this. We say ‘no it fucking well isn’t - rubbish!’ In fact I heard [X] say, which I thought was brilliant...”yes its prisoners’ perception, so what action are we taking to change their perception?” That’s the whole point of the exercise, why have they got that perception and what are you going to do to change it, rather than they’ve got the facts wrong – yes they have but that’s not the point, why have they got that perception?” (S15 governor grade)

However, such a view was in the minority and instead many managers simply saw the outcome of the reports as being as unreliable as the prisoners themselves.

The third reason that the reports were limited in their effects was related to the issue highlighted in the original research that developed MQPL; the inability of MQPL to incorporate the appropriate role of security. For example one manager stated:

“I think you can interpret it in 300 different ways. I’ll give you an example of that, it was put over that the lifer manager is more interested in security than he is in progressing life sentence prisoners. I could take that, because all they do is put that statement in, they don’t quantify how it’s been given or what

inflections on it, so I don't know whether that's meant to be a negative thing said by prisoners or a positive thing. If they are looking from a staff point of view then security is important and that's the key thing, we are protecting the public. Or do I look at it as being negative that prisoners think we are coming down to hard on them but if that is the case I have to decide whether I loosen the reins a bit or am I being manipulated to loosen the reins, or do I keep them as they are? So it's very hard to define what they are saying.” (S26 principal officer).

This comment contested the normative value of MQPL and prisoner observations. It explored how the legitimate role of security, which may sometimes conflict with quality of life, was not incorporated in the assessment.

The fourth issue that limited follow up was that criticisms were often about issues that were not within the control of the prison. For example, problems with foreign national prisoners being detained pending deportation, or prisoners being held at considerable distances from their home were presented as issues that had an effect upon quality of life but the prison was powerless to influence.

Overall, MQPL had a limited effect on the prison. This was partly a function of its complexity but it was also as a result of the cultural response to it being based on prisoners' views.

Structural qualities

As a structure, MQPL was infrequently conducted and used, being conducted once every two years and being weakly followed up. It could therefore be described as shallow. It was also discursive in that managers contested its value and effectiveness and this translated into how they followed up and managed it. It was formalized in as much as it used survey and focus group techniques, which were carefully designed. Sanctions following up from this were generally seen as limited and the results were marginalized, as a result it could be described as being weakly sanctioned. MQPL was designed in order to be based upon meaning and legitimation, but instead it was highly contested and really it was

conducted because it had to be rather than managers feeling any commitment to it.

The aim of MQPL to engage prisoners in the performance management of prisons exposed wider cultural issues. In a more obvious way than inspection, it highlighted the preferences of prison managers for measures that were simple and malleable, but also located within a traditional culture, including how prisoners were perceived. The response of managers to MQPL has to be understood within this context of prison and managerial cultures.

Independent Monitoring Board

Each prison has an Independent Monitoring Board. They are volunteers from the local community appointed in order to monitor the conditions and the treatment of prisoners and staff. They produce regular, weekly visit reports and also an annual report which is sent to the Secretary of State responsible for prisons. Their purpose is defined as “providing a voice for the community in setting out what we expect to be done in our name” (AMIMB 2005). Board members are selected and trained for their role and their appointment is approved by the Secretary of State.

This form of monitoring has a long history, dating back to the Elizabethan era and has had a formal statutory basis that dates back to the nationalisation of prisons under the Prison Act 1877 (Haines 2008). Their contemporary authority derives from the Prison Act 1952. Over time, the role of the Board has changed and this has continued to evolve over recent years. Until 1991, Board members heard disciplinary charges against prisoners and until 2003 were responsible for authorising the use of segregation. Recent changes have seen the Board become purely a monitoring body. This shift in emphasis was recognised by the change of their name in 2003 from the historical ‘Board of Visitors’ to the more explicit and modern ‘Independent Monitoring Board’ (Lloyd 2001). This change in role and focus has also brought with it the development of more structured

techniques, such as the publication of detailed guidance on questioning areas as part of the monitoring role (AMIMB 2005).

It has been argued that these Boards have an important role in highlighting and preventing abuse (see for example Lewis 1997, Ramsbotham 2003). It is also part of their role that they act as a form of public accountability by recruiting from the local community, publishing their reports publicly and having independence from local management. This is a form of monitoring that has a long and varied history and although recent years have seen a more managerial agenda, they have retained an independent and loosely defined monitoring role.

In this section, managers' understanding and appreciation of the role of the IMB will be explored. This will include how they are perceived, how they interact with prison managers and the effects on staff, prisoners and the wider organisation. The section will go on to examine the structural qualities of the IMB as a form of monitoring and management.

Practices, perceptions and effects

The formal role of the IMB was widely understood and appreciated by managers. Their role was often described in terms such as being “the eyes and ears of the [Secretary of State]”. Their role was described as having internal and external dimensions. Internally they were seen as a route through which prisoner concerns could be addressed. Their independence was seen as important in enabling them to resolve problems with prisoners. Within the prison, they could also ask questions and follow up queries so that staff and managers had to spend time explaining issues to them and responding to their concerns. They also had the right to report issues to the Governor, which would lead to follow up actions being taken. A number of individuals were singled out for their knowledge and expertise, often from their professional background in specialist areas such as healthcare. They were seen as having a protective and preventative role in respect of performance and human rights. Externally, their annual report would

be submitted to the Minister and formal questions would be responded to. They also had external power as their reports could attract local media attention and shape community perceptions. They were seen as holding power through public accountability that could have consequences for the prison and managers.

There were positive effects that could arise from their role. Their scrutiny and advocacy on behalf of prisoners acted as a means through which moral conscience was maintained and reinforced, for example, managers expressed concern about the IMB becoming aware of cases where individual prisoners were receiving what they considered to be poor health care or other services. It was also suggested that scrutiny by the IMB led to improvements in quality. As one manager commented:

“In some respects that’s pretty useful because it’s certainly fine tuned what we will write in certain reports because it’s got to stand scrutiny. We’ve upped our game considerably to reflect the changing pace of the IMB.” (W6 governor grade)

The IMB were seen by some as having moral authority which could have wider benefits in protecting and promoting human rights.

However, they were not uncritically accepted by managers. The first example of this was the backroom representation of the IMB as socially distanced from the people who lived and worked in prison. Boards are largely comprised of middle aged, middle class white people (Lloyd 2001). Many managers were conscious of the distance that this created between the IMB and prisoners or staff. As one manager described:

“IMBs aren’t actually a fair representation of the population are they?...if someone said what are the prisoner population and who is looking after them, if you look at [this prison]’s IMB, they’re either retired or coming to retirement, white middle or upper class, that does not reflect the prisoner population. Sometimes there could be that issue of – how can you understand? How can

you understand what its like to be a heroin abuser from [a city], and the culture they have?” (W10 governor grade)

This view led some managers to see IMB members as ill-suited to their role and with a limited appreciation of the world they had entered. Some managers dealt with IMB members at arms length or treated them with scepticism. This could be detected in stories about IMB members. For example, one was alleged to have said that they joined the Board for “dinner [party] material”, and others were described as getting in the way of incidents that were being managed by staff or asking what were seen as inappropriate or inane questions during crises. These stories emphasised issues of social distance and questioned the competence of IMB members.

Managers played an active role in attempting to control the work of IMBs. Although nominally independent, the IMB spent significant amounts of time with prison staff and managers over a prolonged period of time, and had a degree of dependence upon them in order to do their job, as a result there was some pressure upon them to develop empathy and to assimilate their values, in other words there was the opportunity for them to be enlisted or at least managed so as to support the perspective of prison staff (see also Lloyd 2001). This sometimes happened directly, for example they would be given a formal induction, were briefed on security and control issues and would receive presentations and information prepared by managers. However, the majority of this shaping took a more subtle form through interactions with staff. Managers would attempt to form what they perceived as “good relationships” with the IMB, which generally meant that they were polite, consulted with managers before writing up concerns and did not cause too much difficulty. There were also attempts to shape and manage the relative relationships that IMB members had with staff and prisoners. Individual Board members were often judged as to whether they were perceived to be too trusting of prisoners and therefore manipulated into believing complaints raised. Some comments by managers included:

“[They] turn up, believe everything the prisoner told them then walk away” (WFN 22)

“Sometimes with the IMB you just think that prisoner is totally playing you” (S5 governor grade)

“I get annoyed because they don’t always see the bigger picture, they take the prisoners word for something not happening or something going wrong without looking at the bigger picture. I know they’re here for staff as well as prisoners but it’s very one-sided.” (S10 principal officer)

In the words of one principal officer, they were simply “prisoners’ friends”. Staff and managers had a degree of scepticism about prisoners and viewed the absence of this as a risk. Conversely, they praised those IMB members who took an interest in staff issues or elevated the concerns of staff above those of prisoners. For example, those singled out for praise included members who thanked staff for their involvement in events such as family days for prisoners, took an interest in staff well-being after incidents and asked about members of staff who were on sick leave. Such members would receive more positive interactions with staff. Some managers went so far as to want the IMB to become a staff advocacy service:

“I think perhaps they can be more staff orientated because at the end of the day their dual role is both staff and prisoners, but I think a lot of it is maybe prisoner based. I’ve never seen them run a staff clinic here.” (S26 principal officer)

Through this use of criticism and praise, some managers attempted to re-orientate IMB members towards the interests of staff and away from those of prisoners. In some cases, Board members, whether by nature or through this process had an antipathy towards prisoners. For example some IMB members would describe prisoners in disparaging terms such as “nasty bastards”. Others would be critical of issues such as diversity, for example one dismissed the racial monitoring of the use of force seeing it as meaningless or unimportant as in their view all use of

force was reasonable. Some therefore held more critical views of prisoners that resonated with traditional staff cultures.

The second element of the IMBs that was questioned was their ability to provide effective internal scrutiny (Lloyd 2001). They provided a looser and less structured form of assessment and were part-time volunteers. There were often issues regarding the quality of their scrutiny due to methodological limitations and a limited knowledge of prison procedures, processes, rules and regulations. They rarely appeared to use the structured methodologies published in guidance but instead approached the role in a traditional manner learned through experience or passed down over time (Vagg 1985). As a result of their often limited knowledge, they would have to rely upon members of staff in order to explain decisions, prison processes, for access to information and for descriptions of prisoner's behaviour. For example, one manager described:

“Sometimes I think the IMB don't have as much knowledge when dealing with complaints, so they can't always answer them because they don't have the knowledge. They come to us for advice.” (W23 principal officer)

The potential undermining of scrutiny was summed up by one manager who said:

“The problem is they ask questions of a member of staff; what's the number of this they can have or that they can have and you're thinking why are you asking me when it's all on there [the computer] you've got access to it? What they should be saying is I know they're entitled to that, why aren't they getting it? It's the wrong question if you like. Almost straight away it puts them on the back foot. They should know how to find the information then ask the question that comes from that, not the other way around.” (S14 governor grade)

The limited knowledge of some IMB members left staff and managers as the primary definers of the issues at hand. As a result managers could shape, neutralise and control the scrutiny being applied, and IMB members had “a

reliance on managerial judgements of the acceptability of the situation” (Vagg 1985 p.129).

In their external influence, the IMB was also constrained and controlled. Some members attempted to ask critical questions about broader issues such as the prison population or the detention of foreign nationals after the expiry of their sentences. One manager described how this happened through annual reports:

“Obviously the things they put down in their reports, they reflect on [the prison] but they also reflect on the bigger prison picture, which really goes outside their remit and they start lambasting the Governor for lack of spaces, overcrowding and we go on. Unfortunately it’s all very well writing that down on paper, but that comes back down to us to answer the questions they place. They’re trying to set at a national level not for the individual establishment.” (W7 governor grade)

The Board members were criticised by managers and demoralised by being told of the futility of their efforts to raise what were ‘national’ issues and therefore beyond their remit. They were discouraged by managers from developing broader criticisms of imprisonment and instead encouraged to simply focus on local management. This was an attempt to re-orientate IMB members from a public accountability role to a managerial one, focussing on the local delivery of pre-existing policies rather than raising broader questions about the practice and effects of imprisonment.

It can be seen from the three key areas of independence, internal scrutiny and external accountability, that the role of the IMB was contested by prison managers. In particular, prison managers attempted to control, enlist and shape their practice in a way that reflected both managerial and traditional cultural concerns.

Structural qualities

In analysing the work of the IMB in structural terms, the first observation is that they operated using more informal methods that were less clearly prescribed and controlled than others, giving significant latitude for subjective judgements. Whilst visits by IMB members took place on a regular basis, their work did not impinge heavily on the lives of prison managers and therefore tended towards being shallow in its effects. Their role was not widely discussed, but when it was it was contested. It therefore tended towards being discursive rather than tacit. Finally, there were limited consequences that flowed from the IMB, they were seen as being capable of causing some minor embarrassment but they were not seen as being significantly important. Their work was weakly sanctioned. In terms of the sources of power the IMB had, this tended towards the moral aspects of their role, in particular that they were seen as having a protective and preventative role in relation to human rights and their independence was valued. Their power was a soft power relying upon signification and legitimation.

The IMB provided the longest standing method for monitoring prisons and as a result they were less informed by modern practices but instead had a role rooted in history and tradition. Their role was less formalised and more subjective reflecting a form of local public accountability. However, their role was contested, constrained and controlled as they come under the dual assault of managerialism and traditional prison culture. These forces combined to create a pressure to neutralise and enlist the IMB, minimising their impact.

Conclusion

Managerialism has been described as having an ever deepening grip upon organisations including prisons. This chapter has sought to explore the technical and structural qualities of performance management methodologies, but also the social aspects of their practice. In this closing section, some broader issues will be discussed and conclusions drawn. This will start with general observations about managerialism and its effects in prisons, and then go on to consider

individual performance measures in an attempt to use these micro observations to reveal broader issues.

There was a wide range of performance measurement used in prisons. Together these formed an architecture that rendered managerial work visible and accountable. The depth and extent of this structure meant that this could be described as panoptic in as much as it attempted to provide an intensive and comprehensive form of surveillance (Foucault 1977). This had paradoxical effects on managers. On one hand they felt under pressure from the constantly prying eyes of senior managers, they felt vulnerable when poor performance was exposed and they were constantly aware of their need to concentrate on those issues that were measured. They self-regulated their practice in order to comply with organisational orthodoxy, so enabling what has been described as 'management at a distance' (O'Malley 2004). This form of self-management could be felt intensely by some individual managers. However, they also experienced this as empowering when applied by them towards their subordinates. They found that it was a source of information that they could use to judge individuals and make managerial decisions. They could regulate the behaviour of others and direct them into patterns of conformity. Managers were in the position of being at the same time both the subjects and the perpetrators of the panoptic web enmeshing the organisation.

Performance measures, particularly those that were strongly supported such as KPIs and audits, could exercise significant influence upon how managers felt about themselves and their work. There was wide support for these measures and they were generally described as being both legitimate and effective. Many also went further and described a powerful internalised drive to achieve targets. Support for these measures became so deeply entrenched that was in many cases absorbed within individual identity and the professional *habitus*. It has been argued that whilst the initiation of managerialism and NPM was centred upon privatisation and commercial competition, this has been limited and instead it has taken root through the use of management techniques imported from the private

sector such as performance measurement (Armstrong 2007). However, in prisons it is suggested here that this has been given depth and intensity not through the development of technological apparatus, but through the absorption of these approaches within the identity or *habitus* of prison managers so that they become self-governing and self-controlling.

This is not to suggest that there was no diversity in how managers responded to managerialism. Some managers, who most strongly supported these developments, legitimised them and saw them as empowering and effective. They would absorb this within their identity more intensely. For the majority, they were aware of the limitations of performance measures but accepted that they were a fact of life. This was not dull compulsion, an unquestioning resignation, but instead they were pragmatists who accepted their own individual position in the power structure. They could see the strength and limitations but would ensure that the expectations placed upon them were met. As a result, most managers were equally pragmatic about issues such as the manipulation of data. They again accepted this as part of general practice and making things work. There were only a small number of managers who were more thinking and discriminating in how they approached performance management, using this as a means to focus on the underlying issues that they felt a personal commitment towards such as the humane treatment of prisoners and the promotion of rehabilitative opportunities. These individualistic managers attempted to use and reshape managerial targets so as to support wider objectives.

A final general observation relates to the issue of the manipulation of performance measures. This took many forms including the misreporting of information, the collection of inaccurate data and preparing for assessments so as to present a more positive façade. This was not an isolated case of a few bad apples but was instead a chronic feature of the system of performance management. These acts attempted to present an appearance of compliance and were carried out and condoned for a number of reasons including self-interest, the desire to succeed in a competitive environment, it was perceived as

something everyone did and that it was seen as a necessity in order to cope with demands that were felt to be unrealistic. On the face of it, this acted to reinforce and support the regime of performance management by presenting a façade of compliance, conformity and success. However, this also acted in a way that ultimately served to undermine the credibility of the system by creating a ‘virtual prison’ where there was a dissonance between performance figures and the lived experience of prison life (Owers 2007). This also acted in a more subtle way in creating an ‘imaginary penalty’ (Carlen 2008a), by this it is suggested that whilst managerial measures were presented as creating order, control and transparency, they instead fostered practices of distortion, misinformation and deception, so that the operation of the process undermined the aims that it purported to promote.

These general observations suggest that managerialism in prisons is powerful but problematic. A more detailed micro-analysis of the individual performance measures can also reveal more subtle features of the culture of prison management.

As explored in the sections above, not all of these performance management tools had identical structural properties. Using the analytical tools presented by Giddens (1984) it is possible to summarise these in the table below:

	Intensive / Shallow	Tacit / Discursive	Informal / Formalized	Weakly sanctioned / Strongly sanctioned
Key performance targets	Intensive	Tacit	Formalized	Strongly sanctioned
Audits	Intensive	Tacit	Formalized	Strongly sanctioned
Area Manager’s visits	Shallow	Discursive	Informal	Strongly sanctioned
HM	Shallow	Discursive	Formalized	Occasionally

Inspectorate of Prisons				strongly sanctioned
Measuring the Quality of Prison Life	Shallow	Discursive	Formalized	Weakly sanctioned
Independent Monitoring Boards	Shallow	Discursive	Informal	Weakly sanctioned

This table illustrates that there was a mixture of what can be described as ‘hard’ measures that were intense and exerted a powerful influence on managers, such as KPTs and audits, through to those that were ‘soft’ and carried less power and were less intrusive such as MQPL and IMB’s. The table reflects a hierarchy of influence, running from the measures that shaped the working lives of prison managers to the greatest extent, starting with KPTs, through to those that had the least influence. This hierarchy was reflected both in the stronger sense of commitment that managers expressed towards measures such as audits and KPTs, and also in the absence of resistance. In contrast, with some of the measures that were based upon structured professional judgement such as inspection, MQPL and IMB reports, there was more open criticism.

Whilst there were some intrinsic qualities that differed between measures and this may explain the differences in how they were perceived by managers that did not provide the whole picture. The differences could also be discussed in relation to two issues – risk management and prison culture. In relation to risk, the emergence of performance management provided a means through which the complex tasks of prison management could be simplified and controlled. They were means of managing risk or at least presenting the appearance of doing so (O’Malley 2004). The harder, qualitative measures were also more amenable to management action. They were clearer and more predictable and managers saw that their efforts could influence results. In contrast, those measures based upon structured judgement and prisoner perceptions were more unpredictable and unmanageable. The measures themselves therefore differed in the degree to which they were perceived as intrinsically risky for managers and to which they

could provide a means through which managers could control risk. The simplification and certainty provided by the harder performance measures helped to explain their attraction to prison managers as it provided them with meaning and control.

The second issue related to culture. In particular, measures such as IMB reports, Inspection reports and MQPL were criticised because of the attention that they played to prisoners' needs and views. This association with prisoners acted to spoil the identity (Goffman 1963) of these measures in the eyes of some managers, making them unreliable and unimportant. This related to a traditional cultural view of prisoners, who have been seen within the occupational group as being subservient and cast as the 'other' (Sim 2009). In contrast, harder measures were seen as meeting organisationally defined needs or more general needs of managers such as certainty and risk management as described above. The cultural context was therefore also important in understanding the differences in how measures were practiced.

Performance management, managerialism and NPM have become globalised phenomena. This has had a transformational effect in prisons by providing a technology of monitoring and accountability that has changed management practice and professional identities. However, this has not obliterated traditional practice and culture but instead there has been an accommodation and fusion, where globalised practice had been mediated through local influences (Kennedy 2010). For example, the ways that targets were understood reflected traditional views about prisoners, hierarchy and social order, while the ways that they were pursued reflected a competitive machismo. Rather than simply being a unitary globalised practice, the use of performance management has been adapted and reshaped to take account of idiosyncratic and local features of the organisation. This collision, interaction and accommodation created a cross-cutting and distinct set of features that could not be described as purely local nor could it be described as purely global, instead it could be described as having a 'glocal' character.

The ways in which performance measurement was interpreted and understood through particular cultural lenses is important as it highlights the often overlooked issue of how local features persevere in the face of global change, albeit in altered, diminished or re-imagined forms. This has been observed in other criminal justice organisations, including the police, where it has been suggested that traditional culture has not been displaced by modernisation but instead interacts in a complex way across place and time (Loftus 2011). The cultural situation of performance measurement in prisons demonstrates how tradition shapes the use of new techniques and technologies and remains a prominent part of practice and thinking. It also highlights that the managerial process is enmeshed in the use of power, smoothing the way for a movement of control towards managers whilst at the same time maintaining the hierarchical relationship between staff and prisoners. From this perspective, performance management is not a detached, objective management tool, but is instead a set of practices that have important social effects.

Chapter 5

“We haven’t quite been turned into robots yet”: The role of individuality and subjectivity in prison management

The growth of the managerial infrastructure, as described in the previous chapter, has changed both the technical nature of prison work but also had an impact upon the approach of prison managers. This chapter attempts to explore the residual role of individuality and subjectivity within the working lives of prison managers.

It is generally recognised that the growth of managerial practices has seen the development of mechanisms for enforcing greater conformity and has been accompanied by an apparent increased willingness of prison managers to submit to this enhanced control (Cheliotis 2006, Bryans 2007). However, that control is not complete and there remains some space where rules, audit baselines, performance targets and line management supervision do not prescribe or direct (ibid). It is within the nature of social worlds that such spaces always exist, even within a ‘total’ institutions such as a prison, the idea of the all-encompassing control of individual action is neither realistic nor desirable (Sparks et al 1996). This chapter is concerned with locating and exploring these spaces, where there are gaps or room for manoeuvre. The essential concern is with the survival of the personal effect in prison management.

In trying to understand this, it is important to locate the discussion within the historical and social context of management in general and prison management in particular. In the Western world, managers and leaders are often heralded as heroic figures. There is a myriad of popular literature on successful organisational leaders and formulae for effective leadership (for summary see Mullins 2002). This creates what can be seen as a cult of the organisational leader. Prisons have not been immune from this and particular attention has been paid to prison governors, who are described as holding a special place in the

organisation. For example, Bryans (2007) quotes half a dozen official and academic sources from the previous half a century that hail the importance of governing governors in particular. Similar claims have been made by practicing governors, for example Coyle (2008a) acknowledges that prisons are shaped by wider social and political factors but also describes that managers established an institutional “ethos” (p.243). A similar case is also presented by Bryans and Wilson (2000) who describe that:

“An effective prison governor also understands the subtleties and nuances of the special nature of prison culture. In short the prison governor is often the conduit through which various interested parties, including prisoners themselves, make sense of what happens inside.” (p.xi)

As with Coyle, the suggestion is that a prison manager provides a moral framework through which the prison operates.

These writers highlight the idea that prison managers act with agency; a sense of individuality and subjectivity. Whilst this is not unconstrained, they suggest that there is substantial space for the prison manager to shape their working world. From this perspective, prison managers, particularly governors, hold significant power, which they exercise in individual ways, and despite the encroachment of managerialism they retain a significant residual effect.

However, it has been discussed in the previous chapter how the new technologies of managerialism have not simply introduced techniques for organisational control, but they also involve the attempt to manufacture consent and enlist support from prison managers. Recreating employees as idealised ‘corporate citizens’ is a feature of managerialism in contemporary organisations (Parker 2002). It has been suggested further that this involves moulding employees not only to act in ways that are organisationally desirable but also to think in ways that are preferred (Rose 1999). This includes the use of human resource strategies ranging from appraisal, reward and progression to engagement,

consultation, communication and personal development (Parker 2002). This attempt to encompass the subjective capabilities of individuals within the sphere of organisational control has been described as 'governing the soul' (Rose 1999). The aim of these strategies is to deepen and intensify the achievement of prescribed organisational aims and facilitates greater central control and 'management at a distance' (O'Malley 2004). These writers draw a picture of an organisation where the behaviour of individuals in those spaces where choice is open to them, is to act in a way that optimise organisational benefit. Their actions are patterned so as to achieve central aims. The personal effect is reduced and instead they stand as proxies for the organisation.

A third perspective that may be drawn upon is that of occupational culture. As has been described in the previous chapter and in chapter 2, it has been argued that there is a strong and distinctive prison officer culture which plays a role in shaping prison work (Crawley 2004, Liebling 2007). The features of this include insularity, machismo and a hierarchical relationship with prisoners. It has been argued widely that occupational culture can seep into the subjectivity of individuals and this has variously be described as the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984) or 'working personality' (Skolnick 1966). All of these formulations suggest that occupational culture is not consciously enacted but becomes embedded in individual thinking and behaviour. From this perspective, occupational culture may play a role in shaping the way that prison managers approach the spaces between explicit direction and overt control.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to delve into those spaces between rules, monitoring and supervisory observation. This is intended to explore how prison managers approach these opportunities for individuality and subjectivity. What beliefs and values do prison managers hold? Do they act upon these in their work and if so, how? Are these beliefs, values and practices shared across occupational groups? How far has this been eroded or changed by the development of managerial practices? How do they negotiate the various pressures upon them in

their practice? This exploration is concerned with prison managers as ‘micro actors’ (Kennedy 2010), making sense of the tensions between global and local, old and new, individual desires and organisational constraints.

This chapter will focus on five areas. The first is management values, which addresses managers’ approach, presentation, personality and world views and how these are incorporated into their practice. The second is management-staff relations, that is the ideas about how managers should operate, direct and integrate with those they manage. The third is discretion, that is where managers exercise a degree of choice in decision making, how they approach that task. The fourth is resistance, how managers act when their individual beliefs or preferences came into conflict with the expectations placed upon them. The fifth is the ways in which managers exercise and use the power that they hold. These elements, whilst not comprehensive, provide a means through which the individuality and subjectivity of prison managers can be explored within this particular work context. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the issues raised.

Management values

Historically, the sociology of work has had much to say about the different styles, approaches and values adopted by managers. Various different typologies have been proposed, from the most basic such as Lewin, Lippitt and White’s (1939) distinction between autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire managers, to more sophisticated approaches such as the six styles described by Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994). This has also been reflected in the literature on prison managers. As has been discussed previously, Rutherford (1993a) argues that criminal justice managers operated within three ‘credos’: expedient managerialism, humanity and punitiveness. Although he acknowledged that managerialism was starting to dominate, he did argue that criminal justice managers are a diverse group and their work is: “an arena characterized by competing ideologies” (Rutherford 1993b p.26). More recently, Bryans (2007)

acknowledged the dominance of managerialism but argues that there remains a diversity of approaches. He argues that there are four ideal types: general managers who focus on performance management and their own personal career success; chief officers who are hands-on operational managers who have worked their way through the ranks; liberal idealists who are concerned with the morality of imprisonment and engaged in wider penal reform; and conforming mavericks who are charismatic individuals who develop distinct and innovative practices whilst also achieving the majority of conventional targets. Bryans draws upon research on Chief Police Officers, which suggests that these types are “distinctive constellations...that can be seen as variations around central themes” (Reiner 1991 p.303). However, he also recognises that these types are a construction and no individual was likely to precisely match them. Given that this is the case, Bryans suggests that the diversity of prison managers was almost infinite: “Governors, after all, are individuals with distinct attributes and unique histories” (Bryans 2007, p.159).

These works focus on diversity, but in revealing an increasing trend towards managerialism, they also disclose a homogenisation of practices and values. A more complete analysis would be one that explores both of these factors. It has been argued that an emphasis on diversity and change alone produces an artificial neatness that underplays the complexity and tensions that exist within prisons (Loader and Sparks 2004) and also that this has a political purpose, presenting a more positive representation than may be the case and obscuring the more repressive elements of the penal system (Sim 2009).

In this section, the variety of styles and approaches taken by managers will be considered. This will particularly take into account the penal ideologies managers articulate and worked to. This section will ask what the different values expressed by managers are? What do these reveal about the nature of prison management and prison managers? How far do these reflect individuality and how far do they reflect patterns of conformity? The section will close by

exploring how the issue of management values reflects agency in the work of prison managers.

Values in practice

In the two prisons, managers in general stated that they brought their own personality and values into their work and that it was not possible to draw a neat distinction between the professional and the personal self. They also generally resisted the idea that managerialism had created a tightly manacled cadre of managers and instead suggested that whilst the development of rules and targets constrained them, they could still find space to express themselves. As one manager described:

“Although I’ve been describing to you a very tight Prison Service where there isn’t an awful lot of room for manoeuvre in as much as you do need to follow the PSOs, follow the rules and regulations, I still feel that because we are a human business, not dealing with commodities, you can still bring your own personality into the job, we haven’t quite been turned into robots yet.” (S4 governor grade)

The values of managers were expressed in formal and informal aspects of their role. Through communications, their words and statements at meetings and in documents included explicit articulation of values. Examples of this included a discussion in one prison about prisoners’ access to contraception, which drew upon different discourses where one side emphasised public health whilst another cited moral opprobrium and security risks. Managers would also articulate organisationally constructed values such as ‘decency’. Whilst the use of such terms did in some cases accord with individuals’ views about the treatment of prisoners and this could be a way of legitimising these and gaining leverage, for others this was a form of managerial compliance, something they implemented because it was directed rather than through any personal commitment.

Managers also made strategic and resource allocation choices linked to values. Whilst the use of resources was constrained by rules and targets, there was some limited scope for choice. For example, in education, activities including arts were not usually formally funded but managers would find ways to include this so as to create a broader curriculum. Managers could also make recruitment and promotion decisions in which they could select individuals who shared similar values, beliefs and approaches.

The managers in the prisons described the values they held. These were clustered around three broad groups: professionalism; reform, rehabilitation and humane treatment; and punishment and security. In general these reflected the three credos described by Rutherford (1993a). However, it was also clear that constructing such idealised types obscured some of the complexity and tensions that were present.

The most frequently cited values were those clustered around 'professionalism'. This had instrumental aspects, for example managers described how they valued qualities included achieving success, acting "by the book", or complying with the demands placed upon them. However, these managers did not see managerialism as purely instrumental or 'expedient' as suggested by Rutherford, but instead many felt a deeply held personal commitment to meeting targets for their own sake. This had become part of their *habitus* or working identity. Others also looked beyond expediency and felt that some targets helped to improve the quality of service to the public or to prisoners. They therefore felt that targets could contribute towards morally progressive aims.

The notion of 'professionalism' also had other moral and emotional aspects. This encompassed attributes such as conscientiousness, openness, good communication, honesty and integrity. Such characteristics usually related to dealings with staff, but were also relevant to those with prisoners. These characteristics were normative; describing an approach that was considered morally good.

Another element of ‘professionalism’ was a commitment to having good relationships with staff. This has been a staple of management studies including the study of human services (e.g. Gronroos 1984). In prisons, this was complex, as this staff orientation could operate in a way that privileged the perspective of staff and subordinated prisoners. This issue will be explored in more depth in the next section, but at this stage, it should be noted that there were problematic aspects of the construction of professionalism in this respect.

Rather than being a cohesive set of values, the elements of professionalism could sometimes conflict. For example, the pressure to meet targets could lead to tensions with the values of honesty and integrity. As has been described in the previous chapter, there were a myriad of situations in which managers put managerialism first, for example manipulating performance data. However, on other occasions managers resisted this pressure and placed their integrity first. One manager described such a situation:

“...I [had] a written complaint I was late for the month before last. I was three or four days late for various reasons. It was suggested that I backdate it to the date that would put it back in date. I wasn’t happy doing that to the point where I was basically willing to be ridiculed in front of the rest of the SMT...I wasn’t happy lying. I remember being told early in my career that would cause me all sorts of problems and ‘you’re far too honest’ and the rest of it.” (S7 governor grade)

This statement revealed the ways in which values came into conflict for an individual, but was also played out across an occupational group. This manager described how the wider group attempted to influence his behaviour by loosening his commitment to honesty, ridiculing him for not achieving a target and normalising the falsification of data.

Overall, the notion of ‘professionalism’ as understood by prison managers was complex and conflicted, but it encompassed an intensified and personalised

commitment to meeting managerial targets and acting in ways that conformed with cultural aspects of the work including forming strong relationships with staff.

The second cluster of values discussed by managers was based around reform, rehabilitation and the humane treatment of prisoners, what Rutherford described as the 'humanity credo'. Again, this was more diverse and riddled with tensions than the notional ideal types suggested. For some, this reflected a moral commitment towards a liberal humanitarian approach including addressing social deficits such as education, substance misuse, employment, housing and attitudes. This could be viewed as a version of traditional 'public service ethos' that privileged the public good over private interests (McDonough 2006). For others, this was an extension of managerialism, with issues such as 'rehabilitation' 'reducing re-offending', 'resettlement' and 'decency' being organisationally constructed objectives which were implemented because they were prescribed and monitored. That humanitarian ideas had been incorporated into managerial practices was seen as an enabling force by some. For example, one manager described that:

"It's all very well to sit down and say to people this is my view on how we should do it, to which they could turn around and say "that's your view". It's a little bit woolly. We're a professional service, we're professional people, so we should abide by the rules that encompass what we do. If within the staff handbook we should do this, we should maintain this that and the other, that's what we should do, that's what our boundaries are. If I saw somebody who was not up to that, I don't want to leave them thinking "that's his view", no, you will do it, this is what's laid down and you will do it." (W7 governor grade)

In this statement, this manager reveals how managerial compliance could be used for progressive ends. This pragmatic view has also been articulated by senior prison managers (e.g. Wheatley 2005) and academics (e.g. Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004, Whitty 2011).

The third way in which reform, rehabilitation and humane treatment was understood by prison managers was with a punitive aspect. This could be seen in the way that one manager discussed these issues:

“There are certain values that you can bring, like good manners. I think good manners are important. You can instil that and insist and get that from prisoners, providing you reciprocate that and speak to prisoners appropriately, address them appropriately - please, thank you...how they dress at a particular time, they’re going to the servery to collect food, they should be in a proper shirt, trousers, not coming up in shorts, half undressed. Basic standards and values you can instil...Basically you can instil that and you can get the proper respect back from staff and prisoners. If you insist on that, they will respond.” (W30 governor grade)

This presented an image of prisoners as lacking social etiquette, feckless and lazy. This reflected what has been described as the representation of prisoners as ‘feral’ (Sim 2009), unable to exercise basic care of themselves and participate in society. The role of staff was seen as being to “instil” and “insist” that these behaviours were observed so that prisoners could pay “proper respect”. This represented institutional compliance and control as reform, rehabilitation and humane treatment. This also illustrated responsabilization (Garland 2001), in which individuals were encouraged to act in ways that were aligned with state directed standards of behaviour, in this case complying with staff and behaving in ways that enabled the smooth operation of the organisation. Although presented as being reforming and humane, these behaviours actually placed primacy upon institutionalisation, control and reinforcing power structures.

For those who held more punitive values, the ideas of reform, rehabilitation and humanity could exercise a constraining effect. They sometimes set a boundary that prevented managers acting inhumanely despite their personal preferences. For example, one manager described:

“Sometimes I think, “oh fuck it, if the guy wants to kill himself, fucking get on with it” but when I’m on the shop floor I can’t demonstrate it can I? These guys on dirty protest, I’d like to

throw my own bucket of piss over them myself, but you can't do that because it's not humane. Doesn't stop you thinking it though does it? I have to make sure that the staff hold that moral ground.” (W5 governor grade)

In this statement, the manager's knowledge that overt brutality was not organisationally approved, constrained how they acted and how they directed staff.

What have been described as 'humanity' values (Rutherford 1993a) were not characterised by purely progressive liberal views, but also encompassed managerialism and punitiveness. Again, these values were not discrete and coherent but were in practice dynamic and characterised by conflict and complexity.

The third cluster of values related to punitiveness and security. Although these were the least frequently expressed values, some managers did express a respect for order for its own sake. For example, one manager described:

“I think it's quite easy for me because my values of right and wrong are lawful. I'm the kind of person who doesn't park on double yellow lines because I'm not supposed to park on double yellow lines, because there's a reason why I'm not supposed to park on double yellow lines, because if I park somewhere in might restrict vision on the roads. I don't use mobile phone in the car because it's dangerous. Because I have an understanding of why rules are in place, that I believe a lot of prisoners either don't understand or don't want to understand, so I do encourage prisoners to look at those kind of issues...I have a very strong sense of right and wrong and that's the way I operate at work and at home.” (S16 principal officer)

Other managers also expressed how they gained a thrill or enjoyment from the security aspects of their work such as detecting and intercepting drug supply or challenging difficult prisoners. There was a belief by some managers that security played an important role for them both professionally and personally. For others, punishment and security could play a legitimate role in creating a safe

and positive prison where individuals could address their needs, whilst for others it was important because it was reflected in targets and performance measures.

Values as agency

Having revealed the ways in which managers discussed and acted upon their values, it is worth providing a more analytical reflection upon this, returning to some of the ideas discussed by Giddens (1984).

The discussion so far has shown that managerialism or ‘professional’ values have become predominant. The progress of this was noted by Rutherford (1993) and Bryant (2007) and this study demonstrates that it has continued to become embedded in the values of prison managers. However, it was important that had not simply become accepted as a conscious motive, but had become more deeply embedded. This could be seen from the ways that it had been legitimated through the intense personal commitment held by some and the moral discourse that underpinned the justifications for managerial practices. The representation of managerialism as moral was part of the ‘soft’ power that legitmised it (Parker 2002). In practice, these claims of moral force were problematic.

To a greater extent, managerialism had supplanted the traditional notion of the liberal, idealistic governor. Although there were some exceptions, generally managers saw themselves as achieving particular prescribed ends more than creating a moral climate. Even when managers discussed moral aspects of imprisonment such as reform, rehabilitation and humanity this was often bound up in the managerial framework. Equally, there were also few who openly advocated security as a predominant moral value and the open abuse of prisoners had become unacceptable. It appeared that the rise of managerialism as a dominant value had reframed and to some degree subsumed conscious moral discourse from both ends of the spectrum. This could not be described as depoliticisation as managerial practice is itself deeply political, however, prison management did not generally feature the lively moral discussion that had been

described previously. This was both positive, in as much as it constrained the more punitive and inhumane instincts of some, but also negative in as much as there were less promotion of progressive reform.

It was also apparent from the observations and discussions with prison managers that there was some continuity with the past. Elements of traditional prison officer occupational culture had been incorporated within contemporary practices. For example, good relationships with officers and having a close knit team had been recreated as an aspect of 'professionalism', similarly machismo has been largely transferred from physical confrontation to the attainment of targets. It could also be seen that ideas of reform, rehabilitation and humanity were contested and could provide a means to legitimise the control and subordination of prisoners. Whilst these tensions were not openly discussed and did not form part of the reflexive or conscious agency of prison managers, they were part of their rationalisation and practical consciousness; they were part of their *habitus* and 'working personality'. This illustrates how the perennial tensions of prison management were played out biographically in the practice and thinking of prison managers themselves.

Management-staff relationships

The relationship between managers and staff has been a central feature of organisational research (see Pugh and Hickson 1996). This has also been seen in writings on prisons, where relationships in the organisation, particularly staff-prisoner relationships, have been seen as particularly important. In their seminal study, Sparks et al (1996) described that relationships have a central role in creating order by establishing and maintaining the conditions of legitimacy, where the institution is perceived by those involved as being morally justified. They described that these relationships enabled prisoners to feel that they had a stake in the prison, both materially and through some, albeit constrained, bonds of affection. In addition, relationships were able to cushion the impact of 'hard' security measures such as searching, and controls on movement, property and

choice. Relationships could therefore make prisons feel more palatable to the imprisoned. In their work on prison officers, Liebling and Price (2000) returned to this issue and described that relationships had both instrumental and normative aspects. In instrumental terms they described that relationships helped to get things done and secured more easy compliance so that the machinery of the prison and the specific work of individuals could be carried out more easily. It was also recognised by prison staff that relationships had an instrumental value in assessing the behaviour and risk of individuals and gaining intelligence, both of which could be used to enhance security (Dunbar 1985). In normative terms they described that positive relationships were a good in themselves that made the prison a more humane and tolerable environment. They had an important role in enhancing the quality of life for prisoners (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004). Liebling and Price argued that relationships had a cascade effect, where the quality and nature of relationships between managers and staff could set the tone for the use of discretion by staff generally and could provide staff with confidence. Not all writers have been positive about relationships in prisons. In particular, Sim (2009) has described that one of the regressive elements of prisons is the occupational culture. He did not describe this as a sub-culture of rogue officers but instead a pervasive general culture that was influenced by management behaviour including the machismo of basic training, the indifference of managers to examples of abuse and the dehumanising process of managerialism which reduced prisoners from sentient people to objects of risk and operational management. From this perspective, the relationships between managers and staff maintained and promoted a regressive culture of inhumanity and neglect.

This section will briefly explore the importance of relationships in the work of prison managers. It will explore the different approaches that were taken to relationships and the means through which these relationships were utilised. This section will also use an extended example to explore the complexity of relationships, their effectiveness, purpose and consequences.

Relationships in practice

Staff-management relationships were a part of both formal and informal aspects of management. Relationships had to be established and maintained through formal channels including meetings, briefings, interviews, and written documentation, as well as more informal interactions on a day-to-day basis. Approaches varied across different dimensions, including the degree to which individual managers consulted and engaged those they were responsible for or were simply directive, the degree to which they were open or closed with information, and whether they were structured and formal or more relaxed and informal. There were tensions between these polar extremes, with the predominant view of the 'right' relationships being that managers were open and consultative with staff, but not so close that friendships blurred their management responsibilities.

In general, managers discussed how relationships performed both instrumental and normative functions. Relationships with staff and prisoners were seen as a means by which normative standards could be modelled and promoted, and instrumental gains made including increasing productivity and encouraging compliance. Relationships were formed by managers being accessible, visible on the shop floor, taking time to talk to staff and prisoners, and humanising themselves through humour. However, topics of conversation often revolved around male concerns such as football, social drinking and particular television programmes, although they sometimes also touched upon domestic concerns such as family life.

For most managers, relationships were not merely a way of securing rigid compliance but were a means through which attitudes and behaviour could be more deeply controlled. They described that they role modelled appropriate behaviour to both staff and prisoners. Their conduct towards people would set an example to both the person they were interacting with, and others who saw this and this contributed towards creating a general climate. Additionally, and in a

more active way, some managers described that they policed boundaries by challenging what they saw as inappropriate behaviour and recognising good conduct. It was described that:

“...it’s about being around... making sure they see what your values and standards are...when you speak to prisoners you ensure you stick to those standards, it’s about when you hear other members of staff humiliating prisoners and you see inappropriate behaviour, challenging that member of staff and speaking to them. Same with a prisoner, if I see a prisoner misbehaving I’m not afraid to tackle a prisoner or a member of staff. Tell them straight, this is not the standard I expect, you wouldn’t like a member of staff to speak to you like that, I don’t expect to speak to that member of staff like that. If you consistently offer that approach, that’s when they know what to expect, same for staff and prisoners, it is consistency and insisting on it, don’t back away from it.” (W30 governor grade)

This described an idealised approach. However, the observed reality was that most prison managers overlooked a myriad of situations in which prisoners were talked about in denigrating terms, sexist language was used or rough ‘banter’ was deployed. Indeed, not only did they overlook this, they also engaged in it as one of the ways in which they maintained relationships with those they managed. Whilst the idealised, espoused view of managers was that they would take a strict line on such behaviour, the reality of their relationships was that they walked a line between tolerating and engaging enough with traditional elements of staff culture including machismo and their orientation to prisoners in order to be accepted and influential, without supporting overt inhumanity.

One of the most critical formal settings in which relationships were modelled and displayed was in adjudications (Liebling and Price 2001), where prisoners faced charges for disciplinary infractions and risked punishments including the loss of privileges or even periods of solitary confinement. An example of a set of adjudications at one of the research sites will be used in order to explore the complex and multi-faceted ways in which relationships were used.

The governor conducting the adjudications had a distinctive individual style, utilising humour and ‘banter’. On the face of it, it could be said that his conduct was unprofessional such as swearing and making what could be described as inappropriate comments. For example, in one interaction with a prisoner charged with swearing at a member of staff:

Governor: “Do you swear a lot?”

Prisoner: “Yes”

Governor: “Fucking happens sometimes”

And at the end of that adjudication, he concluded by saying; “I would tell you to fuck off, but I don’t swear”. In other adjudications, similar phrases were used including “caution – now fuck off” and “shut up, you’re boring me now”. The manager also made comments about the process itself, saying to various prisoners: “At the end I’m going to win”, “Wheel the guilty bastard in” and “I’ll ascertain what happened, then find you guilty”.

The outrageousness of the behaviour could simply be condemned. However, beyond the surface there was greater complexity. In all of the adjudications, the governor used the first name of the prisoners and he tried to build a rapport, partly through his jokes and outlandish comments. Many of the prisoners laughed at these comments and they largely appeared to be laughing with them rather than being laughed at. The manager also encouraged a sense of legitimacy, by ensuring that the prisoners appreciated the reason for findings and punishments. For example, a prisoner was charged with failing to work properly in an art class and initially pleaded ‘not guilty’, and as the adjudication progressed the following exchange took place:

Governor: Were you asked to draw a picture from the book you were given?

Prisoner: Yes, but I was thinking about it and doodling on the paper

Governor: So did you do what you were told to?

Prisoner: It was near the end of the class

Governor: Did you draw a picture from the book like you were told?

Prisoner: No

Governor: So were you working properly?

Prisoner: No

Governor: Were you having a bad day or the teacher?

Prisoner: Probably me

In another case where a prisoner was charged with disobeying an order to leave a classroom, a similar exchange took place:

Governor: Did you go when you were asked to?

Prisoner: After I'd asked some more questions.

Governor: So did you go when you were asked to?

Prisoner: Not straight away

Governor: So the answer is...?

Prisoner: No

In this way, the manager got the prisoners to state their own guilt rather than imposing it upon them. His relationship with the prisoners and his approach enabled them to understand and accept the ways in which they had breached the rules.

Both staff and prisoners appeared amused by the style, but prisoners seemed to appreciate the substance, with comments such as; “someone said you’re the grim reaper, but you’re alright”, “you seem like a fair man to me” and “fair enough”. It was also noteworthy that the punishments given tended to be on the more lenient side.

This extended example has been used as it appeared to contain elements that illustrated aspects of relationships. The first element was that the presentation was idiosyncratic rather than technocratic. In its own way it was charismatic and entertaining. However, it was distant from the image of a cold managerialist or a compassionate humanitarian. In style it owed more to a punitive and autocratic approach. There was part of the style which communicated a sense of traditional culture where the staff were indisputably in charge and prisoners were powerless

to challenge their authority, indeed this was conveyed by the fact that the governor grade could swear with impunity but the prisoner could not. Underneath that, there was a subtle way in which engaging with the prisoner, leading them to understand their guilt, using proportionate punishments and using a respectful form of address, created a sense of legitimacy and modelled to staff that this was possible without a loss of control.

Whilst these adjudications were individual, idiosyncratic and would be distant from an organisational model of good practice, they illustrated some of the ways in which the tensions between the traditional and the modern are artfully worked through at a street level.

Relationships as agency

This brief exploration of relationships has illustrated that managers use relationships for instrumental and normative reasons. Relationships could help them to get things done and could both soften the impact and oil the wheels for realising managerial aims. Relationships were also talked about in a way that suggested that they were used in order to shape individual workers into an idealised employee, reflecting the preferred values and attitudes of the organisation. Managers were not simply trying to maintain good relationships or achieve results, but instead were creating conditions where prison staff were enlisted in furthering the organisational objectives. It has been described that managers were “delivering results through people” (Brookes, Smith and Bennett 2008).

Beyond these conscious and reflexive ways in which managers discussed their relationships with staff, they also operated intuitively informed by practical consciousness. In particular, the nature of the relationships between managers and staff maintained and reinforced the relationship between staff and prisoners. Managers reinforced a sense that staff were superior and their interests paramount. This was done through the daily and ingrained ways in which

prisoners were denigrated through talk and also in practice where the views of staff were sought and treated as privileged.

In their relationships with staff, managers walked a tightrope; engaging with and reinforcing traditional occupational cultures sufficiently in order to enlist support and reduce resistance whilst at the same time attempting to prevent the aims of the organisation being undermined.

Discretion

The use of discretion has been described as central to the work of criminal justice professionals including judges (e.g. Hart 1961, Dworkin 1978), police officers (e.g. Skolnick 1966, Reiner 1991) and prison officers (e.g. Liebling and Price 2001, Crawley 2004). It is an issue that holds a distinguished place in the understanding of criminal justice work. This was neatly summed up by Hawkins (1992):

Discretion – which might be regarded as the space, as it were, between legal rules in which legal actors may exercise choice – may be formally granted, or it may be assumed. It is in the everyday discretionary behaviour of judges, public officials, lawyers, and others that the legal system distributes its burdens and benefits, provides answers to questions, and solutions to problems. (p.11)

It has been described that rules are essentially uncertain in three senses (ibid). First, rules are inherently uncertain due to the vagaries of language. The second element is that there are a diversity of circumstances that may exist and therefore the application and effects of rules may vary. The third element is the indeterminacy of official purposes. This suggests that in applying rules consideration is given to the intention of the rule makers and the social or political purpose that the rule serves. Given these uncertainties, it has been argued that those applying rules exercise a degree of choice about how they do

so. It is at the field or street level that the law is worked out in practice with all its complexity and its aims can be realized or distorted.

In regard to police and prison officers, discussion of discretion has largely centred upon the idea that the enforcement of all rules or laws at all times is simply not realistically possible (Sykes 1958). It has also been argued that total enforcement of rules is undesirable as it would create inhumanity and undermine order (Sparks et al 1996). Instead, it has been argued that the use of discretion and selective enforcement is a means through which order and legitimacy can be created (ibid) and that positive relationships can be maintained (Liebling and Price 2001). In relation to prison managers, these uses of discretion have been described as operating in the same way to create order and legitimacy and it has also been suggested that the use of discretion by managers communicates a message to the staff group generally that has a cascade effect in influencing their use of discretion (ibid).

In this section, consideration will be given to the circumstances in which managers exercise discretion and the mechanisms that enable them to do so. The section will go on to explore the practice of discretion by prison managers and the ways in which this operates at a street level. Finally, there will be a more theoretical discussion of discretion as a form of agency.

Discretion in practice

There are a myriad of circumstances in which prison managers exercise discretion. This may be formally prescribed and defined or may be informal and open-ended. It has been argued that there are four ways in which discretion can be structured (Hawkins 1992): ‘rule failure’, ‘rule compromise’, ‘rule building’ and ‘khadi’. Examples of each of these forms of discretion will be described and discussed below in order to provide a means through which discretion in prisons can be further understood.

'Rule failure' discretion describes the situation where scope for individual decision-making is formally structured into rules and policies (ibid). In prisons, examples of this included decisions in relation to early release, categorisation and managing self-harm, where the rules set out the criteria to be considered and the documentation and reports that should be taken into account. There were similarly structured processes in relation to staff including appraisals, job selection, and promotion. This form of discretion is established in recognition that every eventuality cannot be foreseen and therefore decision-makers have to act within a framework in order to turn the policies into practice.

In making these decisions, managers would start by considering the factual information that was available to them. They acted in a rational way, making use of the resources available in order to understand the situation. In addition, managers would also take account of the purpose of the rules that they were applying. These would be seen as providing cues, directing their use of discretion. However, official purposes were not necessarily consistent, for example categorisation and early release combine security, efficiency and rehabilitation objectives. The balance between these was also unstable, for example during a period of population pressure managers were provided with central guidance pressing upon them the need to move as many prisoners as reasonably possible out from closed prisons and into open prisons. This informed their use of discretion in making categorisation decisions. Similarly, there had been conscious, centrally-directed efforts to shift the use of discretion in favour of more releases for home detention curfew. This interaction between the decision-making and centrally prescribed official purposes has been alluded to by Hawkins (1992), and it has been suggested that routinised decision-making draws a balance between imperfect information and an attempt to realise the aims and intentions of the framing policy (Feldman 1992).

In his work on prison managers, Cheliotis (2006) argued that they resist the imposition of managerialism and instead negotiate a position between blind conformity and revolution. He argued that this has a humanising effect on the

prison environment. In this discussion of the use of 'rule failure' discretion, it appears that the position can be more complex. In particular, it is worth noting three aspects here. The first is that 'rule failure' discretion encouraged the exercise of some choice and independence by managers rather than their having to wrest this through resistance. The second issue was that many managers did not seek to act in ways that were individualistic but instead sought further guidance in the aims and policies themselves. They therefore sought to use their discretion in ways that were conforming rather than resistant. The third was that humanity was not solely derived from the acts of agents but could also be an inherent aspect of the rules and processes. For example, although it can be argued that central interventions on home detention curfew and categorisation were directed towards the efficient use of accommodation, there was also an aspect of them that was about minimising conditions of custody where appropriate and reducing the harms of imprisonment.

The second form of discretion is 'rule building' discretion, where precedent is used to develop and build better rules over time (Hawkins 1992). This is a prominent form of rule development in jurisprudence. In prisons, it was less obviously present. Of course, it was a feature of those processes that most resembled judicial processes. For example, adjudications processes were shaped by legal precedent. The growth of human resource professionals in prisons has also drawn in greater expertise about employment law including the use of discretion. A third example was in the way that some quasi-judicial bodies attempted to develop and promote case work as a form of precedent. The most obvious example was that of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, which publishes an Annual Report where they cite the outcomes of important cases and disseminate these (e.g. Prison and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales 2011). The practice of formal 'rule building' discretion was not generally part of prison management except in discrete, specialised issues.

The third and fourth forms of discretion will be discussed together as they both encompassed those situations that were the least fettered and had the widest

range of choice open to the decision-maker. 'Rule compromise' discretion is where the issues are contentious and the scope for difference is more pronounced and therefore decision-making is left to individuals, such decisions effectively leave ambiguity and tensions unresolved (Hawkins 1992). Prominent examples of this included prisoner discipline where there was open-ended discretion given to staff to lay disciplinary charges, issue disciplinary warnings, use segregation or do nothing. Similarly, managers had wide discretion in many aspects of their management of staff. 'Khadi' discretion arises in ad hoc situations where there are no formal rules or procedures for guidance and therefore each case is decided individually taking account of law, politics, ethics and emotion (ibid). Many daily issues such as compassionate requests from prisoners for phone calls, visits or access to other facilities fell into this category.

As with other forms of discretion, managers would act rationally by attempting to gather information about the circumstances they were presented with. One example can be drawn from senior officers working on units who often had to consider requests by prisoners for additional funds for phone calls. There were no published rules or guidance for how these decisions should be made. They would approach the problem by making limited inquiries into the exceptional personal circumstances, for example, checking with the Chaplain, personal officer or looking at recent phonecalls. They would also seek information about the general conduct of the prisoner concerned and whilst poor behaviour would not in itself preclude additional funds being given, good or bad behaviour would be taken into account. In addition, checks for obvious abuses would also be considered, for example that the prisoner had spent their funds on other commodities such as purchases at the prison shop or had made several previous requests for additional funds. The collection of these facts and reports would usually lead to what was considered self-evident conclusions. As well as attempting to provide some rational basis for the decision-making, it can also be seen that the discretion in these cases was informed by the values of both compassion and order or security.

The exercise of discretion was varied in its forms but its use was informed by the values that were predominant in prisons; managerialism, humanity and punitiveness. These will be discussed below.

There were three particular ways in which discretion reflected managerialism. The first was that discretion was exercised in ways that took account of the impact on the organisation, including the delivery of targets and the use of resources. This was sometimes cited explicitly by managers as a reason for decisions being taken or a factor in their considerations. The second way was that managers would use discretion instrumentally. For example, some managers would allow informal punishments to be utilised in regard to prisoners perceived as difficult, such being slow in providing service or not following up queries. This also applied to staff. For example, access to annual leave was described in one prison as follows:

“[The manager] said that the leave entitlement was 14.5% so as long as that was not filled, there was an entitlement to leave. After that he described that it was “based on the relationship with that member of staff”. He said that the staff were divided into three groups: the first were flexible and worked closely with the detail office; the middle group come in when they have to, will work extra when asked, they are “not demanding, not a burden”; the third group “do very little except to help themselves”, take sick leave and whenever they are asked to stop on they have a reason why they can’t. [The manager] described that the more co-operative people were, the more he would try to help them out. With certain situations such as bereavements and domestic crises, they would be given the time off regardless, largely because he believed that whether it was authorised or not, they would not come to work. In a second set of situations, such as childcare, there was a general rule that unpaid leave would initially be granted with ‘unco-operative’ staff, he would enforce this, but with ‘co-operative’ staff, “someone of good character”, he would look for a way to help them out by swapping shifts or arranging cover.” (SFN 8)

Discretion was used as a means of rewarding and punishing so as to establish, reinforce and embed norms. Whilst this use of discretion was managerialist in as

much as it sought to harness hierarchical power and control subordinates, it also reflected traditional cultural norms including encouraging good order amongst prisoners and team loyalty amongst staff.

The third way in which managerialism was enacted through discretion was the way in which it was exercised as a means of controlling and managing risk. This was reflected in common phrases such as: “I will err on the side of caution”, “any decision I take must be based around is this defensible?”, “I’ve got to cover my arse and that of the governor”, “you get the finger pointed”. This reflected two particular issues. The first was defensiveness or risk aversion, where discretion would be used cautiously and was often exercised as a means of organisational or self-preservation. Comments such as “defensible” suggested a quasi-legal approach, a managerial response where decisions could be justified internally, in the media, politically or legally. However, other comments such as “cover my arse” and concerns about getting “the finger pointed” indicated defensive self-interest. The other approach to risk avoidance was reflected in those who would “err on the side of caution”, rather than simply being a defensive posture, this suggested a decision that was embedded in a set of values where security and order were prioritised. Again, it was possible to see that what may be presented as managerial decision-making actually encompassed other values.

As has been discussed, it has been argued that humanity was realised by some managers in their use of discretion. There were a number of phrases used by some managers to describe humanity in their decision-making process. For example, managers would use phrases such as: “what sounds fair to me, what is reasonable, what would I expect?” and “use the decency thing, put yourself in their shoes”. As discussed earlier, humane behaviour was more complex than the idea that individuals acted heroically in order to resist potential inhumanity and sustain more positive outcomes. Two examples will be used in order to illustrate this. Both relate to disciplinary actions; one situation involving a member of staff and one involving a prisoner.

In a staff situation, a manager described how he attempted to use discretion to resolve a conflict and take account of individual circumstances:

“Were you here the other day when we talked about an officer who went AWOL? He was challenged when he came back to work on the Sunday, he finished up having an eyeball to eyeball with [a manager], who is full of fucking testosterone, so bear that for a minute would you? The officer’s gone, “well fuck you, I’m going off”. That’s red rag to a bull with me that is, that’s “please explain”¹¹ then we take it from there. Afterwards someone says to me surreptitiously...there may be more to that, there’s some real bad issues that guys going through at home. Doesn’t give him the right to do what he’s done. So, I task my P[incipal] O[fficer], “tell me what’s going on, tell me what your view is, I’ll make the decision” He came back to me and I decided that discretion was probably the best way forward. I’ll have to speak to [the manager] and explain why I’ve done that, because he’ll think [I’ve] gone soft...The member of staff needs to be spoken to when he comes back, “I know what’s happened, I know what’s gone off, that’s not the way you do it”. So, that’s discretion is as much as the [manager] could have put him on a disciplinary charge, I could have formally investigated it, but I ask myself, the officers pretty damn good, he’s well thought of, how does that look?”
(W5 governor grade)

In this example, the manager drew upon three factors. The first was that he was conscious of the context including that the confrontation was partly provoked by an overzealous manager who was “full of fucking testosterone”, and that the member of staff had some domestic problems. These were presented as mitigating factors justifying the outcome, in this case not taking disciplinary action. The second factor was that although the response was in favour of under-enforcement and avoiding formal action, it was done in a way that was intended to reinforce order and power structures, or at least avoid undermining them. So, the member of staff was chastised and the manager reassured. The third issue was that although the primary justification that was presented related to the merits of the individual case, the decision-maker was also conscious of the wider

¹¹ a colloquialism meaning formal disciplinary investigation

perception and asked “how does that look?”. This question revealed a consciousness of staff culture and the importance of working with it.

The second situation involved the use of incentives and earned privileges with prisoners. Some managers would talk in abstract about how they would intervene in order to ensure that the scheme was used in a way that was fair. For example, one manager described this:

“It is important you keep your values. Things like the IEP scheme¹² and staff use of discretion, it was clear we had a lot of different units at [the prison] and it was very easy for units to start going their own way, it was very easy to think we’re going to run the wing this way, then if you’re not careful you’d find all sorts of little rules and regulations are made such as we take that prisoners telly off him. Sometimes it was going in and saying stop everything you’re doing, show a bit of compassion, you can keep nailing this prisoner if you want, but all we’re doing is going on a downward spiral. I need to intervene now and stop this and I will use my power to move the prisoner and give them a fresh start...That’s what the decency agenda is about...” (S4 governor grade)

In practice, this operated in more complex ways. In one situation a senior officer described how he had to manage competing interests:

“SO: there was a situation where a prisoner put in for his enhanced [IEP level] and sitting on the board with the P[rincipal] O[fficer], it was a borderline, where he would get it or not, but at the end of the day he had made great efforts in his behaviour, in finding work, in getting to work regularly. The PO and I both agreed he should be given a chance to prove himself. I had one of the officers say ‘why are you giving him his enhanced, he doesn’t deserve it blah, blah, blah’. I said if we look at his history sheet which is in his file, you’ll see the efforts he’s made, there’s nothing to justify not giving it him. The member of staff actually took that on board and said ‘yes I see what you mean, however, I’ve had a few run ins with this prisoner blah, blah,

¹² IEP scheme is the incentives and earned privileges scheme. This is a national policy applied in all prisons. Under this, prisoners are entitled to ‘basic’, ‘standard’ or ‘enhanced’ levels of privileges according to how well behaved they are and how far they conform with the expectations placed upon them.

blah' and I said but unless it's actually documented then we don't know that's gone off.

JB: So he was given enhanced?

SO: Yes" (S19 senior officer)

In this situation, the manager made a decision that was humanitarian in as much as they gave priority to the interests of the prisoner and sought to reward and encourage reform. The justification presented to the staff who challenged this was managerial in as much as their contention that the prisoner was not suitable for enhancement was not contested but instead the argument was made that without documented evidence the progression could not be resisted. Instead of referring to values or judgements, reference was made to process and procedures. Managerialism was therefore used as a defensive guard. It appeared that this was because this avoided challenging occupational culture norms including supporting staff and subordinating prisoners.

The final way in which managers discussed discretion reflected more punitive orientations. As has been described above, discretion was sometimes exercised instrumentally in order to punish difficult behaviour. However, it was rare for managers to openly articulate punitive values. However, one way in which this was expressed was in a general unease about discretion held by some. These individuals would be critical of inconsistency in the exercise of discretion and would express concerns that this would undermine control or open the prison up to allegations of unfairness. They would sometimes call for people to be "singing from the same hymn sheet". Such individuals preferred blanket rules and usually ones that made conditions more restrictive, dispassionate and impersonal. Discretion had an ambiguous role within the prison, particularly in the eyes of those who had a more punitive orientation.

The use of discretion in practice reflected a range of values, illuminating the contested nature of prison management. In order to reflect on this more

theoretically it is necessary to return to a discussion of discretion as a form of agency.

Discretion as agency

Discretion was an essential part of the work of prison managers. This was integrated into their work in formal and informal ways. The use of discretion has been recognised in studies of prison officers and police officers, and it is equally important for prison managers in their approach to staff and prisoners. In this final section, the use of discretion will be discussed from a theoretical perspective.

Prison managers appeared to reflexively monitor their decision-making. In particular they were conscious of the rules that set the framework in more formalised processes. Equally in less structured decision-making situations, they sought facts to clarify and simplify their choices. In this way, they acted in ways that were rational and bounded. Their consciousness was not limited to bureaucratic considerations, but they were also conscious of managerial issues regarding performance measures and cost. In addition, they also considered how their decisions may be viewed by managers or staff and were therefore conscious of organisational culture. In many organisations it has been noted that discretion can be informed by social factors including occupational cultures and prisons are no different in that regard (Baumgartner 1992, Manning 1992, Deetz 2000). Discretion was exercised in ways that not only drew upon individual choices but also drew on collective or cultural resources.

As in other aspects of prison managers' work, there were three predominant rationalisations, or sets of beliefs that informed their actions: managerialism, humanity and punitiveness. These rationalizations were often overlapping, conflicting and contested. Indeed, the defining feature of prison managers' use of discretion was how they had to balance, and resolve tensions between these conflicting values, either within themselves or with other people. The craft of

prison management and the use of discretion, or practical consciousness, could be found in the ways that they resolved these conflicts and found solutions that maintained the interests and support of those involved. These practices often reinforced the dominant position of prison staff and promoted managerial concerns, but also ensured that necessary attention was given to the interests of prisoners.

Discretion was a process through which managers brought their role to life. This was used to legitimise the organisation and dominant forms of practice. They did not heroically act to transform the prison environment, but instead they maintained, reinforced and entrenched the power structures but did so in ways that rewarded desirable behaviours, avoided excessive, heavy-handed or oppressive behaviours and attempted to avoid the development of revolutionary schisms. Discretion was one way in which staff and prisoners could be enlisted and controlled within the dominant mode of governance.

Resistance

In common parlance, resistance describes acts of opposing, withstanding or refusing to yield to a dominant force or power. The notion of resistance is intimately bound with that of power (Clegg 1994). In the context of work, the employment relationship inevitably involves individual employees surrendering a degree of choice and autonomy to act in the interests of the organisation, as officially defined, rather than in their own or other interests. In addition, and has been discussed previously, many individuals willingly act in conformity with organisational obligations and expectations. However, that does not mean that individuals conform, willingly or otherwise, and in all organisations there is the potential for individuals to act in ways that are counter to the interest of the organisation.

Marxist ideas have shaped the way that resistance has been understood, placing this in the context of a wider, collective class struggle, but this has subsequently

been eroded with a greater focus on the individual and the ways in which resistance is linked to subjectivity and identity (Jermier, Knights and Nord 1994, Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). That is not to suggest that resistance has become dislocated from wider structural issues and it is has been argued that resistance is also linked to global and local factors such as unionisation and the employment market (O'Connell Davidson 1994). Resistance is situated in both an individual and collective context.

It has been argued that relationships of power and subordination are characterised by a formal 'public transcript' and a 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990). The public transcript is the acted ritual of deference and conformity offered by the subordinate and accepted by the dominant power. The hidden transcript is the actions that the subordinate engages in 'off stage', away from the gaze of the powerful. These hidden forms of resistance are pervasive and important. There is not a neat division between these spheres of public and off stage, but instead social relationships are characterised as "a zone of constant struggle...not a solid wall" (ibid p.14). In other words, resistance can also be seen being expressed in the public setting and there is a dynamic relationship between hidden transcripts and what is performed publically.

Managers are sometimes assumed to be compliant with centrally prescribed rules and the enforcers of discipline and control. This has never been universally true and in the contemporary world, managers have felt the effects of measures such as restructuring, increased measurement, technological advances, and changes to rewards, promotions and tenure, creating fertile grounds for anxiety, frustration and alienation (La Nuez and Jermier 2004). In prisons, there has been significant discussion of resistance by prisoners (e.g. Crewe 2009) and prison officers (e.g. Crawley 2004). In relation to prison managers, there has been important work carried out which has identified resistance as a means through which prison managers ameliorate the effects of managerialism and ensure that humanity is preserved (Cheliotis 2006). However, this is a rare example and the broad focus

of academic commentary on prison managers has been concerned with compliance rather than resistance, particularly with regard to managerialism.

This section will explore how managers resist dominant powers in the form of policies, decisions and general trends in practice. This section will ask what forms resistance by managers takes? It will also ask what the purpose of this is? What are the ideologies that they attempt to preserve or perpetuate through resistance? The section will close by returning to the idea of agency in order to provide a theoretical reflection on resistance.

Resistance in practice

Where managers came up against rules, individuals or a general approach that they do not support, they had a range of methods for challenging and resisting this. There were six main forms that this resistance took: off-stage talk, public talk, humour, appropriation of work and time, 'open mouth' sabotage, and cutting corners. Each of these will be discussed in turn below.

A typical example of hidden transcripts of resistance is the use of off-stage talk. This was common amongst prison managers where such resistance took the form of vocal criticisms or "rumours", "bitching", "grumbling", having a "gripe", "muttering in groups", being "bad mouthed". This could be directed at policies, decisions or the general direction of the prison, but could also be directed towards individuals. Generally this acted to harmlessly dissipate concerns; a substitute for more direct acts of assertive resistance. Managers at all levels would be both the subject and the perpetrators of these hidden transcripts.

Public talk was also common and in most cases there was seen to be a legitimate role for challenge and dissent. This was perceived as part of appropriate engagement with staff and was formalised in team and ad hoc consultative meetings, where views would be sought. This could be described as 'pressure' (Scott 2001), a form of counteraction to dominant power which was recognised

and institutionalised. This could have practical benefits by identifying weaknesses and improvements, and was also a way of managing resistance safely, providing a constructive and constrained space for opposition to be voiced. This was underpinned by an acceptance that following this discussion, compliance would be forthcoming whether a specific rule or policy was supported or not. As one manager described:

“I’ve resisted, on the grounds of putting a reasoned argument against, but I’m ultimately aware that I manage and I have a manager, and I believe that my manager with the right case pitched at the appropriate level he would take that on board and maybe look again at what we’re doing. But I would never blatantly refuse to do it, I’d like to think that my way of challenging rather than being negative about something, but saying I don’t think that rule is good, but here’s something that will be beneficial. I wouldn’t refuse to do it, purely because I’m aware of my responsibilities.” (W2 principal officer)

This form of resistance was therefore harnessed as a means of reinforcing authority. This could be described as ‘pluralist’ (Fox 1974), where there is a balance between competing interests and this conflict is seen as productive, where the differences can be accommodated and consensus achieved. However, some features of this need to be further drawn out. In particular, the zone of conflict and consensus was curtailed and defined, reflecting the power differential between the parties. In general, managers held more significant power and were able to define the negotiated space, in particular discussions would usually be accepted on how a particular objective was achieved rather than whether it should be pursued. In addition, there was the ultimate power of managers to follow a particular course whether agreed or not, a power that was generally accepted.

Outright hostility between managers and staff was rare. However, humour was sometimes used as a way of making hidden transcripts public. For example defiant statements and refusals would be delivered by subordinates with a smile and a laugh. Whilst this often meant that rebellious defiance would not be

forthcoming, it did indicate an attempt to maintain an individual identity (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). Equally, some managers would respond by deploying humour to disarm and respond to such challenges, reasserting their authority, talking about disciplinary action with a smile and laugh. In this context, humour had hidden functions in the negotiation of power and individual identity.

Another common form of resistance was the appropriation of work and time (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). This referred to the ways in which individuals left work early, wasted time, or absented themselves, and the ways in which they regulated the effort they made. This could be seen in routine practices, for example, it was described by one manager how the official timings for meals were rarely observed and instead lock up took place early in order to extend the staff meal breaks. However, this would be temporarily fixed during important events such as inspections, as one manager disclosed:

“If you look at notices to staff...audits or HMCIP you get times for say feeding the prisoners or evening association, if we say we’re going to get them out at 6.15, we get them out at 6.15, if we feed at 12 o’clock, we start feeding at 12 o’clock. Then what happens is that once the inspection is over or the audit baseline has been checked, then we’ll make it two minutes to twelve, then four minutes to twelve and eventually we’ll over step the mark until it’s half eleven. Then what happens is that somebody will put their foot in it and we’re back to twelve o’clock again, then we ease off and we ease off.” (W12 governor grade)

This was a means through which the interests of workers were served and there was an ‘indulgency pattern’ where this was tolerated by managers (Gouldner 1964).

This would also be seen in response to specific decisions or changes. For example, and again in relation to attempts to regulate meal times, one manager described:

“The only other one is the serving of the lunch meals or the tea meals. They’re always going on about you can’t get the trolleys...too early. A prisoner speaks to the governor and he jumps up and down and says right, tells the kitchen do not fill the trolleys until this time. This is when the resistance came in, we went down at the right time, took it back, served the meals and everyone was late locking up. That went on for a few days. So each time, two meal times, you’re fifteen minutes late and you’ve got forty staff, that’s quarter of an hour each, your TOIL [time off in lieu] starts bouncing up, so then he says get the TOIL down, make sure everyone gets locked up on time.” (W26 senior officer)

These actions, supported by managers ensured that the changes were frustrated and the status quo preserved. In particular, they played the managerialist system by complying at crucial times such as audits and inspections, but when this was challenged on a more permanent basis, exploiting financial control as a lever. Managers and staff were able to use the process of managerialism as a means of resistance.

Some individuals would also regulate their own efforts in response to issues of concern. This could take the form of withdrawal of goodwill where people would be less willing to carry out extra work, would be slow to comply, and would wait to be directed rather than showing initiative. This could be effective in making areas more difficult to manage and could be frustrating for managers. Occasionally people would withdraw their labour by taking sick leave, although this was generally viewed as an extreme measure that would have consequences for an individual’s perceived status and future career. These forms of resistance were less available to more senior managers who were accountable for performance measures and where reductions in effort would have a detrimental effect.

‘Open mouth’ sabotage referred to the situation where people criticised individuals or the organisation externally, so undermining their reputation (La Nuez and Jermier 2004). In prisons this was a risky endeavour as it went against the cultural importance of teamwork, loyalty and hierarchy. However,

occasionally individuals would resort to the use of grievances as a way of exposing perceived problems to more senior managers outside of the organisation (see Austrin 1994). Going above an immediate manager, particularly to managers outside the prison, such as the area manager was also occasionally resorted to.

Resistance would also be carried out indirectly by bending rules and cutting corners. This was sometimes done in order to make processes more efficient or effective. For example, procurement rules would be dodged by asking invoices to be split so as to avoid exceeding the value threshold that would entail the need for tendering. This would make the process of procurement quicker and more convenient and would aid the timely delivery of objectives, but would subvert the purpose of financial rules. Another example was with directed surveillance, which is the legal framework for intentional surveillance of individuals, such as the use of CCTV on visits. The legal requirements, which were potentially onerous as they required written authorisation prior to any directed use, were managed by finessing and creatively interpreting the rules, as described by one governor:

The key issues I have is...the use of overt CCTV, when does it become necessary to...do a directed surveillance application. The last application I did...[took] two and a half hours to fill in and another two hours [to check and authorise]...I argued the toss and we managed to come up with a method of words that would allow us to demarcate between those that it is necessary to observe for 100% of their visit, i.e. directed surveillance, and for the rest who we would ordinarily be very interested in, we would keep the camera on for the majority of their visit, maybe not 100%, but maybe 50% of the time...It was a play on words, but it got past the legal eagles. (W6 governor grade)

Many managers would pragmatically interpret rules in order to match with their priorities and the available resources. This sometimes meant undermining or ignoring the spirit and purpose of those rules.

A third example can be found in the searching of prisoners where it was frequently suggested that carrying out searches in accordance with the procedures with the frequency they were required was unworkable. As a result, cutting corners and carrying out adapted searches was necessary. This was described by one manager:

“ [An] example is the level of searching that should be done on prisoners coming out of workshop, because of the nature of the establishment, you have 2 or 4 staff actually searching prisoners coming out of workshops and you’ve got a time band of 10 minutes, and each search if you did in properly, did it according to the LSS [Local Security Strategy] and all the manuals and everything else, would take you 3 or 4 minutes and you’re putting 2 or 300 people through in ten minutes, I don’t quite know how we do it. We must be breaking the rules somewhere. There are lots of places where we do that. It’s not Spanish practices; it’s the only way that we can make it work.” (W25 principal officer)

Unofficial work practices have been well documented in the sociology of organisations and function to facilitate smooth running in the face of the dysfunctional aspects of official rules (Blau 1963). They are paradoxical forms of resistance that oppose the strict policy whilst attempting to legitimise managerial modes of governance.

Only rarely did resistance break into open hostility and take on a revolutionary force. This did occur in one of the prisons. This involved a female senior manager who joined the prison in succession to a male senior manager who was widely described as a ‘staff man’, had formed good relationships with staff and was generally seen as having improved the performance of the prison. The female senior manager was perceived as more aloof. Her style was said to have alienated other senior managers, for example she was described as marking written documents like a “school ma’am”. She also suffered an accident shortly after arriving at the prison and was therefore unable to be visible around her areas of responsibility. She was also criticised for failing to develop personal relationships with staff and being unfamiliar with the layout of the prison. The

ways in which she was talked about reflected a number of concerns, some of which related to gender, which will be discussed in a chapter 7. She was perceived as neither fitting into the traditional mould of a macho, heroic leader, orientated towards staff concerns, nor the new managerial and performance culture. Under her leadership, resistance built up. This started with the withdrawal of good will where staff were less willing to carry out additional duties or cover operational emergencies, such as medical escorts. This moved on to the open challenging of decisions and practices. This was more direct and hostile than the 'appropriate' form of challenge described earlier and would often take place where a group of staff were present and was aimed at making managers feel uncomfortable, challenged and under scrutiny. This escalated to a signal event which many recalled, where a full staff meeting resulted in so many hostile questions and such a tense atmosphere that another senior manager had to step in to end the meeting. The final piece of the jigsaw was a visit by a senior manager from headquarters, where there was concerted 'open mouth' criticism by a variety of staff and managers, who complained about the senior manager and the impact on the prison. Following this, the senior manager at the prison left her post and she was replaced by a senior manager who was seen as staff orientated and who indeed had worked earlier in his career as a junior manager at the prison.

This case study provided an illustration not only of methods of resistance, but also the interests that this perpetuated, which centred on both traditional culture values and the new managerial ethos.

Resistance as agency

Resistance formed an important feature of prison life. It illustrated how agency did not necessarily lead to the pursuit or realisation of individualised or idiosyncratic desires but instead was part of a wider web of power.

Managers were conscious and reflective of many of the ways in which they used resistance. They institutionalised this through consultation and limited discussion in order to legitimate management control and contain the effects. Managers both used this approach and were the subjects of it. Such harnessing of resistance was a strategy of legitimation and one of the ways in which modern human resource strategies were deployed so as to enlist support and ‘govern the soul’ of employees (Rose 1999).

Managers resisted practices that undermined their ability to appear to comply with performance measurement, as illustrated by the gaming with rules and practices. This form of resistance reinforced the dominant mode of governance but also exposed its weaknesses. This was a chronic feature of the system of performance management and created ‘imaginary’ aspects of organisational management (Carlen 2008a).

The third major aspect to resistance was less conscious but was embedded in the practical consciousness of managers. That was that resistance reinforced traditional cultures. This could be in the individuals and practices they supported or opposed. The actions reflected support for prioritising the interests of staff, promoting machismo and focussing on internal concerns.

Resistance was an arena which illustrated the inter-relationship between the managerial and traditional agendas. This was the underlying transcript that was revealed through these practices. Rather than being a source of alternative ideologies or humane liberalism, resistance was instead deeply embedded in the dominant culture and power dynamics of prison life.

Power

Scott (2001) asserted that power was the production of causal effects, and suggested that this was integral to the idea of agency, “to be an agent is to exercise causal powers that produce specific effects in the world” (p.1). He

argued that patterns of power and relationships of domination take two elementary forms which then each have two sub-parts. The first was 'corrective influence'. The two subsets of this were 'force', where coercion may be used such as threats or perceived threats of punishment or undesirable effects, and 'manipulation', in particular through the use of incentives and rewards in order to mould behaviour. Such uses of power were instrumental and they sought to control behaviour and secure compliance without being concerned about the inner beliefs and values of the individual. In a similar vein, Giddens (1984) described what he termed 'allocative resources', in other words the ability to use financial and other resources in order to shape behaviour. The second elementary form of power described by Scott he termed 'persuasive influence', which sought to build an inner commitment in the subalterns. The first element of this form of power was 'signification', a term also used by Giddens (1984), which described a moral authority imbued in the dominator. This may have been as a result of some intrinsic moral appeal such as charity or humanity, but may also have been due to the position of the dominator as an 'expert'. This form of power relied on building a base of faith and loyalty in the subaltern. Foucault has been particularly interested in the rise of expert power and the way in which it has created a less coercive but more pervasive form of control (e.g. Foucault 1973, 1977). The second part was 'legitimation', again a term also used by Giddens, which described the process by which a relationship of command was created, where the dominant power was recognised as having the right to give direction whilst the subaltern felt an obligation to comply. This relationship could be established through written laws and rules and through a socially structured, formal or informal hierarchy. Giddens (1984) similarly argued that position, prestige and personality combined to provide "authoritative resources" that could be deployed as an exercise of power.

It is important to acknowledge that themes of power permeate throughout this chapter but this section will seek to explore the ways in which prison managers exercised power directly in their day-to-day work. What are their preferred resources and forms of power, which they used in order to secure compliance?

What are the constraints on their power? How are they the subjects as well as the holders of power? This section will also seek to draw out wider issues regarding power as a form of agency.

Power in practice

Prison managers saw themselves as having power to change the circumstances around them to some degree, rather than being wholly controlled by events and social or organisational structures. They saw themselves as exercising power as agents, but were also subordinate to more senior managers. Their position was intermediate in this regard. Their power was also intermediate in as much as they saw themselves holding power which was constrained. These issues will be explored below using Scott's analytical tools.

Force or the use of threats towards subordinates was viewed negatively by managers. It was considered to be both ineffective and wrong in itself. There was a shared image of a good manager being respected as a leader of their group, and this was contrasted with visions of abuse of power, including shouting, public humiliation of staff, ordering people to comply and relying heavily on asserting hierarchical rank structures. This was described by one manager in the following terms:

“The abuse of power has the ability to ruin your street cred...I won't jump up and down and I won't shout at anybody, I won't have a go at anybody in open forum, but I also try not to use the label [i.e. rank] to get things done.” (W11 governor grade)

Prison managers generally felt reluctant to rely upon 'corrective influences', recognising their limitations in the long-term management of people, undermining trust and relationships.

Managers could also use allocative resources or rewards in order to manipulate behaviour such as the distributing finances and desirable commodities such as

annual leave, job selection and appraisal, or decisions about IEP or early release. Control over finances was relatively limited as many resources were 'ring fenced' for specific purposes and could not be used for other purposes. However, managers were sometimes able to allocate resources to issues they considered important and so promote and develop those areas. In both of the prisons, resources were made available for staff, ostensibly to recognise them collectively. At one prison this took the form of a small bonus payment, whilst at the other it took the form of a social event for staff and their families. These approaches were too small and unpredictable to be effective as meaningful incentives, but they did produce short-term good will. More informal rewards and punishments were used, such as taking account of prisoner's level of compliance in making decisions affecting them or considering member of staff's attendance and co-operation in making decisions about access to annual leave. There was some limited scope for managers to use their allocative resources in order to mould and maintain compliant behaviour.

In contrast, managers felt themselves to be subjected to more corrective forms of power. They perceived that rewards and incentives were available in return for conformity, in the form of giving or withholding promotion, progression and reputation through the organisation. As described in a previous chapter, the language used included: "...you've got to meet [targets] every month and God help you if you don't", "we don't deliver the right numbers, I personally get a kicking", "[If they are not met] you get absolutely hammered", "if we don't meet them, we get our arses kicked if it's our fault". Such comments revealed how managers perceived that they were subjected to a punitive system of control. Nevertheless, despite this perception of managerialism as oppressive, as has been described earlier, many managers not only tolerated this but absorbed this within their identity and legitimised the system.

Moving on to 'persuasive influence', managers drew upon what could be described as softer forms of power. In fact, many managers were wary of the

word ‘power’, seeing it as epitomised by coercion and instead sought alternative terms including “authority”, “respect” and “influence”.

Managers could deploy ‘authoritative resources’, in particular managers drew upon the prestige of their position within the formal hierarchy. This was particularly significant for operational managers who were seen as having an elevated status. As one non-operational manager described:

“An operational manager, even the lowliest operational governor has that kudos, that respect that any non-operational manager can’t have.” (W4 non-operational manager)

Positional power could also be wielded vicariously, by using the name of the governor or area manager. This was particularly deployed where a manager had a specific brief to manage significant changes. For example, one manager who was leading on the development of new accommodation in a prison stated that he had “used and abused” the governor’s name in order to exercise leverage with people inside and outside of the prison, including contractors and headquarters personnel.

However, managers also felt constrained by their position, feeling that there were boundaries and limits to their power. As well as being conscious of the authority that they held over others, they were also conscious that they were themselves subordinate to more senior staff. As one manager disclosed:

“...yes there’s some power to shape the morale of staff to some degree and to help people develop and shape that aspect of the work. On a wider level, I don’t have any power whatsoever, it’s also reinforced by my area line constantly: you just get on with it, you do as you’re told...you just deliver what you’re told to deliver in a way you’re told to deliver it.” (W21 non-operational manager)

In this statement, this manager revealed the degree to which they were subject to a hierarchical system that constrained them. Managers were both the holders of

and the subjects of authoritative resources, in particular positional power derived from the hierarchical structure.

There was a process which managers would undertake in order to secure compliance and legitimate their power including communication, discussion, consultation and explanation. This engagement with staff, treating them as thinking and feeling agents, was described as having both a normative value and instrumental effects. This process could also be built over time so that managers could establish trust and effective working relationships, and most managers saw this as fundamental to their approach. One manager summed this up as follows:

“I don’t scream and shout at people because I don’t think that is necessary. It’s a case of over a period building up that respect. If I say something to these, they do it. I don’t have to work hard with getting the staff to comply with what I want now. That’s something that’s developed and probably developed because I’ve been here as a SO and then as a PO. They’ve seen the way I work and they know I won’t send them off on a wild goose chase, unless I’ve explained it fully. I do try to make sure everyone is aware of why we’re doing something, where we’re coming from with it and what we’re trying to achieve. People tend to do as they’re told if you approach it properly.” (W25 principal officer)

Here this manager described how they used communication in order to establish professional trust over a period of time. Other managers also described how relationships could be developed by knowing their staff and taking an interest in them as individuals and supporting them when they had difficult times. It was also described how demonstrating an ability to do frontline work was important for example by challenging prisoners, helping to lock up and unlock landings or serving meals. These strategies integrated managers with the managed and reduced social and professional distance. It was particularly noteworthy that the prison that had the better overall performance and had a noticeably closer attention to managerial concerns also had closer interaction and integration between managers and staff. This seemed to illustrate that relationships could be used as a way to humanise and legitimise management control.

Managers would appeal to particular values when introducing change or seeking compliance in order to persuade staff or prisoners to provide consent and support. This process of 'signification' was often described by managers in a managerial way by calling this 'selling' change. Sometimes these appeals were simply to the self-interest of staff, described in terms such as 'what is in it for them', for example a new system for issuing canteen goods to prisoners was marketed to staff on the basis that they would get more 'flyers' i.e. leave before the end of their scheduled shift times, and the introduction of a self-select rostering system was marketed on the basis that staff would get more days off-duty. However, appeals were also made to values beyond individual self interest. In both prisons, managers set particular stall by the idea of teamwork and co-operative, supportive relationships between staff in pursuit of a common cause. This idea of unity and cohesiveness was particularly important both as a means of maintaining a close knit and insular staff collective as well as a means of promoting performance. Many appeals were based upon the idea that compliance and managerialism had a value in itself, for example appeals were made on the basis that particular actions would improve audits, KPTs or other measures. Similarly, the fact that a rule or law existed was usually seen as sufficient in itself to provide justification for following a particular course of action. These appeals and this process of signification were therefore centred upon managerialism and occupational culture.

Overtly moral appeals were less common and discussion of humanity and human rights were absent. Where appeals were made to issues such as 'decency' or 'reducing reoffending', these were usually used in ways that presented these as organisationally sanctioned objectives and therefore more closely akin to managerialism than liberal humanitarianism. Some of the problems that may have arise from this are discussed in the final, concluding chapter. There were sometimes also appeals to issues such as security and control. These could be emotive. Managers were also the consumers of such messages. For example, at one prison there was a presentation to the senior management team regarding the

introduction of ViSOR, the violent offender and sex offender register, a multi-agency database of intelligence being used by the police, probation and prisons. There were some potential issues regarding surveillance and privacy but the presentation focussed on justifying the process in emotive terms. The presenter projected large photographs of the victims in high profile child murder cases including Holly Welles, Jessica Chapman, Sarah Payne and Milly Dowler and went on to say:

“I have these pictures in my mind when thinking about ViSOR...I have a daughter the age of Milly. If we can stop just one offence, this is worth it...our families, our friends, the general public are the people who will benefit the most”. (SFN21)

These strategies were deployed in order to minimise potential concerns and to present an over-riding risk. Similarly and more routinely, the potential risks and dangers from prisoners were deployed more regularly than concerns about humanity in order to justify actions.

The final element of ‘persuasive influence’ was that of expertise. Managers were perceived to hold expertise in the area they managed and this gave them authority both within their team and externally. They were seen as people who could provide advice, guidance and support to others. However, with this also came unrealistic pressures to continually provide answers. As one manager explained; “everyone thinks you’re the oracle, you’ve got the answer to everything, but you haven’t.” (W14 senior officer).

However, not all expertise was equally valued, with prison expertise being privileged. Many people described how skills and experience accumulated in previous employment was overlooked, as if it had no value. There was also priority given to work of uniformed and operational staff and the work of managers. The skills of non-operational managers was generally less valued and often seen as narrow or marginal, so for example finance or psychology expertise was often seen as limited to and contained within specific departments and

processes. This was not seen as having the potential for any wider application. Many non-operational managers felt that their expertise was undervalued (see further chapter 7). Expertise was narrowly constructed as that relating to managerial or operational work whilst other skills carried less cache.

The use of softer power or ‘persuasive influence’ was more common by managers in prisons. It was viewed by them as both morally preferable and more effective. However, the ways in which this was deployed was also intrinsically connected with the cultural context.

Power as agency

The use of power by prison managers was varied and they exercised some choice about how they deployed this. However, this was patterned across the organisation. There was a bifurcation in the way that managers experienced power as principals and how they received it as subalterns. As subalterns they perceived that they were subjected to power that was characterised by impersonality, ‘corrective’ forms of action, demands for compliance, and exposure to punishments and rewards. However, they did engage with this, internalise it and accept it as legitimate. In their exercise of power as principals, however, managers relied less upon the use of rewards, punishments and coercive power. Instead, managers developed the ‘softer’ persuasive influences through the authority of their position and the building of relationships with staff.

Although the use of power was, as Scott argued, an act of agency, it was also deeply embedded within the cultural context. For example, it can be seen that the process of ‘signification’ or moral appeals focussed on the needs of staff or managerial concerns. Similarly, the role of expertise was constructed in ways that privileged operational staff. The use of power was exercised by individuals but was patterned across the organisation and was located in the occupational culture and the demands of managerialism.

Conclusion

A number of studies of prison managers have focussed on acts of agency, representing them as diverse and individualistic, sophisticated professionals, and morally heroic. Writers such as Rutherford (1993a) and Bryans (2007) argue that prison managers operate within a morally diverse environment where they have to shape an individual style and approach. There has also been a school of work emerging from the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, based on 'appreciative inquiry' techniques, which suggests that prison work is more complex than has been previously recognised and those who work in prisons exercise individual choices and judgements in a sophisticated and professional manner (Liebling and Price 2001). They also suggest that these acts of agency are important instrumentally, in making the prison operate smoothly, and also normatively, as they maintain a space for empathetic humanity. Similarly, in analysing the work of prison managers, Cheliotis (2006) argues that they deploy 'discreet discretion', in other words the exploitation of spaces where individual choice can be exercised, and use this in order to import progressive values and humanise the environment. These writings identify agency as individualistic and as a progressive force.

This chapter has sought to explore the ways in which agency is practiced by prison managers. There is in any social situation, some space in which individuality can be maintained and expressed and prisons are no exception. However, there is not an open expanse of choice with infinite possibilities, and instead this exploration has revealed that these choices are patterned and constrained. This reflects the work of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977), both of whom identify that agency and structure are interlinked and that agency cannot be seen in purely individual terms but needs to be understood in the ways that it is connected to and contextualised within wider social relationships, practices and norms. In prisons, the emphasis on individuality and diversity has obscured these interdependencies and by exploring these, a more complex and ambiguous understanding of agency has emerged.

The first way in which agency was patterned was in relation to managerialism. This ranged from the way that managers valued 'delivery' and the achievement of objectives in themselves, the way that they exercised discretion so as to conform with organisational needs, the bending of rules in order to make the achievement of prescribed targets more attainable, and the ways in which relationships and power were exercised in order to maximise productivity and compliance. In these various ways, individual choices and agency were used in order to perpetuate managerial practices. It is significant that managerialism has seen not only the introduction of policies and procedures but has also been internalised by managers and other employees. It has been through adaptations in the *habitus*, 'working personality' or practical consciousness of prison managers that managerialism has been given depth, intensity and pervasiveness.

The second way in which agency was patterned was in relation to traditional occupational culture. In particular, it can be seen that staff were given hierarchical preference over prisoners. This was reflected in values, relationships, acts of resistance and the use of power. These attitudes and practices were deeply embedded and were maintained and entrenched through the ongoing actions of managers. It was not simply that managers personally supported those attitudes and practices, but as could be seen in the discussion of resistance, relationships and power, these were also the product of a negotiated order between managers and staff. Managers were constrained and controlled not only from above, but also to some degree from below.

Much has been made in previous studies of the liberal humanitarian instincts of prison managers and the ways that they perpetuate and preserve these values (e.g. Rutherford 1992a, Bryans and Wilson 2000). In this study, such values have been illustrated to be more complex and ambiguous than has been previously suggested. Where managers expressed humanitarian values or acted to advance such concerns in relation to prisoners this was often expressed in organisationally sanctioned terms such as 'decency' and 'reducing reoffending', or were the

outcome of structured decision-making prescribed in rules. From this perspective, humanitarian values were located in a more managerial framework. This illustrated that managerialism could to some degree be argued to be a means through which such values could be promoted and realised. However, in the absence of an explicit moral discourse, they may be fragile or ineffective, as will be discussed further in chapter 8.

There was greater evidence of liberal humanitarianism in managers' conduct towards staff. For example managers expressed values regarding treating staff members as individuals, being aware of their needs, taking account of their interests in decision making and deliberately courting their support. This could be seen in practice in the ways that resistance and power were deployed. This was derived partly from an affinity with a traditional set of organisational values that included having a staff orientation and privileging the needs of staff above those of prisoners. However, it also reflected the development of managerial practices including 'human resource management' that were aimed at securing compliance and increasing productivity (Crewe, Bennett and Wahidin 2008). As with the approach towards prisoners, humanitarianism was a complex notion that was reflective of the predominant values of both managerialism and traditional staff culture.

This patterning of agency raises some important issues in practice. In particular, the ways in which the embedding of these values in policy, practice and 'working personality' created a homogenisation of practice. This raises questions about accountability, professional diversity and progressive change. For example, it has been argued that the constraining of agency is a hidden form of control:

"The decisions lack an open democratic character not because the calculus or calculations are distorted, but because the human character and needs are specified in advance rather than responsive to the situational complexities...The concern here is not just with managerial domination, but the corporate development of the obedient, normalized mind and body, which is

held up against equally legitimate but unrealized alternatives”
(Deetz 2000 p.146)

In other words, the professional diversity described by Rutherford (1993a) and Bryans (2007) was being eroded and diminished. There was a homogenisation of professional identity. This could also create organisational stasis. This has been described by Pat Carlen (2002b) as a process of ‘clawback’, where attempts at reform are drawn back by predominant cultural values. Although she focussed on ‘carceral clawback’ which refers to penal values, it could also be said that contemporary prison culture carried the risk of ‘managerial’ clawback, where managers fell back on rules and targets to shape their working practices. Some of the potential problems arising from this are also discussed further in chapter 8.

From a theoretical perspective, this discussion of the exercise of agency by prison managers highlights some important issues. Agency is rarely, if ever, unbounded, unconstrained and enacted in a social vacuum. Instead there are a range of social forces that come into play in order to influence and shape agency. This has been theoretically described in the concepts of *habitus*, ‘working personality’ and practical consciousness. In his seminal work, Giddens (1984) described that agency and structure are linked through the ‘duality of structure’, that is that the conscious actions of individuals, repeated over time space and across individuals, give a degree of permanence; a structural quality. However, the theory has been criticised as prioritising the way that actors create structures and underplaying the degree to which agents are the subject of structures, and there has thus been an argument that there should be a corresponding theory of the ‘duality of agency’ in order to explain how structure becomes embedded in agency (Caldwell 2006). This issue is encapsulated in the two different elements that appear to shape the agency of prison managers; traditional prison culture and managerialism. The traditional prison culture can be seen as an example of the duality of structure, in as much as it is a bottom up structure that has been created through the behaviour of actors over time and space and has taken on the form of a more permanent structure. However, managerialism has been a top down

creation, particularly over the last two decades. Despite the fact that it was a manufactured process, this has become embedded in the practical consciousness or *habitus* of managers. This is where the idea of an alternative theory of the duality of agency would be helpful in order to distinguish between the processes.

In conclusion, an appreciation of managers as agents needs to be situated in a cultural and social context, taking account of the ways in which traditional occupational culture and managerialism have come to shape their practice and identity. Managers particularly have to balance, rebalance, negotiate and interpret these competing forces. In this way, they acted as micro actors, a medium through which the intersection of global and local was facilitated and given discernable form as practice. This phenomenon also raises important theoretical questions about the process of structuration.

Chapter 6

“I wouldn’t ask you to do something I wouldn’t do myself”: Prison managers and prison officer culture

The first two empirical chapters have considered how prison managers work with the managerial apparatus and how they negotiate the unregulated spaces and apply individual choice. In that respect they have focussed on structure and agency, but in a way that deconstructs them and illustrates how they are intertwined and interdependent. This third empirical chapter picks up on an issue that has emerged in the study - occupational culture and in particular the influence of the traditional prison officer culture.

As has been previously discussed, the main features of this traditional prison officer culture are: insularity; machismo; and a hierarchical relationship with prisoners. Insularity describes an internal focus with strong bonds of solidarity between colleagues who feel cut off professionally and socially from those outside of prisons. Machismo emphasises male qualities directly and indirectly through the types of roles or duties that are afforded status. The nature of staff prisoner relationships is based on a broad consensus about what constitutes the ‘right’ relationships (or at least what are the ‘wrong’ sort) and how interpersonal and professional boundaries are drawn.

It has also been discussed that ‘occupational culture’ is a contested term that has been used in many ways and has no fixed meaning (for example see Martin 1992, Parker M. 2000). In this study, it is intended to follow the analysis of Martin (1992) and to view occupational culture from a range of perspectives. The first is integration, which emphasises the idea of culture as a homogenous manifestation where there is clear consensus without ambiguity. The differentiation perspective suggests conflicts between cultures or between a dominant and sub-culture. The fragmentation perspective focuses on ambiguity, suggesting that there is constant flux with no stable organization-wide or sub-

cultural consensus. By viewing this from a range of perspectives, the complexity, dynamism and duality can emerge,

By examining this multi-dimensional perspective, it is intended to view how occupational culture develops and influences managers, but also how it interacts with both individuality and managerial practices. This is an attempt to consider how global and local forces interact and how individuals make sense of that in their working lives. This will be done by asking questions about the ways that organisational cultures constrain, empower and otherwise shape the actions and thinking of managers. How do they deploy their sense of individual values, approach, or character in their engagement with features of occupational culture? How has occupational culture been altered by the development of managerial practices? How do managers make sense of and forge a coherent approach to the various tensions and pressures placed upon them?

This chapter will approach these subjects by focussing on four issues. The first is the process of becoming a prison manager. Why do people become prison managers? How do they prepare for the role? What are the forces that shape their approach? The other three issues focus on the fundamental management practices: managing staff, managing teams, managing prisoners. These are features that bring to the fore elements of traditional occupational culture. There will be an attempt to examine how prison managers understand these roles and practices. What are the 'narratives' that sustain them? Are there dominant approaches or is it contested? By focussing on these micro aspects of individual practice, an attempt will be made to understand the lived experience and daily practice of prison managers, how they negotiate and make sense of the pressures and tensions around them.

Becoming a Manager

Becoming a prison manager is not simply a matter of taking up a post, but instead it is described here as a process of socialisation in which over time an

individual becomes assimilated within the group, whilst also maintaining a sense of individuality and self. As Crawley (2004) has described in relation to prison officers:

“...the new recruit must acquire the ‘working personality’ of the prison officer. This is not acquired through mere habituation and repetition; rather it involves inhabiting a way of being. It is in this sense that the prison officer himself, like the occupational culture to which he must subscribe, can be described as an ‘achievement’ or ‘process’ produced over time” (p.92)

It is similar with prison managers, that those taking up management roles undergo a process of inhabiting a ‘working personality’ and learning how to express themselves within this and use it creatively.

This section follows the journey that people make from joining the prison occupation through to taking on and learning the management role. This section will ask what motivates people to start working in prisons and then to take on a management role? It will consider how far they import values, practices and behaviours and how far they themselves are shaped by the occupational cultures? What are the forces that press upon them? How do they bring their own sense of self into their role? This section will then close with some concluding reflections on the process of becoming a prison manager and how this relates to wider issues of occupational culture and identity.

Why become a manager?

The first stage in this journey was the initial decision that individuals made to work in prisons. Most managers did not enter with a particular moral perspective on the work, and they rarely cited this as a reason for joining. Instead, pragmatic reasons were usual. Of 62 people interviewed, 38 stated instrumental reasons for joining such as job security, financial rewards or career opportunities. A typical example was:

“I saw it as a steady employment with a fairly good basic wage and good pension package. When I joined a few years ago, we’d just come out of recession, so I saw it as a good move really”.
(S11 senior officer)

Many such people had experienced casual or variable employment and had been threatened with or experienced redundancy. These people came from a variety of occupations including construction work, catering, sales and mining. Often their decision was taken as the result of life stage influences such as marriage or parenthood. One staff member described how his experiences of working and personal life led him to seek stability:

“I’d been in manufacturing for twenty years, been through the redundancy process six times, made redundant twice, I had a young family that had just come along and I wanted something that would give me job security” (W18 officer)

The initial interest that people had was stimulated from a variety of sources, although most frequently cited were friends, family or acquaintances who introduced the idea of working in prisons. Nationally advertised recruitment campaigns also attracted some people. In these circumstances, prison work was often one of a number of options that would be considered, including the police, armed services and other parts of the public sector. It was therefore the material stability that came with the work rather than other intrinsic qualities that had appeal.

A second smaller group were those from an armed forces background who joined as they left those services. Such people often saw prisons as a way of extending the armed services ethos of camaraderie and teamwork into their civilian life, as one prison officer described it, “a natural progression”. These people often saw prisons as one option amongst similar public sector professions including the police and fire brigade. A typical response of this group included:

“I was released from the Royal Navy and I knew I was going to be discharged and I wanted to stay in a disciplined service, so I

applied to the police, the fire service and the prison service and the first one that came along was the prison service.” (S3 principal officer)

Those in this group not only sought material security, but also wanted social aspects of the employment experience including being part of a close knit team, working in conditions of stress and conflict, and being part of a uniformed, public service.

A third group were those that sought a professional challenge in particular working in what they perceived as a testing interpersonal environment. They were attracted to the intrinsic occupational challenges. This was not necessarily seen in terms of criminological values but instead was described in terms of the prison being a human service, one that required one to work with people with all of the unpredictability and variability that brought. For example, one person in this group stated:

“I thought it looked very interesting. I thought this is something I could do rather than the same old mundane routine production line scenario. It was change, something different every day”.
(W7 governor grade)

Such people did not express a particular moral view about how that challenge should be approached, but instead saw it as an issue of interest in itself.

A final group were those who joined with a moral perspective. Only four people described this. Three of these related to reform and rehabilitation, inspired by either religious conviction, or personal experiences of living in marginalised conditions. An example of this included one person inspired by their own personal life history:

“I was homeless when I was sixteen. I went into a YMCA-type hostel and the kind of people I was mixing with, I thought [I could] help, it was something I wanted to do, I wanted to straighten people out, if I can put it that way.” (S28 officer)

One person described themselves as having a natural affinity with “law and order” and they were attracted by both the mechanistic, rule-bound order of prison routine and what they saw as the moral basis of punishment:

“I was brought up in that kind of disciplinarian kind of way. I’ve always been a lawful kind of person. When I was at school, I was never one of the kids that started smoking like some of the others, I was never led by peer pressure, I always felt that I had a very strong sense of my own identity and I didn’t feel I had to pander to certain other boys in the class in order to be accepted. I felt quite confident in who I was. I just had that particular way of thinking, that particular drive that I like law and I like order”
(S16 principal officer)

Such moral perspectives were rare and were exceptional in generating the reasons why individuals joined the Prison Service. Instead the original reasons were more pragmatic or more orientated around the relationship between staff and the challenges of the job.

Relatively few managers stated that they had joined with the intention of becoming a manager. Those that did were often graduates, had been managers in previous employment, or saw themselves as joining an organisation that offered a predetermined career structure. However, the majority of those who became managers did not join with that as an ambition but rather took on managerial roles after a period of time at the basic grade level. These people often described their move into management as “natural progression”, a seamless move informed by their experience of prison work, their observation of managers, the structured system of progression and their own personal development. The feeling that this was a state that crept up upon people meant that they never identified an epiphany but more often described that this seemed to open up as an possibility once they were anchored in the occupation (Schein 1988).

The most common reason presented by those who entered management (14 of 44) was that they observed that their managers were poor and they believed they could do as good or better job. For example, one manager stated:

“I thought the Prison Service had poor quality manager, poor quality people leading us, poor quality decisions and there didn’t appear to be the professionalism that I wanted. That’s why I chased the managerial posts” (W11 governor grade)

There was also a process through which individuals saw peers progress into management ranks, often peers who they perceived as being less able to carry out managerial roles. For example, another manager described this process:

“[I became a manager] on the back of seeing people get promoted and people already at the senior officer level and thinking they don’t know what they’re doing, they don’t know how to get the best out of me, they don’t know how to talk to me. They were not very good managers some of them. There were some excellent people as well. I thought to myself I could do just as good if not a better job, that’s why I went to be a SO”. (S5 governor grade)

There was a process through which management positions came to be perceived as obtainable. This gradually crept up on those who had not previously considered this, but having become established then started to look ahead. For example, one manager stated:

“I don’t ever remember ever making a conscious decision to be a prison manager. I think it just happened. I looked around at some of my managers and thought I could do a better job than some of them could. I think that’s how a lot of people start”. (S18 governor grade)

This evolutionary and emergent view was far more prevalent than those who felt that they were identified as having potential and positively nurtured by their managers. Only four mentioned that this had occurred.

Of those interviewed, ten also mentioned that there was a push factor from their boredom with officer work, which they felt was becoming routinised and under-stimulating. Management was seen as a route to greater job satisfaction, autonomy and professional challenge. It was also seen as a means by which people could have a greater impact on the organisation. For example, one manager described:

“As an officer I got into a routine, because prison routines are the same every day, I found myself in that situation being bored. I got frustrated, I wanted something else to expand on”. (W26 senior officer)

From this perspective, there were intrinsic qualities of the management job role that offered an enriched occupational experience.

In contrast to the reasons that people presented for joining the Prison Service, only six people mentioned the material benefits arising from becoming a manager, and none of those mentioned this exclusively. Indeed, for some, the financial rewards for becoming a manager were so small that this was irrelevant to their decision. As one manager explained:

“When I first started doing it I was a bit [exhales] because it’s not a money thing for me because I’ve done a long time anyway. It’s certainly not a jump in money for the extra responsibility, so it’s got to be for your own personal reasons.” (W16 senior officer)

On entering the prison, people appeared to be open to being shaped by the expectations, culture and values of the organisation. They tended not to emphasise their own personal values but instead entered into the employment for instrumental reasons. However, where they did bring values with them, these largely related to camaraderie and relationships with colleagues rather than particular views about prisoners. This aligned with aspects of traditional prison officer culture previously discussed. On entering a managerial role, people were open to new ideas and experiences as they saw this as an opportunity for job

enrichment. However, they more clearly carried expectations that were anchored in their experience of working in prisons. As a result, values shaped by prison officer occupational culture were imported into the managerial role.

Socialisation and the process of becoming a manager

On entering management at any level or even changing role within a managerial grade there was a period of adjustment and adaptation, what might be described as a state of 'liminality' or limbo, where they pass from one occupational identity to another (Turner 1969). This was the challenging period of truly 'becoming' a prison manager, through a process of learning the craft, acquiring the competences and becoming accomplished at managing the expectations and competing demands placed upon them.

Prior to taking up a post, there would often be a period of preparation or 'pre-learning' (Watson 2001). For those who were being promoted or were transferring prisons, the selection process itself would require them to read about the prison, perhaps make a preliminary visit, and start to think about their potential role. Some staff described how reading performance information such as policy documents, inspection and audit reports would provide a basis for starting to think about the prison. Others described how the selection process marked a point at which they started to psychologically prepare for a new role. For other managers, they were specifically selected for posts, based upon their experience in particular areas such as audit, security or industrial relations, or based upon a previous working relationship with a more senior manager. People in such a position often had a clearer idea of what was expected of them from the outset and therefore experienced a quicker adaptation. Part of this quicker adaptation was also due to the fact that either through their expertise or relationships they would be more readily established and supported, whereas those that were unknown were seen as untested and had to prove themselves.

Taking up a management post could be a difficult adjustment. A number described this as a “sink or swim” experience for which they found themselves insufficiently prepared and inadequately supported. This was similar to the ‘culture shock’ and ‘reality shock’ that has been described as being experienced by prison officers taking up post for the first time (Crawley 2004). Some managers described that they had to create social distance from people with whom they had previously been peers, this was difficult as they moved from being “one of the boys” to learning how to “take a step back and take it from a managerial point of view” (W19 Senior officer). This process of renegotiating relationships was a difficult process both because those relationships had a professional value but also because there were sometimes personal bonds of friendship.

Most managers described that on taking up a post they would undertake a period of observation and relationship building with staff before starting to implement change. This usually involved watching staff at key times, asking about practices and processes and carrying out introductory interviews and team meetings. It was rare for managers to describe that they would speak to prisoners during this period. This period allowed them to understand the performance of the area, what the problems were and helped them to understand the people they would be working with. This was also described by managers as an opportunity for staff to get to know them as individuals before they started to take on a more directive role. This induction process was a two-way process, as it was a means through which managers could understand how to change the teams they led, but was also a means through which they could accommodate and adapt to the existing practices and expectations. For some, they faced barriers as established staff battled for control with them, offering a challenge to their authority, for example questioning decisions in meetings or being slow to comply with instructions. These tests were often a rite of passage to being seen as a credible manager. This initial period was where managers established their authority but this had to be negotiated rather than imposed.

In learning a new job, many looked to others for help and support. Sources of support were varied. Most commonly, managers would seek support from their own managers, from their peers and from subordinates. Some managers stated that they received a briefing from their own managers about what was expected of them and this gave some clarity to their role, however, others described that they had no such briefing and were instead left to their own devices. Some sought the views of their managers, seeing this as a necessity in order to ensure that they were complying with the expectations of their seniors. The most commonly cited source of advice and guidance was more experienced peers. These were used as in order to show the ropes to new managers. Others described that they had to rely upon experienced subordinates in order to guide them initially until they got a sense of how the area worked. The choice of support could alter the ways in which managers developed and adapted to their role.

Many managers presented their tenure through a particular narrative of change. In this, they joined an area that was difficult or poorly performing and that during their period this transformed. These narratives were often deployed with little evidence and based upon subjective assessments of factors such as “staff morale” or being “dynamic”, while the end result was that they “sort[ed] it out” or “turned it round”, “got the whole jail involved” or became “probably the best team in the jail”. Such judgements partly reflected managerial concerns and ways in which managers created a ‘virtual’ or ‘imaginary’ prison (see Owers 2007 and Carlen 2008b) in order to protect or promote themselves. However, this was also a reflection of the personal journey they made from new arrival, through a liminal state, building confidence and relationships to the point where they were established and accepted in their role.

Discussion

The process of becoming a prison manager was notable for the prominence of traditional prison officer culture. When people entered prison work, they

generally took on the prison officer 'working personality' (Crawley 2004) and as has been described above, those who sought to enter the management grades generally only did so once they were anchored in their occupation. These individuals carried that 'working personality' and culture with them as they entered their new role. In addition, when they became managers, they found that they were not tightly moulded but instead went through a 'sink or swim'' experience where they had to negotiate their authority with those they managed. The influence of traditional culture was imported by those who became managers as an embedded part of their 'working personality' and it was also maintained through the power of the prison officer occupational group who had a dialectical relationship with their own managers.

The role of managerialism was less prominent initially, but was not absent. It formed part of the pre-learning by those who became managers and it was also part of the expectations that were set for them by more senior managers. Those who became managers also noted a shift in their perspectives and relationships as they entered a state of liminality where they developed greater social distance from former peers and started to understand the expectations placed upon them. Instead of being tightly moulded, there was a subtle and longer term process through which managerialism became embedded in the practice of managers.

The process of becoming a manager was characterised by both continuity and change. Traditional occupational culture was imported and maintained, but there was also a gradual introduction into newer, managerial concerns. Managers experienced uncertainty and even anxiety as they tried to make sense of these structures that were placed upon them from above and below. Having navigated through this period of liminality, managers developed a mode of practice and a sense of professional identity where they could balance and reconcile these competing demands. Having reached this stage, many managers constructed a narrative of change to celebrate the rite of passage. These narratives reflected that the development of an individual sense of professional identity, making

sense of the competing structures and creatively working with them was a significant accomplishment and one that was achieved through struggle.

Managing staff

Conventional management studies assert that managing staff requires a balance between focussing on the needs of individuals and focussing on the tasks of the organisation (for a summary see Mullins 2002). This is also a staple of management training and a feature of policies and practices in organisations including prisons. This approach reflects an assumption that a participative style and an engaged workforce will produce greater outputs and results. This is situated within a broader trend where organisations aspire not simply to manage the actions of staff but also their subjectivity and way of thinking (e.g. Rose 1999) so that they embody the aims, aspirations and values of the organisation.

This section will focus on the relationship between managers and staff. This was explored in interviews, where managers described what they perceived to be a 'good' manager. This section will also draw upon observations of the ways in which managers conducted themselves with staff. Broadly there were two dimensions that shaped these interactions. On one hand there was a focus on delivery and task achievement, what will be described as the managerial aspects of the work. On the other hand, there were expectations based on the nature of interpersonal behaviours and the quality of relationships. The relationship between these two aspects could be described in conventional management studies terms as being the quest for the optimum balance between task and people. However, this was not simply a technical issue relating to productivity but was a social phenomenon with a localised character, which replicated the tensions found elsewhere between traditional and managerial cultures.

This section will open by discussing management values and practices regarding the attainment of organisational tasks, the managerial elements of the role. It will then discuss how managers understood and approached their role in managing

staff. This section will go on to discuss the inter-relationships between these elements and draw broader observations about the working world of prison managers.

Managing tasks

As has been previously argued, managerialism and the attainment of organisationally prescribed objectives had become increasingly important. This was reflected in the ways that ‘good’ managers were described.

In this study, managers’ descriptions of ‘good’ management practice emphasised what could be termed traditional heroic notions of ‘leadership’, in particular that managers should be “visible” (see chapter 5). This idea of visibility often meant managers demonstrated their ability to carry out prison officer duties or their willingness to carry out the more risky elements of the work, including challenging prisoners. This acted as a way of signalling cultural affinity and ascribing status to particular aspects of the work, including dealing with conflict and using force. Being visible in different parts of the workplace on a regular basis was also often used as an opportunity to build informal relationships with staff through discussing work and non-work matters. Non-work matters often included football and television programmes, and work issues often included issues such as attitudes towards prisoners. These informal discussions reflected and reinforced values such as machismo, and demonstrated shared work and non-work identities. From this perspective, ‘good’ managers remained part of the prison officer occupational culture.

However, the notion of ‘visible’ management also facilitated management checking and observation. As one manager said “people know I’m watching and observing them”. For example, during visits to areas, managers would check documentation such as observation books, self harm documentation and searching records, and asked questions of staff about targets and incidents. There was a distinction made between visibility and micromanagement, one manager

described that the ideal manager would be “visible but not too visible”. Interactions with staff also had this managerial dimension but this could have a more divisive and alienating feel to it if it was overused or not balanced with demonstrations of cultural affinity.

Managers generally described that it was important to meet targets and performance measures. This was often described in terms such as “come up with the goods”, a phrase which strips away the human element of the service and paints it as a mechanistic, commercial operation. The way that many managers discussed how they achieved these outcomes often emphasised machismo and aggression. Phrases such as “he’ll come down on you like a ton of bricks”, “they’ll get a kick up the backside”, “give a bollocking” and “ruled with a rod of iron” were not uncommon. Some managers even described themselves or others as “disciplinarian” and “autocratic” with a sense of pride or admiration. This macho language painted a picture of a strong, male, heroic leader able to dominate and control others through force of character or strength of will. This indicated the ways in which the macho aspects of traditional occupational cultures seeped into contemporary management practice. However, this language did not necessarily reflect practice. As with much ‘canteen culture’, this may have exaggerated or manipulated reality in order to represent a way of behaving that was considered admirable (Waddington 1999). For example, one principal officer described that on taking up his responsibilities in an area, he introduced himself to the team and started by “throwing some fucks into them”, however, when he elaborated upon this, he had set out the performance of the group to the team as a whole and discussed personal performance on an individual basis in private. At no time had he actually sworn in speaking to them but instead such phrases were used as a culturally recognised short-hand, whereas actual behaviours were different in content, tone and effect. In many cases, the behaviours were staples of contemporary management practice such as performance management and feedback, but the ways in which they were discussed and described was situated within a local culture.

The discussion of the attainment of tasks also emphasised terms such as: “direction”, “decisive”, “clear about their role and responsibilities” and “organising”. Such terms focussed on organisation as a practice, where managers provided a sense of order and purpose to the tasks at hand. In this sense, ‘good’ managers gave structure and clarity to the work. In doing so, they were often drawing upon wider organisational structures such as business plans and also enacting the organisational infrastructure in the form of group and individual appraisals and target setting. What distinguished a ‘good’ manager was not simply that they could use these as bureaucratic mechanism, but instead that they embodied these, bringing them to life for people, making them relevant to their daily work and providing guidance and support.

The way that managers thought about and enacted the managerial aspects of their role was not the amoral and mechanistic manner implied by a term such as “expedient managerialism” (Rutherford 1993a) or the dull bureaucracy of the “general manager” (Bryans 2007). Managers sought to embody the managerial aspects of their role, meeting targets, enacting prescribed policies and following organisationally directed aims meant something to them personally. This was part of their identity; it was part of who they had become. However, this was also infused by a distinct appreciation of the local cultural context. The practice of managers reflected and maintained elements of traditional cultures including a close affinity with officers, machismo and a particular orientation to prisoners. In achieving tasks, managers both used this cultural capital and invested in it.

Managing People

The importance of relationships between people has been a feature of both conventional management strategies and prison occupational cultures. In management, the development of strategically aligned, instrumental human resource management has become the dominant orthodoxy in professional literature and practice, including in prison (e.g. see Crewe, Bennett and Wahidin 2008). In contrast and as has been described earlier, traditional culture has

emphasised a close and insular relationship between staff that serves their interests in preference to others including prisoners and the organisation.

The new language of human resource management was frequently deployed in the ways that managers talked about their relationships with staff. For example, phrases that reflected this included: “develop”, “communication”, “meeting the needs of the individual”, “empower”, “emotional intelligence”, “understanding people”, “support”, “enable”, “approachable”, “knowledge”, “listener”, “involves”. Such terms described an emotionally connected and sensitive manager who paid close attention to the needs of staff but also used these relationships in a purposeful way in order to achieve organisationally approved outcomes.

For many managers, this involved walking a tightrope between taking control and allowing individual discretion. Whilst a good manager was seen as one who took a direct and active role in setting targets and achieving results, it was clear that this should not undermine the autonomy of staff. In particular, many people spoke about how once they were tasked they wanted the space to achieve the results in their own way. For example, one manager described that:

“The main thing I want in my line manager and I’ve always wanted is to make it clear what I have to do, leave me to get on with it, be there when I need you.” (S20 non-operational manager)

This was described by one manager as “letting go but also being in control” (W4 Non-operational manager). Many described how they did not like to be overly managed, and found that this was counter-productive. One manager illustrated this in the following words:

“[Good managers] allow you that room for manoeuvre, that autonomy and allow me to make my own decisions...I don’t like being micromanaged I have to say, I don’t. I find it very

irritating, very frustrating. I like to be allowed to get on with it really". (W13 principal officer)

These comments illustrate the dialectic of control, the negotiation between managers and the managed in defining appropriate behaviours and boundaries.

Many people believed that managers should be approachable, listening and consultative. By approachable, this meant that people could go to their managers with personal and professional difficulties and this would be treated seriously, confidentially and positively. They wanted to know that this would not be seen as a sign of weakness but instead would be respected. There was also an expectation that managers would listen to what staff had to say; "I mean really listening not just the words going on actually listening not just hearing" (S7 governor grade).

Where this was an issue of practice or performance rather than a personal one, the boundaries and expectations were drawn differently. There was an expectation that managers would listen but this was curbed by the rider that this was "without always agreeing" and that they would "not be pushed over". For managers the process of listening was not simply the right thing to do, it had an instrumental value for them. The nature of their role was often described in commercial, marketing terms, describing how they would have to "sell" change to staff, to "win hearts and minds" and "get people on board". As one manager described:

"To me, a good line manager would be someone who knows you, who is prepared to listen to you, contributions you can make and what you can say, and includes you within the decision making process, involves you in that decision-making process in some form or other. By doing that you make that person feel more valued, even if it's just cosmetic, you make them feel more valued and therefore you get better reaction and more productive work from that person. That's the basic skill of a good line manager."
(W22 senior officer)

Communication and consultation would be used where changes were being developed and the process would involve discussing this with staff and eliciting their views. Often the reasons for changes would be presented, sometimes appealing to the self interest of staff, for example the introduction of a new prison shop system in one of the research sites was promoted on the basis that staff would be able to complete their work and go home before the end of their shift time. The quality of consultations were variable, these meetings were often ad hoc and informal, based on speaking to whoever was available at the time. Occasionally, and largely in respect of operational incidents, the opinions of staff were decisive, for example, during a day long strike, the concerns of staff who continued to work about what they would be expected to do with the prisoners led to the curtailment of plans to unlock prisoners for activities such as exercise and phone calls. Another example was a manager agreeing to a decision regarding the availability of contraceptives to prisoners despite his personal misgivings about it after the majority of the team argued in favour of it. However, on many other occasions consultation was limited, teams often being given an opportunity to simply air their views before a pre-determined policy was introduced, or were simply given an input into how a policy was introduced rather than about what the policy was or whether it was introduced at all. In these ways, consultation, communication and listening were part of the ways in which human resource management promoted the use of interpersonal relationships as instrumental management tools.

Many people described that ‘good’ managers should attempt to develop individual staff. This meant both immediate feedback and learning, but also longer term growth. Again, whilst the ability of managers to switch between styles and approaches that worked with different people may be presented as sensitive interpersonal management, it was also instrumental. It was described as being an exercise in which people would be developed in order to achieve particular results, for example in phrases such as: “I’ve shown them how to deal with it and they can implement it themselves next time” and “empower and ensure they deliver to the level I expect”. This instrumental purpose was also

seen in longer term development with a “strategic” view, building competencies and skills or “giving them the tools”. This suggested development was not simply about individualised personal growth, but also had an instrumental purpose to make people more productive resources.

Despite the extent of the instrumentality in interpersonal relations, there were also some normative boundaries. The ‘good’ manager also had qualities of “honesty and integrity”, “openness” and “fairness”. It was also important the people felt that they were treated in a humane way. This could be detected in phrases such as : “not being brutally honest”, “not just thinking as a manager, ‘they’re my underlings””, “poor line managers who will use every opportunity to beat their chests and bawl and shout”, “can’t be too dictatorial” and “no feeling that you’re being bullied”. These phrases indicated that management behaviour was normatively constrained and that there was a base level at which individual feelings had to be respected.

Discussion

The way that prison managers approached the management of staff did in some ways reflect conventional management strategies. In particular, there is an appreciation that the needs of individual staff members and the needs of the organisation had to be balanced in order to maximise productivity. As one officer neatly summarised:

“[A good manager is s]omeone who understands his staff. He understands that there’s a job to be done, but understands there are two sides between a job to be done and the people who do it. The job is to be done whatever way, but at the end of the day you have to get the staff motivated to do the job”. (S30 officer)

The way that this was manifested in prisons, however, also had a distinctly local texture, which reflected the ways that managerialism and traditional culture co-existed.

There were ways in which managerialism had changed the nature of relationships between managers and staff, leading managers to use them more instrumentally and incorporate elements of formal organisational human resource practice into their work. However, managerialism had not replaced or eliminated localised practices, but instead this interacted with traditional culture and resulted in adaptations or reinforcement. For example, managers would enact cultural displays, particularly through 'visible' leadership where they would carry out prison officer duties or get involved in conflict with prisoners. This reinforced and legitimised some aspects of traditional culture including closeness to staff, attitudes towards prisoners and machismo. At the same time, this also provided a means through which managers could enlist staff and reduce resistance to managerial measures.

There were two strong structural forces that came into contact through the work of prison managers. Individuals did not generally challenge these but accepted that they would be a feature of their working lives. The way that they developed their sense of identity was through creatively managing the dynamic interaction between these structures in order to balance and advance the needs of individual staff and the organisation. Their approach humanised managerialism and made it effective, crafting an accessible and acceptable localised and individualised form of practice.

Managing teams

Conventional management literature emphasises the importance of teamwork (for summary see Mullins 2002). This suggests that cohesive teams have enhanced morale, productivity, flexibility and innovation (ibid). Conventional management theory pays particular attention to the creation of teams that work collaboratively towards pre-determined organisational goals. However, the reality of this is often more complex and problematic, including that close teams

can become isolated from the wider organisation and can create distorted perspectives through ‘groupthink’ (ibid).

In this chapter, the various norms that shape working lives are explored. The issues of loyalties, teams and teamwork were particularly significant as they were not only central to conventional management studies, but they also reflect the tensions that exist within occupational cultures in prisons. Approaches to teams were a central tenant of both traditional occupational cultures and the newer managerial ethos. Traditional prison officer culture has featured a tight-knit and insular occupational group (see Crawley 2004, Liebling 2007). These groups were comprised of people who relied upon each other for safety and for getting their work done. They did not feel that those outside of their working group truly understood or appreciated the pressures they faced and the skills that they deployed. They were also suspicious of others within the organisation, including more senior managers who they perceived threatened their sense of security through investigations, policy initiatives and also under valued them as individuals in favour of managerial targets. In contrast, managerialism has involved processes of opening up, being controlled from higher up in the organisation and having a wider, external perspective. This also fostered a sense of competition between different teams and units. Both approaches shaped team work and did so in ways that both conflicted and reinforced one another.

This section will seek to explore these issues and to look in depth at three aspects of this team working. First it will look at where managers’ loyalties lay and where their locus of interest was directed? Were they looking inward or outward, up or down? Did they see themselves as part of a local entity or a broader corporate organisation? Secondly, the relationship between managers and their teams will be explored, asking how managers presented themselves to their teams? How did they establish and maintain their credentials and where did they see themselves in relation to the team? Finally, the issue of competition will be considered and how this has influenced or changed the nature of prison management and the notion of collaboration and team working?

By exploring these issues, this section sets out to further reveal the norms that shape the working lives of prison managers and how individual managers navigate these.

Loyalties and locus of interest

Loyalties are those bonds of allegiance between people that shape who they give their attention, commitment and trust towards. This section will seek to explore the allegiances formed by managers and what this revealed about their work.

Managers reported a range of overlapping loyalties, from their immediate team to the particular prison they were working in, towards the Prison Service as a whole and beyond towards the government and the public. However, there were variations in emphasis and priority with some loyalties being stronger than others and these differences were pronounced between groups of managers.

In general, officers and senior officers were more likely to describe that their loyalties lay within their immediate team. This partly reflected the organisation of their work as they were part of settled and established groups in specific parts of a prison. This also reflected the nature of the work and the environment as they worked directly with prisoners and this was perceived to involve risks to safety that required solidarity for protective purposes. For example, an officer and a senior officer reported similar concerns that underpinned their loyalties to their immediate colleagues:

“My immediate loyalties are to people around me, whoever that is. At that time, the people you are with, that you’re working with, who’s backs you’re watching, and are watching your back. In that respect it will be the team around me.” (W18 officer)

“It’s the wing staff because I work with them. If there’s an incident we have to rely on each other to get ourselves out of that danger if it happens.” (W26 senior officer)

These loyalties were tested when there was a national one day strike called by the Prison Officers Association, which took place during the fieldwork phase at one of the prisons. This circumstance placed senior officers directly in the position of deciding whether they were on the side of officers or whether they were on the side of governor grades, who operated the prison during the action. The overwhelming majority of principal and senior officers chose to join the strike rather than support the more senior managers who worked.

More senior managers, both governor grades and non-operational managers, saw their loyalties generally falling within the prison, either describing themselves as having a generalised loyalty to the prison or personalising this to the Governor. Occasionally the commitment to the Governor reflected a personal relationship or individual loyalty, but largely this reflected a means by which commitment to an abstract entity such as 'the establishment' was made tangible, and the loyalty was to whoever held the post of Governor. Again this localised loyalty reflected to a degree their working structure as they were often part of a senior management team often over a number of years and therefore had emotional and professional bonds that tied them to both the place and particular people. However, they did have more of a corporate sense of loyalty and interest, focussing on an entity and a hierarchical formulation rather than specific individuals and groups.

Some managers were conscious of wider responsibilities to the Prison Service, government or the public. This commitment was stronger for those who had moved around several prisons and therefore did not see themselves as tied to a particular prison or manager.

In general, loyalties were localised amongst all managers, with a focus on particular establishments or teams. However, there was a difference between uniformed managers and those out of uniform. Those in uniform tended to have a stronger attachment to that specific uniformed staff group and had a more insular

focus, based on a shared sense of threat and danger. This replicated the sense of teamwork seen in traditional prison officer culture. Governors and non-operational managers still had a localised locus of loyalty but also focussed on the whole establishment as a corporate entity and a bureaucratic structure rather than particular individuals or groups. The loyalties displayed by them were less affective than uniformed managers and more based on a mechanistic understanding of the organisation and effective management practice.

Managers as team members

As has been previously described, managers were valued for their visibility and leadership. This notion will be explored further in discussing the ways that managers attempted to reduce barriers between themselves and their team members through particular norms, rituals and rites.

Many managers and officers described how they liked their managers to lead by example and one informal norm that was frequently cited by managers was that “I wouldn’t ask you to do something I wouldn’t do myself”. This was a phrase that had multiple meanings and implications.

On one hand it described that a manager had a general level of knowledge and experience about the working conditions of the staff that were being managed, often accumulated through a period of experience prior to taking on a managerial role. For example, one manager described:

“You’ve got to be honest and you’ve got to be capable of doing the job. I’ve always said, I came up through the ranks, I did the prison officer job so I’m not telling anybody to do anything I wouldn’t have expected to do as an officer”. (W12 governor grade)

This manager recast and represented themselves as a prison officer, sharing their experiences and values. Many managers played up and glorified their experience

in shop floor roles and these stories and legends were used to enhance their status. At the same time this implicitly undermined the status of those who had not worked as prison officers, such as non-operational managers or operational managers who had entered on fast-track management development programmes.

This phrase was also used in a literal sense in as much as prison managers would sometimes actually carry out officer duties and get their 'hands dirty', for example by unlocking cell doors, serving meals or challenging prisoners. One officer explained the value that they placed upon managers who did this:

“As an officer, having worked with different line managers, my preference is for somebody that is willing to get stuck in...I like the line manager to be the kind of person that in the morning meeting says we're a bit behind on searching, [X] we need to crack a few out, then in the afternoon says have you got a spare minute, [X] come and do a search with me. I much prefer that sort of proactive approach than somebody who would remain very much removed...” (W27 officer)

The manager in this context was literally taking on the burdens and role of a prison officer. In some circumstances this was required in order to get work done on time. However, some managers did this for symbolic reasons, for example senior managers occasionally appeared on a landing and assisted with unlocking or locking up. Whilst this did little to actually reduce the work load, it had a ritualistic value in demonstrating their affinity and ability.

Another example was managers who personally dealt with difficult and aggressive prisoners or gave bad news to people. This was seen as a sign that they were willing to do the difficult tasks and did not simply leave it to others to do. Examples of this included managers who would summon prisoners to their offices or go to their cells after lock up times flanked by a number of officers, in order to challenge their behaviour. This was seen as a way of demonstrating courage and personal strength, but was also deeply seeped in a culture of machismo.

In this regard, the relationship between managers and their teams was particularly important as it revealed ways in which traditional cultures have been maintained in the contemporary penal system and indeed this has been encouraged and entrenched through modern notions of leadership and visibility.

Competition

A particular feature of managerialism has been the importation of competition through the creation of a market for public services, including prisons. However, for most prisons and prison staff, the prospect of participating in a commercial competition was remote. Notions of competitiveness have been also promoted and perpetuated by techniques such as quantitative performance measurement, league tables and the award of performance ratings (e.g. see Armstrong 2007). In this section, the effects of this will be briefly considered and in particular how this related to traditional occupational cultures which emphasised insularity and closeness between staff.

Managers were conscious of and interacted with the performance management technologies. For example, when prison performance was discussed, the weighted scorecard would be used as a measure of relative achievement, and comparisons would often be drawn with other prisons in the geographical area as a way of benchmarking. Particular vitriol was reserved in one of the prisons for a nearby private prison, described as a “civvy jail”. Staff would revel in stories of their failings, including an escape. However, competition did not only relate to inter-prison rivalries, but was also evident within the prison where departments would compete with one another. Some described this as “healthy”, acting as a spur to greater effort, but many also highlighted the negative consequences. For example one manager discussed the benefits of competition but also the fragmentation that could take place:

“There’s a bit of a ‘them and us’ attitude.. I’ve found ever since I joined the service that even within your own wing you get the different divisions¹³, even the same group of staff, during the week you all work together and then at the weekend there’s a ‘them and us’ attitude, wherever you work it’s always “that fucking weekend, what have they done this weekend, this weekend have done nothing”. It’s always that your weekend does all the work and the other weekend does nothing. If you swap weekends it would still be the same, nothing changes. The Res[idential] thing is the same, we say “[those wings] they’re fucking useless”, and they’re probably saying the same about us. It’s them and us. Sometimes I think it’s a bit of humour, its done tongue in cheek and it gives you that morale boost within your own group, and sometimes it forges more team work, even without realising it. If you’ve got a bit of friendly competition, sometimes you think we’ll do better than them. Sometimes it is quite a good thing”. (W26 senior officer)

There was a knock on impact across group and team collaboration. Whilst performance measurement may have acted to focus managers on particular objectives, this could make them myopic. For example, one manager described:

“There’s always an element of competitiveness, because at the end of the day we spend a lot of time looking at performance and everybody is sitting there thinking yes I want to help other people but I don’t want to be the one whose audit area is receiving 56%. At the end of the day I have to put my area first because I want all my audits to be achieving 90% and I don’t want to be seen as missing targets. While you have a senior management teams that are performance driven you’re never going to be able to get away from that, there’s a bit of live and let die”. (S4 governor grade)

Competition could also be defensive. Just as the spotlight could shine on those departments that performed exceptionally well, it would also fall on those who performed poorly. When attention was focussed on these, it would provide relief from close management attention for others. Two managers summed this up by saying:

¹³ Prison officers and often senior officers work alternate weekends. The two groups are often referred to as ‘divisions’

“I refer to this [x wings] as ‘the dark side’...why should I bother if [they] are getting themselves into trouble? It looks better for me, although I wouldn’t deliberately stitch them up”. (WFN 14)

“You look after your own area. Everyone always feels that either someone else is being given more, while you are getting more grief. While the governor is beating the shit out of [x] wings, it means [y] wings aren’t getting it. I’m not going to help, because if I was in their place, they wouldn’t be running over to tell me what I could do.” (WFN 30)

Of course, the use of performance measurement did not always undermine teamwork, and as was described in chapter 4, there were examples where the attainment of particular targets required cross-departmental co-operation and the use of performance targets was a device through which this had been facilitated.

On an individual level, the effects of competition were sometimes described as divisive as it eroded inter-personal relationships and trust. Within the management group, those who were identified as competitive were talked about using pejorative terms such as “political manoeuvrings”, “jockeying for position” and “looking for smartie points”. Such terms highlighted a view of competition as childish and vacuous but also self-interested.

Some managers also argued that competition had a distorting effect and would lead to people being less honest. This was sometimes described as people trying to “sell” their achievements, engaging in “putting your stall out”, or choosing to “blow our own trumpet a bit” or to “put a spin on things”. This was usually in order to impress more senior managers either for individual advantage or to make their department look good, this was criticised by some as creating an “I, I, I, me, me, me culture” where people were both selfish and boastful. This could also contribute towards rhetoric overtaking reality, creating a ‘virtual’ prison.

For others it could be even more destructive, creating an aggressive culture where people had to engage in “fighting my corner” and had to “shout loud, be very political, spell out the consequences of decisions on targets...It’s the only

language they understand” (WFN 24). Others described how competitive individuals could affect a whole team:

“It’s weird, it’s one of those things where you get a member of staff that just creates a feeling of mistrust, everyone feels uncomfortable and that spreads, it’s like a disease almost”. (W28 officer)

Although traditional prison culture has been characterised by closeness, insularity and co-operation and there were examples where performance measurement has been a spur to cross-team collaboration, these accounts highlighted the emergence of a less corporate, more individualised culture. The working environment had come to incorporate elements of the intense inter- and intra-agency competition described by Cheliotis (2006).

Discussion

Working with teams again highlighted the confluence between the traditional occupational culture and the newer managerial practices.

It appeared that the changing structure of prison management, with its more globalised, managerial outlook, created a force towards a more atomised, competitive culture. Although this sometimes encouraged people to work together in order to achieve objectives, this was a weaker more transitory and superficial sense of togetherness. The sense of competition also drove people apart rather than pushing them together. There was either a sense of individual one-upmanship or a defensive collective desire to avoid the negative effects, a sense of shared misery. The structures of prison management appeared in this respect to work against deeply felt camaraderie. However, a sense of place, belonging and shared identity has remained important. This was often seen in the ways that managers had a sense of loyalty to a particular establishment or group. It was also evident in their engagement with traditional culture for example by displaying their affinity with prison officer work.

These pressures played upon all managers, but the balance between them had to be sensed and managed differently according to roles. In particular, uniformed managers (senior officers and principal officers) had a closer loyalty to staff as a result of their mutual dependence arising from the perceived risks of their working environment and roles. A broader and more externally influenced sense of loyalty pervaded the views of more senior managers. The attainment of targets and corporate objectives loomed larger in shaping their outlook.

The art of prison management lay in the way that individuals were able to take the structures they worked within and moulded them into an operable and sustainable set of practices that kept teams together and made them effective.

Managing prisoners

In discussions of prison officer culture, relationships with prisoners have featured prominently (for example see Liebling and Price 2001, Crawley 2004). As has been described previously, this has emphasised an asymmetric relationships where prisoners occupy a subservient position. However, the relationship has also been shown to be complex as prison officers also act to ameliorate the pains of imprisonment for prisoners. Prison officers generally view prisoners as less deserving and hierarchically below them, but despite this generally exercised their power responsibly.

Managers had a less direct role with prisoners than officers and this was a less prominent feature of their working lives. Interactions were largely restricted to set piece events such as adjudications, recategorisation and early release boards, and dealing with formal requests or complaints. There was therefore a greater social distance between prison managers and prisoners and their relationship had less of the intimate domesticity that was characteristic of officer-prisoner relationships (Crawley 2004).

This section will explore two issues regarding the relationship between prison managers and prisoners. The first is how managerial thinking had influenced the ways prisoners were seen and understood. The second is to understand and explore ways in which traditional cultural views about prisoners have persevered in the practice of managers. Throughout this research, orientations towards prisoners have been discussed and the intention of this section is not to repeat those observations but instead to summarise key elements and to analyse them more systematically.

The quantification of prisoners

As was discussed in chapter 4, the structure of prison managerialism, including KPTs and audits had taken an increasingly strong hold over prison managers and their *habitus*. As a result, prisoners were often seen through this prism of managerialism. From this perspective, prisoners were the recipients of prescribed services monitored through targets such as offending behaviour programmes, work skills accreditations or purposeful activity. Additionally they were seen as the unknown quantity in the management of performance risks such as assaults or complaints. Prisoners were seen in relation to their influence and effects upon performance measures rather than as thinking, feeling agents. Of course, none of this is to suggest that providing purposeful activity or preventing assaults were not of value, but this does indicate the ways in which managers could perceive prisoners under the influence of managerialism.

This could also be seen in the ways that decisions were made about prisoners including early release and recategorisation, as discussed in chapter 5, which shifted with central direction. As has been discussed, the use of discretion was informed both by actuarial calculations (Feeley and Simon 1992) considering previous history, and also senior management direction that could redraw the boundaries, as when recategorisation was deliberately encouraged in order to ensure that spaces in open prisons were being used.

The quantification of prisoners represented them as units in business processes. As a result, humanitarian concepts promoted by the organisation such as ‘decency’ and ‘reducing reoffending’, tended to take on a more managerial shape rather than having an emotional immediacy. They were seen to represent particular prescribed services (such as offending behaviour programmes or employment), or specific behaviours (such as not abusing prisoners or calling them by their first names) that had been specifically articulated by senior prison managers. As has been acknowledged, the services that were being provided were by no means unimportant but it was the shift in thinking and perceptions that was particularly relevant.

Prisoners as the ‘other’

A feature of traditional prison culture has been the asymmetric relationship between officers and prisoners, with prisoners being subservient. There were several ways in which managers reinforced and maintained this in their practice.

As has previously been described, managers would sometimes make macho displays of challenging prisoners. In addition, some managers would tacitly approve of denigrating comments about or behaviour towards prisoners, which would be in breach of formal organisational policies. For example, a prisoner in a constant observation cell due to his high risk of suicide was described as “that creature”, some staff described how they informally punished prisoners for demonstrating a poor attitude by being slow to provide them with goods or services they had requested, and some staff described how they had been verbally abusive to prisoners in response to what they perceived as a poor attitude. In all of these instances, the managers did not challenge the comments and thus tacitly supported them.

Managers often described that their general approach would be to treat everyone equally, whether they were staff or prisoners. There were certainly examples of where managers did show compassion to individuals and communicated with

them empathetically. However, managers were also keen to “support” staff, which generally meant that they would back up decisions when challenged by prisoners or would challenge poor behaviour as described above.

As has been acknowledged, there were examples of prison managers showing compassion and individualised care, but they also participated in and reinforced the traditional asymmetric relationship with prisoners. Their demonstration of this cultural affinity could help to reduce the social distance between managers and staff.

Discussion

In this short section, it has been highlighted that prison managers generally had a more distant social relationship with prisoners than officers and that the process of managerialism led to a quantification of prisoners whilst traditional cultural values placed prisoners in a subservient position.

These processes had an impact upon prison managers and staff. The aims of managerial targets were instrumental and for a team to be effective, a shared sense of purpose was important. The shared cultural values, including the attitude towards prisoners could help to bind teams.

These processes also had an impact on prisoners as both processes acted to dehumanise them. Interpretive denial (Cohen 2001) describes a situation where acts of rationalisation and sanitisation obscure the full human experience and context. In prisons, traditional cultures did this morally by denying that prisoners were deserving of sympathy but instead were the undeserving subservient strata of the prison system. Managerial techniques were not based upon such overt judgements about prisoners, but by quantifying them and making them business units, they were based upon a denial of the rounded humanity of the subject. As a result, managerialism and traditional culture both came together in the work of

prison managers to reinforce the asymmetrical structure of the social world of the prison.

Whilst there were some examples of managers acting creatively or compassionately in individual circumstances, this was not an embedded and extensive mode of practice that has been suggested elsewhere (e.g. Cheliotis 2006). Instead, prison managers generally used attitudes towards prisoners as a means of creating and maintaining the cohesion of the staff team.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to consider how people become prison managers and once in the role how they approached major aspects of their work. This has been used as a means to explore the lived experience of prison managers. This has, in common with the previous chapters, revealed two major factors. The first is the development of managerialism in prisons, through performance management methodologies, actuarial tools, efficiency, competition and the shaping of a new professional ethos. The second element is the influence of a traditional prison officer culture comprising of machismo, an asymmetric relationship with prisoners and insularity. This discussion has shown that two structural forces played a leading role in shaping the working world of prison managers, but also that they had a complex inter-relationship in which they were sometimes in competition and are sometimes reinforcing.

There were at least three reasons that these two forces were able to co-exist. The first was the power held by different players and groups. Managerialism was initially pushed by senior managers but over time has gained a hold throughout the organisations so that there was a growing constituency of supporters. The more localised traditional culture was maintained by an influential group of staff and managers who were important in making the work of prisons effective. Both factors therefore had widespread support and were deeply embedded in the

practice of individuals and groups. These micro actors are the ones that realise and enact this intersection of global and local:

“It is ordinary people in their everyday lives who cope with and sometimes react to the global forces penetrating their particular life spaces...even though they do not always understand or interpret them as global forces” (Kennedy 2010 p.13).

The second reason was that there were instrumental grounds for engaging both trends. Managerialism provided tools, means and justifications for empowering managers, but traditional culture also provided a means through which the subjectivity of a range of staff could be accessed. Engaging with traditional culture reduced resistance and enabled the ‘hearts and minds’ of staff to be won and their commitment secured. Both could be combined therefore to make the organisation effective. From this perspective, localism was an enabler of global forces but equally, globalised forces were a means through which the particularity of local practice could be maintained.

Thirdly, there were affective reasons that the two were accommodated. As Richard Sennett argues:

“One of the unintended consequences of modern capitalism is that it has strengthened the value of place, aroused a longing for community. All the emotional conditions we have explored in the workplace animate that desire: the uncertainties of flexibility; the absence of deeply rooted trust and commitment; the superficiality of teamwork; most of all, the spectre of failing to make something of oneself in the world, to “get a life” through one’s work. All these conditions impel people to look for some other scene of attachment and depth” (Sennett 1998 p.138)

He therefore suggests that, as appears to be the case here, the re-energising of traditional cultures can be a response to the conditions of modern organisations. Managers experience a change in their sense of meaning and belonging, in part they respond to this by finding new senses of identity but they also respond by

looking to the past; retaining and expressing localised forms of cultural expression.

The culture of prison management reflected the uncertain, unstable and fluid relationship between global and local forces that characterise late modernity. Managerialism and traditional prison officer culture existed in a state of flux where managers had to creatively draw upon elements of both and draw them together so as to make sense of and operate effectively within their working world. Managers were not passive agents in this process but instead they were active creators and interpreters of it.

It has previously been described that in some occupations (including prison officers) there existed a ‘working personality’, which included relatively clearly defined ways of acting and thinking (Skolnick 1966, Crawley 2004). Such a concept was not adequate to describe the more dynamic and conflicted expectations placed upon prison managers. This could be better described by returning to Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977). In this he described that agency should be situated within the conflicts and tensions between groups within a particular field. He argued that the ability of individuals to act with agency was constrained by the relative power of the groups to which they belonged. As could be seen, prison managers were constrained by the structures from above and below. He also argued that individuals participated in these power struggles and this was so central that: “The subjectivity of actors is only rendered ‘agentic’ when collectivized by field struggles” (Parker, J. 2000 p.48). This is relevant as the agency of prison managers was demonstrated not in idiosyncratic practice but instead in the ways that they interpreted, balanced and recreated the relationship between traditional culture and managerialism. Managers were active participants, or micro agents, in the intersection of these forces. The accommodations and adaptations between these were the accumulated outcome of the actions of agents over time, including prison managers.

This was also an ongoing and continuous process. Managers had to creatively interpret and imagine the relationship between managerialism and traditional culture. This could be seen in the ways that they had to make fine judgements about how they balanced, blended, chose or were constrained by these two forces. As has been illustrated, practice would vary according to a range of factors including the experience and seniority of the individual manager, the nature of the issue at hand, the relative power of the staff, whether the issue was locally or nationally generated, the time within the monitoring cycle and the operating context. As a result boundaries were blurred, judgements contingent and practice involved creative acts of agency.

This chapter has suggested that there has been a shift in the working world of prison managers. This has come to be dominated by two structures: managerialism and traditional prison officer culture. These changes have constrained and reshaped the practice of prison managers. Whilst agency has a place, it is different from the moral vibrancy and unconstrained individuality that has been described in the past (e.g Rutherford 1993a). The practice and craft of prison management has not been eliminated, but it has been reframed, being located at the nexus of globality and localism that is so central to late modernity.

Chapter 7

Hidden Injuries of Prison Management

This chapter can be read in conjunction with the previous chapter and can be seen as an exploration of some of the effects of the dominant working identities and cultures that exist in prisons. In particular, it will seek to identify those who experience 'hidden injuries', the nature of those injuries and their source. This will be used to draw wider observations about prison management, occupational culture and their effects.

In their 1972 book *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Sennett and Cobb explore the impact on working class communities in Boston of a series of social changes including the displacement of traditional inner-city and ethnic communities through the process of 'urban renewal'. They describe that the challenges experienced were not simply material, for example being concerned about entry into the burgeoning consumerist society indeed many had made progress and had achieved a level of affluence that made them materially middle class. However, rather than simply 'melting' into the middle class mass, these people experienced 'hidden injuries' that were cultural and social in as much as many were left searching for a sense of place and identity within wider American society. Many described that they had entered a world in which they did not feel at home and felt isolated, with a diminished sense of dignity and self esteem. The way that the authors explore the relationship between class, social change and individual identity has been described as a pioneering attempt to "grasp the consequences of structural positioning *biographically*" (Crawley and Sparks 2005 italics in original).

Sennett continues to explore these themes in his studies of the working world and the social consequences of 'new capitalism'. This term is used to describe changes in the world of work, including a focus on short-term benefits, and developments in technology that allow direct communication up and down a

company, reducing ambiguity and interpretation, and increasing panoptic supervision, as well as more distant and less personal interactions. There have also been changes in the architecture of organisations including casualization (short-term contracts and contracting out), delayering (reduced management layers), and non-linear sequencing (moving around tasks and changing to respond to need and demand). The effects of these changes, Sennett argues, include that people have a reduced sense of place, drifting between jobs and not understanding how their role fits into the wider organisation; they have increasingly routinised jobs that leave them feeling unsatisfied; and that social capital is reduced as people feel that experience is not valued and relationships are superficial (Sennett 1998). He further argues that experience is undervalued as it is perceived as a form of resistance and that emotional self-sufficiency is required with those who need support being perceived as 'needy' or 'dependent' (Sennett 2004). He argued that these changes result in three social deficits; low institutional loyalty, diminishment of informal trust and weakening of institutional knowledge.

It has to be acknowledged that it has been countered that 'new capitalism' is not as prevalent as has been suggested (Doogan 2009). It also has to be acknowledged that prisons are not 'new capitalist' enterprises, at most it could be argued that they incorporated some features of managerial practices, but tenure is secure and as has been described previously there is significant continuity as well as change. However, what Sennett points the way towards is appreciating that social changes take place within wider patterns of social power and that the effects of this are experienced differently by individuals.

During the fieldwork stage of this study it was apparent that although the logic of managerialism was presented by many practitioners as objective, neutral and equal, the world of prison managers contained hidden injuries. Certain groups were able to articulate how they struggled to find a sense of place and how they did not feel at home. These were often groups that have been identified in the past as suffering structural disadvantage in the workplace, relating to such issues as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ill-health. Another group, non-

operational managers, has also been identified as suffering in the past within prisons, where they were treated as less important than ‘operational’ staff such as officers and governor grades (see Bennett, Crewe and Wahidin 2008). It has been argued that such groups lack power and a legitimate platform to articulate their needs and interests and as a result become dislocated, experience indignity and feel the effects of disadvantage personally (Crawley and Sparks 2005). This chapter is an attempt to draw out those experiences and illustrate how structural disadvantage is manifested biographically amongst prison managers.

Gender

Whilst prison staff are formally integrated and the days of single sex workforces are in the distant past, prisons are not gender neutral workplaces. The two research sites were men’s prisons, employing a majority of male staff in direct roles with prisoners and were quantitatively male dominated organisations. Two thirds of staff in prisons are men, but this is more heavily concentrated in the unformed staff group, where almost 80% are male (Crewe, Bennett and Wahidin 2008).

Gender has been a core element of the sociology of work. Within the criminal justice system, issues of gender have received some attention in relation to both the police (for example Westmarland 2001) and prison officers (for example Tait 2008, Crewe 2006). However, the main research in the UK on prison managers has conspicuously ignored gender issues (for example Bryans 2007). This appears to be a particularly significant omission given that the numbers of women prison managers has been increasing over recent years (Liebling, Price and Shefer 2011) and studies of gender in the workplace have highlighted this as an important issue.

This section will explore the occupational experience of women managers. It will start by describing the extent to which women filled managerial positions and the roles that they generally held. The section then goes on to explore aspects of women’s experience of the workplace and how they were perceived. This will

include both the positive benefits a mixed occupational environment was perceived to have brought as well as the criticisms that were often levied against women managers. The continued existence of openly sexist language and 'banter' will also be discussed. The section will go on to discuss the resistance experienced by female managers and how they adapted to the working environment. There will also be a discussion of how the structure and culture of prison management reflected gender. The section will conclude by drawing together observations about gender in prisons.

The experiences of women managers

In the two prisons studied, women were a minority of the managers. At the two sites, 31% (95 of 310) and 36% (137 of 384) of staff were female, amongst managers this was 29% (17 of 59) and 24% (19 of 61), but amongst operational managers i.e. governor grades, principal officers and senior officers, this dropped to 16% (five of 32) and 10% (five of 52). This indicated that the roles that women held were gender defined.

On the two senior management teams, women were more likely to be in non-operational administrative roles such as finance and human resources. Even managers in operational roles were often, but not universally, directed towards roles such as resettlement and rehabilitation of prisoners rather than security based roles. Within their roles, it has been suggested that women could also find themselves excluded from the management of incidents and the use of force, partly because of a chivalrous view that they were deserving of protection but also because of a more chauvinistic view that they were unsuited or incompetent for such roles (Crawley 2004). Such allocations of work and opportunities reflected the gendered structure of prison work, where direct work with prisoners, particularly security and control, was seen as 'man's work', whilst caring and administrative roles were seen as 'women's work'. Such allocation of tasks has also been highlighted amongst police and prison officers (Westmarland 2001, Tait 2008). The structures of recruitment, training and deployment contributed towards

this gendering of the workplace. However, in both sites there were women, albeit a small number, that occupied managerial positions that involved security and control and some men, albeit a small number, occupied roles requiring empathy and care, indicating that the segregation was not complete.

The default position of most managers was to assert that they were treated and judged equally regardless of gender. These claims were based on a belief that there was a universal basis upon which managers were judged. This was expressed through phrases such as “strength of character” and “credibility” as well as the “product delivered” or “how they get the job done”, indicating that this encompassed both the achievement of particular outcomes and the display of particular professional characteristics. However, it appeared that such benchmarks reflected and entrenched issues of gender identity and difference.

There were some positive views articulated. In particular, the presence of women managers was seen by many men as having beneficial effects. First, female managers were believed to bring a “softer” or “more gentle” approach to their dealings with staff and prisoners such as demonstrating empathy and care, which reduced confrontation and smoothed conflict. Second, they were seen as being more emotionally connected and more temperamentally suited to providing a listening ear with personal and domestic issues; “a mother figure or a big sister”. Third, women were believed to be better able to manage a number of different tasks at the same time, and this multi-tasking was valued in busy roles that required good organisation and planning, for example one manager commented: “Women have a more natural skill and multi-tasking. I don’t know if that’s a scientifically proven fact but they certainly do”. This role was close to that of the domestic organiser and administrator. Fourth, the presence of female managers was said to encourage chivalry, resulting in a less macho approach from others, such as more polite behaviour including less swearing and ‘banter’. Whilst these perceived benefits reflected stereotypical female roles and characteristics, they were situated within the local context, reflecting the centrality of managing the

risk of violence and the ordering of the essentially domestic nature of prison life (Crawley 2004).

Not all attitudes towards gender and not all experiences of women managers were positive. Some men were not content to be managed by women. Criticisms particularly focussed on the perceived “emotional baggage” carried by women or the extent to which they were too ‘emotional’ generally. For example, one manager stated:

“I would say on balance I would rather work in a male environment...Where I've had some bad [female managers] to work with they've been awful, it's the emotional baggage that they bring, tends to cloud some issues whereas males don't tend to have that sort of stuff, they will say what they want, shut up and get on with it. (S15 governor grade)

Such views represented women as uncontrolled, vulnerable and unable to function effectively in the professional environment. Women managers often described that they were conscious of this and would manage the display of emotions as a result. For example one stated:

“I get frustrated sometimes, I can get very stressed and have done, but I won't cry because then the problem is 'you're a woman', 'she's just being emotional' or 'silly', so I take great care. Even if I want to cry with sheer bloody anger, I would never cry in the workplace. (female manager 1)

However, everyone experiences emotions at work and this is intertwined with the experience, whether that is the joy and happiness of success, the frustrations of failure or the anger at injustices (Fineman 2003). In prisons, there was a cultural expectation that emotions should be concealed behind a façade of indifference (Crawley 2004). This was a form of ‘emotional labour’ where there was an expectation about how workers should display or conceal emotions at work (Hochschild 1983). This construction of ‘emotions’ was itself gendered as the experience and display of feelings by men and women could be perceived

differently, for example mutual affection and inter-relatedness, more often displayed by women, may be constructed as 'emotional', but feelings such as fear, competitiveness and aggression, more often displayed by men, may not be constructed as 'emotional' at all and may be perceived as culturally acceptable (Wajcman 2000). The open expression of emotion was threatening because it undermined the façade of indifference deployed as a coping strategy by the majority of (male) employees, whilst the display of overt empathy threatened the depersonalisation of prisoners that underpinned the social order.

A second element of female identity that was seen as threatening by male managers was sexuality. In prisons, sexual relations were repressed and there was an attempt to expel these from the workplace towards the home (Burrell 1984). This was both because lack of sexual relations were one of the 'pains of imprisonment' and therefore an integral part of punishment (Sykes 1958) and also because this was seen as behaviour that could potentially present a risk to order, control, safety and security. Following a female officer being discovered at one of the prisons with contraband in her possession which she was attempting to traffic to a prisoner she had formed a relationship with, there were concerns expressed by some staff that women, particularly young women or women in roles other than that of prison officer, were vulnerable to engaging in sexual relationships with prisoners. Such instances became part of organisational history and held particular discursive power, being used to illustrate that this risk was genuine. This fear had a spillover into more general perceptions of women managers and staff. This linked to the male perception of women as emotionally unstable and vulnerable and played a part in the construction of prison work as men's work for which women were not suitable. It was useful to contrast this with the examples of where male staff had been corrupted, for example bringing drugs or mobile phones into prisons. This was usually seen as an individualised issue and did not result in any broader spillover into judgements about male staff, their suitability to work in prisons or their vulnerability.

Prisons, along with other public sector organisations, have developed equal opportunities training and policies (Bradley 1999). These have been designed to eliminate discrimination and offensive language and behaviour, including sexual harassment. However, there remains within prisons elements of a culture characterised by machismo where sexist language and bawdy jokes are not only tolerated but were perpetuated by workers at all levels. Such cultural displays reinforced the dominance of men in the workplace but also acted to cement the close bonds of camaraderie between staff. In the research sites, there were numerous examples of sexist comments, banter and jokes ranging from jokes about wives to a description of overweight women as “pigs in knickers”. These comments were perpetuated by managers at all levels. Whilst many managers, male and female, described that they felt uncomfortable with this, they believed that engaging in this to some degree was a route to acceptance and that challenging this on every occasion was not a realistic option. More subtly, group solidarity was also reinforced through discussions of predominantly male pastimes, in particular football, where the wheels of relationships would be oiled by talk about the latest scores and upcoming fixtures. However, women rarely participated in these discussions and were therefore excluded from one of the main means through which social solidarity was maintained.

Many women described how they had to prove themselves before they were respected by their peers and staff. Often they faced preconceived ideas from largely male workforces and had their positions on trust rather than by right. For example one manager described:

“When I knew I was coming here as the only female and the only female they had ever had...I wasn’t concerned or worried,[but] a little bit apprehensive. But I fitted in really well, I feel they have accepted me. I think it was my first week, one of the turned around and said “we had reservations about you but you’ve fitted in really well”. It was all a bit concerning”. (female manager 2)

Women managers were concerned about resistance and some felt that this meant that they had to be careful when settling into their role and had to bide their time before they were accepted sufficiently in order to take more proactive action. One manager described this struggle:

“I did feel that maybe people were looking to see if I was going to fail. I think at the very beginning when I first started temporary promotion I was very wary of stepping on toes and sticking my heels in and saying ‘I’m not doing this’ or ‘you are doing that’ and that took me a year really, maybe eighteen months to overcome that and say ‘this is me and this is how I’m going to do it’.” (female manager 3)

There were elements of the culture that were exclusive of and indeed hostile to women and as a result they could be inhibited from reaching their potential and could be left with negative feelings including a perception that they had been treated unfairly or harassed (Stanko 1988).

Adaptation

A number of women managers described how they adapted and faced the challenges that arose from being a woman in what was essentially a man’s world. Many described how they continually had to work harder than men in order to achieve recognition. It was not unusual for women managers to use words to the effect that they had to work twice as hard to get the same recognition as their male counterparts. This could be a source of considerable stress and foster a sense of unfairness (Alvesson and Billing 1997).

Women also used gender roles as a means through which they attempted to operate as managers. This could be by adopting more masculine traits or by exaggerating their female characteristics. The risk of this was that what was presented was a distorted version of their individual identity, but also a distorted version of gender identity that was constructed around a male perception. As one senior officer described:

“Sometimes women can either be seen to be soft or too harsh. I think that’s because they are trying to be a woman in a man’s world and try to adopt male attitudes or they may be more soft on people and more forgiving”. (W14 senior officer)

This was an issue that had been observed more widely in the world of work, but rather than being an objective reality, it has been suggested that these polar views are created by the perceptions of women managers imposed by male staff. For example it has been described that:

“Any action may be interpreted in a radically different way depending on whether the actor is a man or a woman. For example, a particular action or experience might be defined as ‘firm’, ‘decisive’ and ‘rational’ when constructed in relation to a man, and as ‘bossy’, ‘hysterical’ and ‘irrational’ where a woman is involved. A woman exercising a democratic leadership style may be seen as soft or indecisive” (Wajcman 2000 p.259)

Those women that adopted more masculine characteristics, such as being more aggressive, directive or confrontational came in for particular criticism from men. Such women were criticised not only for the actions in themselves but also because they were perceived to be acting in a manner that was contrary to their assigned gender role. They often faced resistance both informal and through formal complaints and grievances. As one manager described:

“If a women approaches things like a man that can be construed almost as bullying, whereas a man that’s a characteristic of a male to be more forceful. There are women who are like it and the women who are like it, without exception, I can’t think of one who hasn’t, been on a charge for bullying”. (female manager 4)

Some women also played up their female characteristics in a way that was described as using their “feminine charm” whether that was being flirtatious, engaging in sexualised banter, or providing an accessible source of empathetic support for colleagues. A number of women also took an approach of fighting fire

with fire, and they were equally capable of demonstrating prejudices such as sexism, homophobia or racism.

Discussion

The key issue in the adaptations that women underwent in the workplace was that they had to fit in to a culture that was essentially constructed by and dominated by men. Although a niche had been carved within that for what were seen by male staff as natural 'female' skills, women were generally judged in the context of a cultural that privileged the male perspective. They were subject to marginalisation in their roles away from dealing with prisoners and operational problems, were the subject of sexist behaviours and had to construct occupational identities that did not neatly mesh with their social identities. By conforming and being controlled by these male notions of appropriate presentation and behaviour, power inequalities became entrenched (Adkins 1995). It also exerted a price, where some women managers felt stereotyped, constrained and experienced dissonance between their personal and work identities (Cockburn 1988).

Managerialism was sometimes posited as a means through which traditional cultures could be undermined and equality of opportunity promoted (e.g. Bradley 1999). For managers, this particularly arose from the objective and even scientific claims made for performance management, suggesting that a level playing field had been created in which the best would prevail. This claim was one that had great currency in prisons. This was the basis upon which many prison managers, both male and female, denied that gender difference existed or was relevant in the contemporary prison. Two protective factors arising from managerialism that mitigated prejudice and supported equal treatment were cited. The first was that there was a universal basis for judging managers, a set of competences that marked out a good manager from a bad one. This used familiar terms such as approachability, listening, decisiveness and clear feedback. As has been described previously, such terms are not as unambiguous as may be assumed. The second was that performance management such as targets and audits provided an

objective basis upon which to judge achievements and this eliminated bias. Both claims deserve closer scrutiny.

The culture of management and the widely accepted norms of good management, rather than providing a universal leveller, entrenched a particular gendered view of managers. Many men and women described prisons as “macho” or “male dominated”. This could be seen in the admired management characteristics such as making decisions rather than developing others to do so, giving direct feedback rather than encouraging self-reflection, providing directive clarity rather than encouraging self development. Management was seen as task focussed and controlling rather than person-centred and developmental. It could be argued that such a construction is gendered, elevating male characteristics and attempting to objectify them uncritically. A similar argument could be made in respect of performance management, which focused on task and encouraged competition and individualism. Again this approach could be said to reflect a gendered perspective which entrenched a male orientation towards work. Indeed, it has been argued that the discourse of management itself is embedded with gendered ideas, such as the “masculine concern with personal power and the ability to control others and self” (Collinson and Hearn 1996 p.3). Far from being objective and detached, performance management and the construction of a good manager were deeply gendered. Women not only had to manage a workforce with particular perspectives, they also had to navigate in a role that was itself gendered.

The second claim was that managerialism provided an objective measure of performance. However, as was revealed by women managers, they perceived that they experienced greater resistance than their male colleagues and therefore had to work harder in order to compensate for this. As a result of this, quantitative measures not only masked these differences but also objectified and legitimised them, providing a basis for arguing that men were better managers. By focussing on measurement, the qualitative experience of work was obscured and hidden from view.

As a closing comment in this section, I wanted to draw upon an anecdote provided by an officer in one of the research sites. In this, the officer recounted how a colleague had challenged a visiting senior prison manager about changes such as improved services and care of prisoners and had criticised this to them as “feminising the Prison Service”. A number of elements of this were particularly salient. The term “feminising” was used as a pejorative term as if it was a distortion of the ‘true’ prison. It was also no coincidence that this term was used towards a senior manager who was a man and therefore the comment was intended to call into question his masculinity. It was also important that not only were people viewed in gender terms, but particular policies, practices and strategies were also imbued with a gender identity, in this case care for prisoners being attributed with female characteristics. The final observation was that this encroachment of gender, particularly female gender, was seen as a threat to order, control and traditional culture. What this anecdote exposed was that gender was a matter of power and culture, issues which were deeply embedded within the structures of prisons and within the identities of individual workers.

Prisons remain gendered organisations and machismo permeated individual views and behaviour, but also the structure of managerialism and the practices of prison management. Whilst many women were able to navigate the environment and were able to enjoy success, many experienced a general sense of resistance, dissonance and even marginalisation.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity in the criminal justice system has been a pervasive issue relevant to every branch of the system (for example see Cavadino and Dignan 2007, Spalek 2008). Black people and members of some minority ethnic communities have been significantly over-represented throughout the system. This was partly an outcome of the poverty and deprivation that they disproportionately experienced, and also a function of the increased policing and differential treatment they received. Similar ‘race penalties’ were replicated across society, including in the

occupational field (Modood 2000). For prison staff there has been a long-standing issue regarding under representation of minority ethnic groups and negative occupational experiences (Bhui and Fossi 2008).

In prisons, the issue of ethnicity has undergone major change in how it has been represented and understood in official discourse. The period prior to the late 1990s could be described as one of denial where it was not officially recognised that there were race issues in prisons and indeed it was more common to hear that there were no problems (McDermott 1990). The early development of race relations policies was largely peripheral and failed to address more fundamental issues of power and inequality (Alfred 1992). Following the Macpherson Inquiry (1999) which reported on the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence and the inadequate investigation by the Metropolitan Police, the Prison Service along with other public bodies publicly accepted that they were institutionally racist. This was defined by the Macpherson Inquiry as:

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people”. (ibid p.28)

The existence of institutional racism was confirmed by the judicial inquiry into the racist murder of Zahid Mubarek at Feltham prison in 2000 (Keith 2006). Since that time, there has been significant investment in race equality in prisons with the appointment of race equality officers and race equality action teams, and changes to policy and practice including a specific complaints process, more sophisticated monitoring and auditing, the introduction of equality impact assessments, and the establishment of a staff support group called RESPECT. Similar developments in the Metropolitan Police led the Chief Commissioner to claim that the term ‘institutional racism’ was no longer “appropriate or useful” in describing the situation or motivating change (*The Guardian* 24th February 2009). No such

official claims have been made about prisons, instead the changes that have taken place over the last decade have been assessed as improving the situation but it has also been recognised that this has not transformed the experience of Black and minority ethnic staff and prisoners, who still experience racism, albeit in less overt and more subtle forms (National Offender Management Service 2008). For example, people from minority groups performed less well on selection and promotion assessments and received poorer appraisal markings (ibid). In addition, the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic staff has proven persistent. Between 2004 and 2008, despite improvements, the percentage of minority staff employed in the Prison Service remained below the national target (ibid), although in 2008-09 this target was finally met (National Offender Management Service 2009).

Another extensive recent examination of the experience of prison staff was contained in a thematic review carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMCIP 2005). The findings of this research showed that half of the Black and minority ethnic staff said that they had experienced racism from colleagues, whilst 36% said that they had experienced racism from prisoners. This racism could take the form of 'jokes' or 'banter' but could also take the form of concerns about their associating too closely with prisoners and being denied fair opportunities to progress. There was also a more elusive and intangible way in which some staff from minority ethnic communities felt that they were treated or perceived differently as a result of underlying and unspoken prejudices. These staff also reported that attempts to address racism, such as promoting diversity and monitoring the percentage of minority ethnic staff led to counter attacks in the form of claims that recruitment was manipulated to meet targets rather being based upon merit, and generalised claims that the race equality agenda was constricting and overbearing on the majority of staff. Staff from minority ethnic communities were generally less positive than their white counterparts in their perception of the treatment of minority ethnic prisoners. The report concluded that these staff had a poorer occupational experience and whilst some improvements

had been made, more attention needed to be paid to their emotional experience of work in order to provide better support and enhance their quality of working life.

In this section, the diversity of the managerial cadre in the two prisons will be discussed as well as general attitudes towards managers from minority ethnic communities. The section will go on to explore the experiences of two prison managers from minority ethnic communities and discuss their encounters with resistance and their strategies for adapting to, coping with and navigating the challenges of the prison world. It will then go on to discuss some of the structural aspects of the work of prison managers including the managerial framework and the occupational ideal of a 'good' manager, exploring how these effected those managers and how they played a role in the dynamics of ethnicity in prisons.

Processes of denial

The two prisons in this research study were located in rural areas with small ethnic communities. In both prisons there were few minority ethnic staff. In one site they comprised 1.8% of staff (n=5) and in the other 2.3% (n=9). In each site there was only one manager who was visibly Black or Asian. Some staff recognised that this limited exposure to diversity could have an impact on the views and behaviour of individuals as they may be unfamiliar with and insensitive towards ethnic diversity. For example, one officer commented:

“It’s how you’re brought up. Coming from this area of the country, you can quite easily be, not racist, but have racist tendencies, purely because of where you are. My kids have them and I try to knock it out of them. It’s purely because they go to a school in a backwater...there are no Black kids, there are no Asian kids, there are no Chinese kids. Everybody is white and 80% of them come from farming backgrounds. At the age of eight or seven, to all of a sudden we had a Thai girl start and a Black lad start at school and it was a big thing. They were making statements or using names that in this PC world of ours are unacceptable, but they didn’t know, they didn’t mean anything by them, it wasn’t a racist comment, it was kids being kids. If they

were kids from a big estate in the city you can deem that as being racist because they are aware of what racism is.” (W28 officer)

The majority of white managers recognised that ethnicity was an important issue, particularly as it had received high profile, senior level recognition in prisons. However, many also believed that this related to the past and that subsequent changes meant that discrimination had been reduced or even eliminated. Many managers engaged in literal denial (Cohen 2001) about the idea that there may be problems arising from ethnic differences. They would often argue “we don’t have a problem here”, “Their experience wouldn’t be different at all”, “I definitely know there isn’t racism in this prison”, “there certainly wouldn’t be a problem with the staff”, “they’ve had no issues”, “I don’t think they would be treated differently”, “I don’t think there would be any problems whatsoever”, “there is no racial discrimination”, “no issues at all”. There was a strong view that racism did not exist or was not an issue in the prisons. This was similar to the denial that had been noted in the late 1980s and early 1990s (McDermott 1990), however, whereas that denial was based upon the idea that there never had been any problems, contemporary denial was based upon the idea that historical problems had now been addressed and circumstances improved.

A significant element of this claim of progress was based upon the development of managerial practices. Managers frequently cited that all managers would be judged against a widely accepted consensus as to what constituted a ‘good manager’ and the objectivity of performance measurement meant that there was equality of expectations and any differences in treatment could be justified. However, the way that this operated could vary. For example three comments from managers illustrated these views. The first described this directly:

“...the bottom line is, they have their job to deliver, they have their remit, they know their role, they know the end product that’s desired. It’s as simple as that.” (W2 principal officer)

The argument here was that there were objective standards against which performance was judged and they applied equally to everyone. According to this argument, managerialist measures have levelled the playing field.

The second comment focussed on how this operated in practice, describing how good performance could act as a protective factor:

“I don’t have a problem with anyone’s sexuality or gender or anything like that. A key for me is can they deliver what I’m looking for. Providing they can deliver in the manner I expect, I don’t have a problem with them.” (S9 governor grade)

This comment implied that there was both an objective performance criteria in terms of what was achieved, or ‘delivered’ and a cultural criteria relating to the “manner” in which that was done. Again this implied that there was a unitary and transparent set of criteria against which individuals could be objectively appraised. From this perspective, performance was a leveller and ‘good’ performance would outweigh any other factors. The achievement of results acted as a key to unlock the door to acceptance. If managers, including those from Black and minority ethnic communities met these prescribed standards, they would be recognised and move beyond racial identity. However, lurking beyond this was the implication that in the absence of the right results lay a less supportive approach, even rejection.

The third comment also revealed a different approach:

“If that person is managerially a tosser, it doesn’t matter whether they Asian, Chinese, transvestite, they’re just a fucking tosser.” (W5 governor grade)

The grouping together of ethnic groups with “transvestite” and the use of the term “fucking tosser” presented an air of mocking flippancy and implied a rejection of the idea of difference and diversity as legitimate. Again, it was underpinned by the notion that there was a unitary measure and a level playing field for all

managers. There was a more macho and punitive attitude contained here and appeared to imply that those who failed to measure up were susceptible to being degraded, derided and abused.

These comments suggested that there existed objective forms of measurement that provided a means through which individuals could overcome barriers such as prejudice, making it a matter for individuals to succeed through compliance and 'delivery'. This section will later explore whether there was a 'level playing field' and will use the experiences of two managers to illustrate these issues.

Under the surface, the image of the progressive and fair organisation was exposed as being less complete than many of the statements by managers suggested. Many people held generalised and stereotypical views about ethnicity. For example, many people expressed political views that reflected racialised perspectives such as voicing criticisms about 'Indian call centres' or the rights of migrants in the UK. Others also were sceptical about what they saw as 'political correctness' and claimed that this had become unbalanced to the extent that the white majority were powerless victims in the face of manipulative racial minorities. This was a form of interpretive denial where it was suggested that it was the majority who were at risk from the minority (Cohen 2001).

As there were few Black or Asian prison managers, generalised views were often shaped by limited experience. This could be particularly damaging where those experiences had been difficult. Stories of perceived poor performance by Black and Asian managers were recalled at both prisons suggesting that these incidents had a deeper impact due to the relative rarity of having staff in those groups. Many of the criticisms of Black and minority ethnic managers revolved around the issue of what were perceived to be false claims of discrimination. It was described that such claims were used in a defensive way in order to deflect criticism of poor performance, or in a more instrumental way, attempting to gain advancement by threatening grievances or litigation. This moulded with another frequently heard criticism, which was that Black and Asian prison managers were

recruited to meet “targets” or as a result of “positive discrimination”. This view was based upon the existence of monitoring of HR practices and a KPT for the percentage of staff from Black and minority ethnic groups employed at each prison. These perceptions fed scepticism about the ability of Black and Asian prison managers and questioned whether they were in post on merit. Minority ethnic managers themselves raised this issue, feeling that they were undermined by rumours about this issue. Far from entering a level playing field, minority ethnic managers entered a working arena where they had to face greater scrutiny and had to overcome scepticism about their suitability for the job and the weight of institutional biography.

Experiencing resistance

Black and Asian managers described how they faced resistance in the same way as women managers; in subtle ways where authority was not given as a right but instead was contested, challenged and contingent. As one manager described:

“You know when you’re being challenged...it’s not overt, but you know it. You’re there, you’re being challenged, your authority is being challenged and there is an expectation from the group, what are you going to do about it? How are you going to handle it? The way you handle it will decide whether or not you get respect or whether it goes the other way. ...we all know that this officer has said something or in his actions has challenged your authority, that he wouldn’t have challenged the SO who was on yesterday. As a female, or Black or something else that separates you from the rest of the group, how are you going to challenge it? How you challenge it will depend whether or not the respect comes.” (manager)

It was suggested that sometimes such resistance was fed by an underlying attitude towards ethnicity held by some members of staff, but not openly stated. It was also described that more senior managers were insensitive to how such resistance made achieving results more difficult and meant that some staff had to work harder to achieve the same ends. This was an example where the ‘objectivity’ of

performance management acted to obscure reality and entrench discrimination. This was described by one manager who reflected upon his own experiences:

“When I dealt with those kind of issues, it was at a time when there was no support structure...My own personal view is that I found that when I was challenged in that way, sometimes very openly challenged, there was no support from management. The expectation was get on with it...just get on with it, sort it. You’re still expected to deliver the job of any other SO but you find you have to work quite a lot harder at it, just to be seen as any other SO. You churn out more work that’s not taken into account you’re just regarded as any other SO, but you know that you’re doing more than the officer over there...It was if you don’t like the heat get out of the kitchen, that sort of thing.” (manager)

Acceptance only came after a prolonged period of absorbing and dealing with these difficulties and gradually achieving recognition as a manager.

For managers in this situation, the fact that the prisons were located in rural communities with little diversity meant that there was little support. They were in “what is basically a white male environment”. Not only did they have little support in dealing with challenges, they also found that they had little support in championing them and accessing informal networks that assisted with progression.

Issues of ethnicity, however, were not simple. For some managers, their way of coping with difference was to deny or adapt to this. For example, one manager described himself as having “an amazing tan” and accentuated his regional British identity. His view was that nicknames relating to ethnicity were no different from those based upon British regional identity, such as Liverpoolian’s being called ‘Scousers’. Some people constructed alternative identities in order to adapt to their circumstances. It was also widely recognised that challenges may come from prisoners who held prejudicial views or even targeted Black and Asian managers for particular vitriol for perceived betrayals to their ethnicity or potential vulnerability. Equally it was argued that some Black and Asian staff themselves

held prejudiced views about other identities such as gender and sexuality. These observations illuminated that there was not simply a Black and White dualism but instead there was complexity and diversity (Pilkington 2001).

Discussion

Although this study included only two managers from minority ethnic communities, their experiences resonated with other studies of ethnicity in prisons and other workplaces (e.g. HMCIP 2005, National Offender Management Service 2008). This section has described that despite progress, there remained denial, both literal and interpretive, regarding the issue of ethnicity. There also remained attitudes and values that were either conducive to discrimination or hostile to the promotion of diversity. Many saw there being an objective standard against which individuals were judged encompassing both managerial performance and a shared cultural understanding of what was a 'good' manager. This widely held belief suggested that there was a level playing field for all managers. This belief acted to responsabilise minority ethnic managers, suggesting that it was for them to overcome prejudice through performance and that any failure to do so was a matter of personal competence. However, the reality of the experience of the two managers in this study suggested that this was problematic. On the one hand it was suggested that there was not a level playing field as they faced greater resistance and it was more difficult to achieve the 'objective' performance criterion. As a result, these managerial measures acted to obscure the issues, whilst also legitimising and entrenching discrimination. On the other hand, it was also suggested that diversity was not valued and promoted within the management cadre, but instead there was encouragement for a process of assimilation into a homogenised, dominant culture. Whilst laws, policies and processes have changed, it was these more subtle and unseen social factors that persevered in occupational groups, including prison managers.

Sick absence

Across organisations there is significant concern about absenteeism from work, particularly sick leave. Concerns often centre on waste and the costs in terms of loss of productivity and covering absences through overtime. There is also concern about the effects on individuals and the personal cost of ill health. As a result, most organisations have procedures to manage and minimise absenteeism.

There has been particular criticism levied at the public sector, where persistently higher levels of average absenteeism than in the private sector have been described as “a sick joke” (Paton 2005). It is been estimated that £1.4 billion could be saved if public sector organisations matched the private sector average (Confederation of British Industry 2008). However, it has been suggested that when account is taken of demographic differences such as age, gender and size of organisation, the differences are negligible (Health and Safety Executive 2005). It has also been suggested that absenteeism is under-reported in the private sector and attendance is distorted by different policies, such as not paying the first three days of sick absence (ibid). It has further been argued that the nature of public service, including face-to-face contact with the public means that the work is more stressful but that despite these demands, public sector workers are more likely to report that they attend work whilst unwell (ibid).

There have been concerns expressed by employers in both the public and private sectors that sick absence procedures are abused. It has been estimated by employers that 12% of absenteeism is non-genuine (Confederation of British Industry 2008). This is not backed up by empirical evidence but is instead a reflection of the scepticism of managers.

This concern about the costs of ill-health is not exclusive to employers, but is also an issue of concern in relation to welfare and social security. Ericson (2007) argues that there is uncertainty about the cost of making welfare payments, but also about the diagnosis and assessment of incapacity. He suggests that this has led to the development of a system that restricts eligibility and stigmatises

claimants. This is underpinned by a construction of incapacity as a “drain on collective prosperity” (p.73) and claimants as potential frauds.

The response of the public sector to these issues has been to attempt to reduce absenteeism. New approaches include more intensive contact with people who are absent, closer adherence to procedures for warnings, more extensive use of occupational health referrals and greater scrutiny of suspicious patterns of absence (Ministerial Task Force for Health, Safety and Productivity and the Cabinet Office 2004). There have also been attempts to focus on creating longer term effects through improved occupational health services and working environments (ibid).

Prisons have historically had one of the highest levels of absenteeism in the public sector (Ministerial Task Force for Health, Safety and Productivity and the Cabinet Office 2004). As with other parts of the sector, there have been attempts to reduce this. New procedures were introduced in 2002 with tighter trigger points for warnings for short term absences and clearer processes for managing longer-term absences. The aim of the policy was described in the following terms:

“The P[rison] S[ervice] O[rder] is being introduced to strengthen the current arrangements for managing attendance. It increases the range of mandatory actions to tackle sickness absence and poor attendance. The PSO introduces the Attendance Score for assisting in the management of attendance. The aim of the new rules are to assist in reducing levels of sickness absence across the Prison Service” (HM Prison Service 2002)

There has been a consistent decline in the level of absenteeism in prisons between 2002 and 2009, excluding a small rise in 2007-08. This has seen absenteeism fall from an average of 14.7 days per member of staff to 10.8 days (HM Prison Service 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008a, National Offender Management Service 2009)

Revised procedures were introduced in 2008. These again made the trigger points for warnings more stringent and provided for clearer processes for long-term absences. However, the official aim of these policies articulated a more rounded approach emphasising both efficiency and support for employees:

“Policy on sickness absence is in place to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Service whilst providing appropriate support for staff with health difficulties. The Service expects regular attendance at work of staff but does recognise that absence may be necessary on medical grounds and will respond sympathetically and supportively in returning staff back to work quickly where possible.” (HM Prison Service 2008b p.4)

As can be seen from this discussion, sick absence is seen as a “Leviathan” (Ericson 2007 p.31), a demon that threatens to engulf the economy and place the well-being of the majority in jeopardy. There are concerns both about the cost of absenteeism and the genuineness of it. There are attempts to reduce sick absence which focus on making procedures more punitive but there is also an emphasis placed upon prevention and supporting those in need.

This section will discuss how sick absence was perceived and managed in prisons. It will start by describing how prominent sick absence was, how this was managed and what role this has in the working lives of prison managers. It will then go on to explore the perceived effects of absenteeism, what impact this had on teams, the organisation and individuals. The section will then discuss how those who take sick leave were perceived, the effect this had on their standing at work and how they were treated by managers. The attendance management procedures will then be discussed and in particular how these were perceived and used by managers. The section will close by discussing what the management of sickness and ill-health was able to illustrate about the nature of prison management and its effects.

The impact of absenteeism

Staff sick absence had a prominent place for prison managers in the two research sites. It featured at daily morning meetings where absentees and feedback on contacts would be read out and commented upon, full staff briefings where the absenteeism figures would be reported and feedback provided on the organisational impact, and there was even a notice at the entrance of one site reporting the level of sick absence and the financial cost that this entailed. This not only took up a lot of time quantitatively, as will be discussed later this preoccupied managers and generated intense feelings.

Much of the prominence and importance of sick absence was derived from it being a national priority that was reflected in performance management such as KPTs and the weighted scorecard, and managers were conscious of that. As one officer commented:

“I understand that it’s a lot more damaging to the governor than say a prisoner going over the wall, weighted scorecard-wise.”
(W3 officer)

Whilst this may not have technically been true, this comment did convey a sense of the widely held perception that managing and reducing sick absence was so important that it was coming close to being the *raison d’être* of prison management.

Absenteeism also created knock on problems by jeopardising delivery and undermining the smooth operation of the prison. As one manager described:

“The resources we have got are stretched and when somebody doesn’t turn in that’s something that isn’t being delivered and somewhere along the line that is something we are going to fail at. That time when we are stretched, some prisoner is going to be able to move drugs around the jail.” (S6 principal officer)

This comment illustrated that performance, order and control were all tied together in representing the effects of absenteeism.

Many managers commented that sick absence meant that other members of staff had to fill the gaps. Some managers referred to the past where they described that abuse of sick absence was common place. One stated:

“We’re not in the good old days where everyone’s allowed ten days sick, treat that as part of your annual leave entitlement. When I joined the Prison Service, that was it, everyone was entitled to ten days sick, you could almost pre-book it because someone else got overtime. That was probably one of those dodgy practices.” (W25 principal officer)

In the contemporary prison, there was no advantage to other colleagues from absenteeism as there was no longer unregulated overtime. Instead this had a direct and undesirable impact on colleagues who had to cover shortfalls.

There were some mixed views about the effectiveness of the procedures. Some managers described that the procedures were too prescriptive with insufficient discretion. This meant that they sometimes found themselves issuing warning and taking other punitive action when they personally did not feel that it was justified. Some managers stated that they wanted discretion not to issue warnings where the absence was “genuine”. However, others found that the procedures were too bureaucratic, that there were a “lot of hoops to go through” and that great attention to detail was needed if the action was to be supported, it “needs to be spot on”. In the view of these managers, the system was too easy to manipulate. For example, some managers described how individuals were aware of the rules on sick leave warnings and would manage their absences around those procedures, so avoiding warnings or returning to duty before they incurred half pay. One manager described his frustrations:

“I find it difficult to comprehend some of the integrity of staff sometimes going off duty. It seems to be the same old faces for a period of time, then you challenge them and they’re okay, you take your finger off and they’re back on it again. It’s managing those people, I don’t think we do it effectively. They do in the

private sector, they'd manage them out the job very quickly. We've got all sorts of procedures in place we're stuck with and it takes forever to remove these people. It's frustrating for staff at ground level because they see these particular individuals, they know these particular individuals and they say why aren't you doing something about that, he's done it all his service, why aren't you doing something about that. We are tied by our procedures and consultation we have to go through and the time it takes to get these people out of the service. I do find it frustrating.” (W30 governor grade)

This frustration was underpinned by a sense of uncertainty and lack of control experienced by managers. For example, they felt that they lacked expertise and that medical knowledge and power limited what they could do. As one manager described:

“I need to take the officer's statement that they are sick, because I'm not medically qualified to say 'get in here, because you are not'. It's annoying in that respect. We've got someone here at the moment who is playing that kind of game. He managed to talk his doctor into giving him a sick note at the start of his nights - that was a big struggle to cover that. Then once his nights had finished saying he was fit for duty. That's annoying...It's things like that that annoy you, but your hands are tied a bit as to what you can actually do.” (W22 senior officer)

Some of this uncertainty was also created by the legal constraints, including employment law and employee rights. This meant that there were checks and balances in the system before dismissal for absenteeism was considered. Another manager described how this combination of medical and legal constraint had been both a source of frustration to him, but also something he had used when he was unhappy with his own manager:

“I laugh when we sit in the morning meetings and they say this person has gone to level 5, how many levels are there? I don't blame people for abusing the system when they can abuse the system and nothing happens to them...there's a nucleus of people who take the mick and know they can get away with it. I think that if anything went the wrong way for me and I was in my last six months [before retirement] I'd say...I'll join that band of

sickies and there's nothing they can do because I know that in six months time I can just get my pension because they can't get rid of me. A lot of doctors will just give sick notes out. I've seen it, I've once done it myself where I put the doctor under a bit of pressure and he gave me a sick note..." (W12 governor grade)

As managers were not in a position to directly assess absenteeism because of their lack of medical expertise and because of the legal constraints placed upon their actions, they felt frustrated and powerless.

In managing sick absence, managers often described that the appropriate approach was to be "robust" but fair and to follow the laid down procedures. There was much macho and punitive language used in relation to sick absence management, such as "pursuing" individuals, calls to "get a grip" of cases and targeting individuals who were "in my eyeline". Robustness was seen as the need to take a hard approach towards the difficult decisions. Many saw the answer to the problem of sick absence in reducing the rights of employees and increasing the use of what were seen as commercial practices, such as stopping pay for absences and dismissing people more easily.

It can be seen that absenteeism had a managerial impact for the organisation, but also that it was represented as causing problems in terms of control and security and for staff more generally. It had become an issue that was no longer looked upon in a universally sympathetic way within prison officer culture as it violated norms regarding staff cohesion and undermined the ability of staff to manage prisoners effectively. These two strands combined to produce a negative organisational response to absenteeism in which there was frustration about bureaucracy and the lack of immediacy in tacking action against individuals. Managers craved greater control and certainty and saw this as available through reduced rights for absentee staff and the use of more punitive responses.

The emotional texture of managing ill-health

The degree to which sick absence was central to the working world of prison managers and their own 'working personality' was evident in the intensity of the emotions they expressed regarding this issue. The way that managers talked about their own attendance and that of other people was heavy with emotion and value judgements. This section will explore those feelings and will also explore the experiences of those at the receiving end of attendance management procedures.

Managers often stated a strong personal commitment to avoiding sick absence, they were often able to cite how many days sick absence they had during their career and this was worn as a badge of honour providing an example of their commitment, professionalism and machismo. For example comments heard included: "I've never had a sick day in my life", "I can't remember the last day I had sick", "I don't do sick, personally", "I'm very rarely sick", "I have never been one for taking sick", "I've never had a day off personally in almost 20 years", "it's not in my nature to play the sick, I won't take sick unless I'm on death's door".

Managers were often critical of those who did take sick leave. Several managers described their feelings in intense and emotional phrases and one even went as far as declaring: "I hate people that go sick". Absenteeism was seen by some not as a health issue, but an issue of character and those who did take sick leave were often described as having a poor "attitude" or lacking commitment, other managers went further, for example, one described those who went onto sick leave as having "a lack of gumption, lack of comradeship, totally sticking two fingers up at people" (W7 governor grade). Some of those who were on sick leave were described in terms equating them to prisoners, for example suggesting that they "address his offending behaviour" and that an individual was "a drain on my limited resources", appropriating a phrase used to describe difficult prisoners. Within the cultural context, this can be seen as a response rejecting those taking sick leave and casting them out of the occupational group.

However, when individual cases were explored in more detail, there was not a simple formula that all sick absence was bad. Instead, there was a distinction that arose between what might be termed ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ absenteeism. Deserving sick absence was that which was related to serious accidents, injuries or serious ill health and operations. This was seen as undisputable and clear. However, other sick absence, particularly short term sick absence was viewed more sceptically. This was summed up in the words of one manager who said:

“I accept when someone is really ill, I’ve had staff off with heart attacks, and you go all out to support them, I’ve had staff off with serious bouts of depression a male member of staff and that hit that person very hard, again, supported them and worked very hard to get them back to work at the right time for them. I’ve had staff off with a broken leg, they were off for a while. I’ve also got what I call piddly widdly peripheral sickness which sometimes is just people can’t be fagged to get out of bed because it’s been a good weekend or it’s going to be a nice weekend.” (W21 non-operational manager)

Those that were off for ‘deserving’ absences generally had problems that were serious, visible and quantifiable. This was summed up by one manager who said:

“It’s frowned on, people don’t like people to go sick. I can understand from a business point of view, and I guess I can understand from a detailing point of view that sick can cause its own problems. However, the only thing I do struggle with is that it can take away the humanity bit. Some people do get poorly, everybody becomes ill at some point, and sometimes through no fault of their own they might break something, they might have a car accident, they might be assaulted, they might have a heart attack.” (S13 senior officer)

These cases were talked about in positive terms and this was often described as “genuine” sick absence. The individuals concerned were often offered supportive visits and were talked about positively, both in terms of their recovery and attitude, with comments such as “she’s eager to get back”, “he’s keen to get back”. Such people did not have their character questioned but instead received positive support.

This was not a view that was universally applied to long term sick absence cases. Some people were criticised for their previous record of absences, where they had “cried wolf too many times”. There was particular ambiguity around the issue of absence for stress-related reasons. There were cases where this was viewed as ‘genuine’ and dealt with supportively, but others were seen in more negative terms and individuals described as “bone idle”, unsuited to prison work, or simply acting churlishly in response to management decisions. This was summed up by one manager who discussed this issue:

“There are people who are genuine, who may have had a major operation, who do need time to adjust, there are people who may have broken down due to mental health problems and we need to be very sensitive of that, but some jump on the bandwagon when they experience pressure. The word stress can be used like the word flu. If you’ve got flu you’re in bed, if you’re stressed that bad you’re in bed. I’ve seen people stressed out and I know what stress is, I’ve seen people with flu and I know what flu is. These words get bandied about. Someone says “I had flu yesterday I’ve miraculously recovered”. “I’ve been so stressed out I just needed to have a month off”, “did you have any treatment or anything?”, “no the doctor said I just need a break”, bloody hell, don’t we all need a break?” (S8 governor grade)

Short-term sick absence was criticised more vocally. This was described in such terms as “swinging the lead”, “taking the piss”, “lazyitis”, “skiveritis”, “malingerers”, “shysters”, “shirkers”. One manager made a typical comment that “Staff do take the piss going sick at the drop of a hat” (W7 governor grade). Such absence was often treated with disdain, scepticism and mockery, for example:

“I can’t abide ad hoc, single days sick for all sorts, it’s the anniversary of the dogs death and that sort of thing, and the wife was upset – get a life. I’m sorry, that’s the way I am.” (S6 principal officer)

This short term absenteeism was where it was most keenly perceived as a matter of character and managers described that they set high standards for themselves and others. One manager commented:

“As an ex-military man you drag yourself into work and if you can’t perform at work, there’s two sides if you get yourself in you’ve tried your best then you go home I think yes okay at least you’ve tried your best, your managers can see that. There are others, I’m not talking about extreme cases, but people say they’ve got flu or a cold and they’ve got a runny nose and they say their not coming to work. One example was a young officer’s mother phoned up on the Wednesday to say he had a migraine and he wouldn’t be back until the Friday. That’s a hell of a migraine for 72 hours.” (S1 senior officer)

Managers also described how they lived these standards and would come into work when unwell. For example, one commented:

“I very much subscribe to the view that if you’re sick you should be off work, but at the same time if you wake up a bit ropey, like I did this morning, you still come into work because if you’re ropey you can still do your job effectively. I’m very much of the opinion if you’re sick you should be off but if you’re not sick you should be in.” (W27 officer)

Another also described how they suffered for their work:

“I can’t live with people who phone in with headaches, who phone in a little bit unwell, we all feel unwell sometimes, sometimes the majority of the week.” (S8 governor grade)

Sometimes these expectations would be pushed beyond the realms of reasonableness. For example one manager suggested:

“Sick to me means you are unable to carry out your day-to-day work, you can sit at home with diarrhoea or you can have diarrhoea here, it doesn’t stop you doing your job.” (S9 governor grade)

One issue that underpinned this attitude to absenteeism was scepticism about the genuineness of sick absences. It was sometimes claimed that this exploited as a way to avoid undesirable management action, pursue other interests such as employment or education, avoid working at times such as the Christmas period, or attend to domestic issues such as childcare. This scepticism was not unique to prisons, but it has been described by Ericson (2007) that this is a means to cope with uncertainty. He has described in relation to the welfare system that:

“The over-arching myth of the war on social benefits fraud is that all social benefits are a kind of fraud against the well-being and prosperity of society as a whole.” (ibid p.117)

He suggests that this is then used to justify more intensive surveillance and more punitive action. This can also be seen in prisons with the greater use of occupational assessment, management scrutiny and disciplinary responses to absenteeism.

So far, the discussion has focussed on managers and their perceptions of attendance. However, it is also important that the experience of those who were being managed is considered. As has been described earlier, people did admit abusing the sick leave system, sometimes in the past as part of a wider ‘overtime culture’, but also as a form of resistance to what were perceived as unfair managerial decisions or behaviours. Other members of staff talked about more mundane absences and how they were treated. Two officers described how they had been affected by being challenged about their sick absence. At one prison, an officer described that after completing their probation without any health problems, they had then had some short term absences due to an ongoing medical condition:

“In two or three months, I had three sets of two days off. I wasn’t happy with how that was dealt with when I came back because I was told ‘you got through your year probation without being sick, now you’re sick all the time. If you are sick one more time you’ll be put on this monitoring’...I did feel a bit intimidated and

I got a bit upset because if I was able to come to work I would come to work...I said this to them and they said 'fair enough', but I did then feel that if I was ill I had to come to work. I felt a bit pressured that I was letting the side down by being sick and it was being noticed by people, so I would come in if I was feeling absolutely rubbish, if I was feeling miserable and ill...I did feel that he pushed us on whether it was a valid reason not to be at work. I did feel like I was being called a liar. I did feel uncomfortable and I did have a little cry afterwards... I felt bullied, very much so.” (W17 officer)

In this comment can be seen the scepticism and ‘robustness’ of the management response, with the attendance being challenged directly. There was also the cultural pressure to support the team and not let anyone down. This created a feeling in the individual that they had to attend work even when unwell. These practices were being pressed on this officer at the earliest stage of their career in an attempt to shape and induct them.

Another officer described that she was dismissed for taking sick leave during her probation period, although she was later reinstated. She described that this was linked to how she was perceived more generally and her view that she was not accepted by the staff group:

“When I first started the job...I had a very unfortunate run of five days off sick over four separate incidents. Because the wing I worked on was very cliquey and the staff were very established and had opinions that were put onto the PO, it was recommended that I was dismissed...I was sacked, it took me three months to get my job back for five days sick over four [periods]. There was one where I wrote my car off on the way to work, I was back at work the next day...I just felt there would have been other ways for him to have dealt with it, and my line manager didn't think it would go that far. Other senior officers on the wing had already made judgement of me. It has been said to me off the record that it was a personality thing rather anything else and the sick was just used as an excuse. That brings me round to their integrity and professionalism.” (S28 officer)

She also described that although her absences were for genuine reasons, there was scepticism about her attendance:

“There were rumours and everything...everyone thought that I was pulling a fast one and the rumours went round I was blagging it...So the rumours, you get tarred as a blagger and if you are genuine it's not right, if you are blagging then fair enough.” (S28 officer)

Again there was a pattern of scepticism, ‘robustness’ and early induction into a macho culture where sick absence was not tolerated.

Discussion

In concluding, the first observation is how the general perception of sick absence has changed over time. There was a time where sick absence was seen as beneficial both as additional annual leave for those taking it and additional earning opportunities through overtime for those who were at work. However, as overtime had been abolished and staffing levels had become more tightly managed, this meant that the interests of staff shifted. As a result, sick absence not only lost its benefits, but started to become problematic for the wider staff who found themselves having to work additional time (with no overtime payment but instead time off in lieu) or work harder to complete the work that was required. The general prison officer culture has therefore shifted from a pressure to take sick leave to a pressure to avoid it. This was reinforced through the managerial architecture, where managers were conscious of the impact on the organisational of sick absence.

The issue of absenteeism had a particular intensity for managers due to the uncertainty that it engendered. They lacked the medical expertise to make informed judgement but instead relied upon the vagaries of self reported ill-health or medical certificates. This uncertainty then became emotionally charged and managers felt scepticism. The response of managers to this drew upon both

managerialism and traditional culture. In terms of managerialism, there was a wide range of obligations, assessments, warnings and sanctions that enabled the policing and control of individuals. In more traditional terms, there was a machismo and punitiveness in their responses, with absentees being recast as an out-group akin to prisoners. For those who took sick leave, there were some who admitted that they had used this as a form of resistance however others described how they were stigmatised and felt that they were treated unreasonably.

Whilst the management of attendance has become a primary focus of contemporary prison managers, their approach has largely been informed by a greater focus on compliance with procedures and an emotional ‘othering’ of those who took sick leave. In this context, this change may have reduced the level of absenteeism, but did not appear to have done so by improving health, but instead had potentially done so by accepting, ignoring or even perpetuating harm.

Non-operational managers

Not all managers belonged to what were known as the ‘unified grades’ i.e. officer or governors. Those managers who were not in uniform or were not governor grades were described in prison parlance as non-operational managers, or sometimes “civilians” or “civvies”. Their roles included posts such as finance, human resources, learning and skills, chaplaincy, psychology and offender management. These roles broadly encompassed organisational management and regime delivery for prisoners.

In a traditional, insular and tight knit prison culture, they were perceived as being distinct. The term ‘non-operational manager’ defined them negatively, by what they were not rather than what they were, by what they could not do rather than what they could, and by their incompetence rather than their competence. This also represented them as a coherent group, rather than reflecting the diversity of skills and professions involved. The terms ‘civilian’ or ‘civvies’ emphasised that they did not belong to the inner culture but were outsiders. However, with the

development of managerialism, it could be anticipated that roles such as finance and human resource management would become increasingly important as they related to core management and organisational functions. Similarly, roles such as psychology and learning and skills could be anticipated to derive power from their expertise and their importance to ‘reducing reoffending’ and delivering targets in those areas. It could be anticipated that there may be some tensions between inclusion and exclusion, between managerial and traditional approaches.

This section will explore the experiences of non-operational managers, focussing on what many of them described as the difficulties of adapting to and being accepted within the prison culture and how this influenced their professional identity. These effects will be particularly drawn out by using an example of the role of Head of Learning and Skills (HoLS). The experience of HoLS was described by one such post holder as one that: “shows all of the Prison Service’s desire to do good but exposes all of its weaknesses”.

Case Study: Head of Learning and Skills

The HoLS role was originally introduced into all prisons in order to improve the quality of education provision and the availability of accredited work training and education (Bayliss and Hughes 2008). The posts were funded by the then Department of Education. The recruits generally were drawn from two pools, one being educationalists from the community coming into prisons for the first time, and the second being established education managers who transferred in from contract providers.

There was a contrast between those who had previous experience of prisons and those who did not. Those that did not found that they experienced a wall of hostility to this centrally prescribed change, some of this related to resentment about pay and grading, and some revolved around confusion about the role. As one HoLS suggested, they were confronted with the questions: “well who are you, what are you, why are you here and where the hell am I going to put you?”. They

felt that they faced “brick walls” and resistance and as a result became frustrated. Some also found themselves not fitting in culturally because of the accents with which they spoke and the language they used. They were described as moving from a “touchy feely...hugely PC” working world in education into “a macho set up distrustful of academics”. Their expertise was contained, for example, some managers felt that as operational management took priority they were not afforded the recognition of their professional status, were unable to effect change as they carried little authority in the eyes of the general staff group, and that their expertise was generally undervalued. This could be reflected symbolically in, for example, which offices they were allocated, where they were based in the prison, whether their views were adopted in meetings and whether they were able to influence the organisation more generally.

Those who had previous prison experience were often more sanguine about the secondary position they held in the prison and were pragmatic about this. For example, one HoLS commented:

“The operational grades have to come first because that’s what we primarily do, then you’ve got personnel and finance, they are the people that can actually make things happen. Then you’ve got the other roles that are appreciated. I feel appreciated and valued, but to a certain extent I’ve got to be a bit on the edge because I’m not operational.” (HoLS 1)

For those HoLS that entered the prison by external routes, they experienced ‘culture shock’ as they were faced with resistance, marginalisation and a new cultural milieu, which was often in contrast with both their previous occupational experiences and their expectations. Similar experiences were also discussed in relation to other non-operational managers who had joined from external routes such as probation managers, psychologists and human resource specialists.

The HoLS also reported that over time their role changed in ways that conflicted with their expectations and diluted their expertise. Some of these changes were structural, for example many HoLS took on additional responsibilities for areas

such as workshops, health and safety and catering. However, some welcomed this as an opportunity to influence the prison more widely. As one HoLS described:

“Very soon, within a matter of weeks, this ring-fenced job called head of learning and skills, the clever governors thought, what the hell is a head of learning and skills?...They can take over activities, resettlement, regimes. Suddenly this individual was being spread far and wide. In some ways that was no bad thing [because] a head of learning of skills [could] start influencing heads of activities or industries, or resettlement or regimes to start saying, look you’ve got to start delivering qualifications in your contract packing shop and the guys that clean the landings have got to get BICS¹⁴... if you’re ...actually there line managing it it’s a lot easier. But that wasn’t the intention.” (HoLS 2)

In more subtle ways, professional identity became diluted. In particular, HoLS found that their focus on quality and their professional expertise was not valued in itself. Their influence relied upon external political importance from senior managers and organisations such as HMCIP, or the importance of the targets that they were responsible for achieving. This was summed up by one HoLS as: “[The Governor] knows the value of, if not education per se, then the KPT’s I am responsible for”. This was also reported by other non-operational managers, including psychologists who were aware of the double edged nature of KPTs for offending behaviour programmes, which gave them influence but narrowed their professional range and reduced their role to that of a provider of specified product.

By generalising the role of HoLS through expanding responsibilities and focussing on managerial targets, expertise and power was reduced. Ultimately this had led to resistance and subversion where managers with no educational background started to be recruited into some HoLS posts, indicating the degree to which they had been generalised.

¹⁴ Recognised qualifications in industrial cleaning

Another way in which HoLS roles became diluted was in the relationship with their wider profession. HoLS described that they could become distanced and detached from the wider teaching community, describing themselves as “on a limb”. Whilst there was some connection through previous contacts and through professional events, this was not strong and enduring. As a result, they lacked collective cohesion and felt isolated. This atomisation of the professional group weakened their ability to collectively resist the changes that took place.

Although HoLS felt detached from their profession and found their expertise diluted, that is not to say that they felt that they were powerless. They also described how they were able to overcome barriers in facilitating learning and skills and supporting creativity. Some HoLS saw their role as maintaining a diverse curriculum and “guarding against the unremitting diet of maths and English”. For example, one manager introduced a music course by presenting it as “music with key skills”, so smuggling this within the restrictive contract for education provision. Non-operational managers were also able to import and maintain a space for dialogue that reflected their wider professional concerns. This could be heard in terms such as “defensible decisions”, “evidence based practice” and “reflective practice”, which were brought from probation and psychology, and reflected quality and professional expertise rather than pragmatism. As has been described above, some managers also used their managerial cache in order to exert influence, in particular through KPTs. Some roles were able to exert a sustained influence, in particular human resources and finance, where authority had been delegated and their skills were needed to manage prison performance generally.

Discussion

In conclusion, traditionally non-operational managers had been marginalised as being outside of the prison officer occupational culture. The process of managerialism enabled them to enhance their influence and role, particularly through KPTs. However, there has also been a movement towards neutralising

their expertise and diluting their specialism. This process has taken place through broadening their responsibilities, focussing on targets and detaching them from their wider professional bodies.

Conclusion

It was widely suggested by managers that managerialism, particularly through performance measurement, provided a 'level playing field', a means through which equality could be promoted through the objective or even scientific basis upon which it rested. However, the preceding discussion in this chapter has set out to explore groups who do not experience equality and fairness but instead reported experiences of psychological harms. The consequences of these harms included that individuals became alienated from their work and colleagues, had their potential curtailed, experienced a dilution in their sense of professional identity, and suffered ill-health. These were the hidden injuries of prison management.

Some of these injuries arose from the structural aspects of prison management. For example, the prominence that was given to absenteeism in measurements such as the weighted scorecard deliberately sent a strategic message to managers about the need to address and reduce this, and they were provided with tools such as medical assessments and warnings. Structures such as quantitative performance measures also provided the means through which professional expertise was diluted. These structures both directed and provided the means to perpetuate the harms disclosed.

However, most of the injuries could not be attributed to the structure of prison management alone, but also related to the cultural context. This could be seen in machismo that shaped a gendered workplace, the insularity and close knittedness of the staff that resisted ethnic diversity, and the valuing of 'operational' work that diminished the status of 'non-operational' employees. These harms emerged from a traditional prison officer culture.

These two factors also combined to consolidate and perpetuate harms. In particular, performance management provided an appearance of objectivity. This did not take account of the resistance experienced by particular groups or their reduced power. Instead, this was masked and performance figures could provide a justification for less favourable treatment based on the 'objective' information available. The consequences of this were that managerialism could act to obscure and entrench harms.

The hidden injuries of prison management were both new and old. Traditional harms, such as gender and ethnic discrimination, and the marginalisation of non-operational staff were maintained. New harms were also created, or at least intensified, in particular ill-health had emerged as a new leviathan, created by both managerialism and aspects of traditional culture. All of this is not to suggest that prison management was unremittingly harmful. As has been described, there were those who found this empowering or successfully overcame obstacles or resisted effectively. However, what this discussion has attempted to do is to challenge the myth of the equality and objectivity and instead to expose how particular groups experienced harms that were hidden but nevertheless intense and painful.

Chapter 8

Prison Managerialism and Beyond

This study of prison managers has been situated in the wider context of contemporary social life. It has been an attempt to understand how the constellations of forces that have characterised late modernity have come to bear in a particular place and at a particular time.

In an attempt to capture the lived experience, a novel methodological approach has been taken. In particular, the research strategy included not only interviews, but also observational data, taking an ethnographic approach, which has been noticeably absent from UK studies of prison managers. This study has sought to take a wider view of what constitutes a 'prison manager'. It has not limited this to elites such as governing governors as most previous studies have (e.g. Bryans 2007). Instead, it has sought to engage with the experiences of all managers, uniformed and non-uniformed, from senior officers to the most senior governors.

The complexities of the work of prison managers have been revealed through this detailed and in-depth exploration of them as micro actors and the daily flow of their working lives. This has illuminated a series of dualities and dialectical relationships that are at the core of prison management. Most importantly, this has captured the tensions, accommodations and co-existence of globalised practices, particularly managerialism, with localised practices informed by a traditional prison officer culture. In addition it has shown how prison managers creatively negotiate a role balancing these forces so as to create a sense of professional identity. In doing so, they are at times both enabling and constrained by the forces pressing upon them.

In this closing chapter, the main themes and implications of the study will be drawn together. The first part will define and discuss the central characterisation of contemporary prison management, which has been developed here. That has

been described as ‘prison managerialism’. The chapter will then go on to discuss the effects of this mode of practice for prison managers themselves, for prisoners and for society more generally. Finally, this chapter will close with some comments on developments following the completion of the study and considers potential futures as well as drawing out some ideas about how the findings of this study could be applied in practice in order to create alternative possibilities.

What is prison managerialism?

The most significant finding of this study was that the role of prison managers, their occupational culture and identity was shaped by what has been called ‘prison managerialism’. At the most general level, this described a combination of the forces of managerialism, such as performance measurement, efficiency and instrumental techniques, and a traditional prison culture shaped by an occupational insularity, a particular perception of staff-prisoner relationships as being distant with the prisoner cast as the ‘other’, and machismo. The term ‘prison managerialism’ is intended to convey a sense of the dialectical relationship between an identifiable globalised pattern of practice, in this case managerialism, and elements of localised culture. The nature of prison managerialism will be considered further in this section.

The relationship between managerialism and the traditional prison officer culture was not rigid, fixed and impermeable. Nor was it solely characterised by new practices being met with conflict, subversion or resistance. Instead, there was a dynamic and complex relationship which included tensions but also included adaptation and mutual reinforcement. In chapter 4, there was an examination of performance management architecture in prisons, which was the manifestation *par excellence* of managerialist practices. Whilst this had changed the practice of managers and the nature of their work, it had also been implemented in ways that reinforced and reflected traditional prison officer culture. For example, those measures that drew upon the direct contribution of prisoners or were perceived to be biased towards the interests of prisoners were denigrated and given less

attention than those that were seen to serve the interests of managers and prison staff. Machismo was also seen in the way that certain targets were pursued with aggression and a determination to succeed even if that was at a cost to the individual themselves or others. Whilst the development and operation of performance management had changed the nature of prison work, it was contextualised within and shaped by an existing local culture. In chapter 5, the space for individualism and the exercise of choice by prison managers were considered. This illustrated that rather than being characterised by moral pluralism and competing ethical viewpoints as has been previously suggested (e.g. Rutherford 1993a), managers' choices were largely patterned with a view towards the organisational priorities and the needs of staff. These concerns were embodied by prison managers and this was expressed through their professional practice. Again, though, the relationship was varied and complex, with managers often having to search for and create ways in which the managerial needs of the organisation and the cultural expectations of prison officers could be balanced and met. Chapter 6 offered an insight into the practices of managers in managing staff, teams and prisoners. It was possible to see ways in which managers acted in accordance with cultural expectations, such as consulting with staff and building good relationships, but also were aware of how these could have an instrumental benefit in achieving managerial ends. Equally, there were practices where traditional culture flourished, such as the ways that managers used cultural displays such as carrying out prison officer work or challenging prisoners in order to demonstrate their affinity with staff. This was largely independent of managerial concerns, but did gain some support from contemporary human resource management ideas of leadership and emotional connectedness between managers and staff. In relation to prisoners, both managerialism with its economic rationale and traditional culture with its 'othering' of prisoners both coalesced to maintain the dominant power relations between staff and prisoners. The effects of this were explored in chapter 7, which highlighted that 'prison managerialism', was not socially neutral and objective, but instead was embedded in both global and local power structures, including gender, ethnicity, and traditional occupational culture. This brief summary of the four empirical

chapters has been intended to provide a concise illustration of the complex but pervasive relationship between managerialism and traditional prison officer culture.

This relationship reflected the nature of globalisation and the conditions of late modernity more generally. Managerialism has been a form of globalised practice, spreading across nations and organisations, forming a homogenised mode of practice. However, globalised practices have not swept away what has gone before but instead they have interacted with local traditions (Giddens 2002), which are “ubiquitous and commonplace” (Kennedy 2010 p.7). It has been suggested that global forces have shaped employment practices less than has been commonly suggested and that traditional modes of practice such as secure tenure and inward national investment are still dominant (Doogan 2009). In affective and cultural terms, it has been argued that local practices exercised “powerful centripetal tendencies and attraction, pulling us inwards” (Kennedy 2010 p.7). Further, it has also been suggested that the insecurity created by new managerial and global forms of operation has led people to cling more tightly to traditional cultural practices as a way of retaining a sense of place and identity (Sennett 1998). These arguments illustrated that globalisation was incomplete and coexisted with localised practices. That is what was reflected in this study, where traditional culture had remained strong and although had been changed and constrained by new practices of managerialism, it had also been adapted, incorporated and enlisted so that it had continued to form a central part of prison life. This suggested that the essential nature of the late modern prison should not be viewed as a complete transformation but instead should be seen as being located in the dialectical interaction between global and local factors.

For prison managers, there have been changes in what can be described as their ‘working personality’ or *habitus*, that is their sense of values, actions, practices and the way that they embody these. Managerialism has been adopted and absorbed by managers in their sense of professional identity. They recognised that this was important in their work; they were expected to meet targets and they

were accountable for this. However, this was not simply a quantitative or technical change in their practices, instead managers actively engaged with these new modes of operation and felt a deep personal commitment to achieving them. At times, this constrained them from acting in ways that they would otherwise have chosen to, at other times it gave them a thrill to pursue and meet targets and some also felt that meeting targets was more important than their own personal health and well being. Managerial practices had become embedded in the identity of prison managers.

However, this was not the whole picture. Traditional prison officer culture retained an important place in prison managers' working lives. The continuing importance of prison officer culture is something that has been neglected in previous accounts of prison management, for example it was absent from Rutherford's (1993a) study of criminal justice managers, although elements of traditional culture may be discerned from what he described as those subscribing to 'credo one', which encompassed punitive attitudes. This may have been influenced by the time at which the research took place. In 1987, the hierarchical structure of prisons changed, so that the officer and governor grade ranks became unified (HM Prison Service 1987). Prior to that there were distinct rank structures and this meant that most governors had not worked as prison officers, but this changed as a result of the reforms. Rutherford's work took place shortly after this change and therefore the changes would have had limited impact. By the time of Bryans (2007) research at the turn of the century, he was able to identify 'Chief Officers' who made much of their display of affinity with prison officer culture. However, he did not draw this out more broadly and largely restricted this to a particular 'type' of manager. In the research sites, the majority of managers had worked as prison officers and carried not only their experiences with them, but also an embedded sense of the prison and those who lived and worked there. This was imported into their management role. This was also reinforced through their working relationships with prison staff. Managers needed the co-operation of staff to succeed and therefore actively sought to harness their support by appealing to their needs and values, but managers were

also influenced and shaped by those they managed through a dialectic of control. This was also part of the *habitus* or ‘working personality’ of prison managers.

This study suggests that, despite the widespread transformations in practice through the growth of managerialism, traditional prison culture has retained its importance. As this aspect has often been overshadowed by the prominence given to the overpowering effects of globalised practices such as managerialism, it may not be immediately obvious why such localised practices should have been sustained. It is suggested here that there are three main reasons why this has been the case. The first was that there was importation of prison officer culture into management grades as a result of organisational changes which created a unified structure and provided opportunities for progression (HM Prison Service 1987). This had, over time, led to a blurring of distinctions and a smoothing of differences between managers and officers. The second reason was that engagement with prison officer culture was necessary for instrumental reasons. In order to achieve managerial targets, managers sought the co-operation and consent of those they managed. This required negotiation and involved a dialectic of control. As a result, managers used their cultural affinity, or at least displays of this, in order to secure consent. The third reason was that managers sought a sense of identity and belonging. Managerialism brought with it a more atomised occupational group, insecurity about reputation and position, and a reduced sense of professional distinctiveness. Prison officer culture provided certainty, familiarity and continuity in a more uncertain world.

The nature of ‘working personality’, balancing as it did managerialism and local culture, was not fixed, rigid and impermeable. As was argued in relation to police working cultures: “[t]he strength of the lenses may be weaker or stronger depending on certain conditions, but they are ground on a similar axis” (Skolnick 1966 p.42), and so in this case, the axis is provided by managerialism and traditional prison culture, but the balance between those elements is unstable and contingent. In his analysis of organisational culture, Parker argued that this could be characterised as a “contested local organization of generalities” (Parker 2000

p.214), in other words, there were basic features of agreement about what is important but how these were pieced together into a coherent whole was contested, disputed and continually revised. Again, this analysis is relevant to understanding the ways in which prison managers made sense of the competing pressures that they faced. The ‘working personality’ or *habitus* of prison managers was less certain and clear cut than has been implied in the past, instead it was fragmented and was characterised by flux. Managers had to balance, review and rebalance competing priorities and do this in a way that was contingent upon circumstances and varied across grades, roles, and situations. Although managerialism and local culture formed the foundations, individuals had to make sense of the relationship between them and find ways in which to artfully balance the competing pressures and priorities. When discussing the craft of prison management, it has been argued that managers’ role was to: “fashion and re-shape an essentially punitive structure into one that was positive and optimistic” (Wilson 2000 p.12). Whilst this may have been helpful as a normative prescription, the observations in this study suggested that the craft as practiced was not centred on this explicit moral vision and leadership. Instead, the craft was demonstrated in fashioning, reshaping and continually recalibrating the balance between managerial targets and traditional cultural demands into a pragmatically sustainable mix.

The term ‘prison managerialism’ has been intended to provide a means of appreciating the dominant pressures that shape the working lives of prison managers. However, this was also a concept that was full of tension and uncertainty. It was the centre of the intersection between global and local forces, between the past and the present, and between agency and structure. This was where prison managers lived their working lives.

The effects of prison managerialism

Having briefly described prison managerialism, it is now necessary to turn to the question of how this has shaped prisons. How has this influenced the ways that

individuals work? How has it shaped or recast the way the organisation operated? How has it changed the experience of the subjects including staff and prisoners? Has it changed the aims of the organisation? In short, what have been the effects of prison managerialism?

There have been some grand and profound claims made for the positive benefits of managerialism by senior prison managers. For example, it has been argued that managerial techniques have empowered managers so that they could ensure that what should be happening did happen (Wheatley 2005). Prior to this, it had been argued that “a mainly liberal and decent cadre of governors” had good intentions but were ineffective and so presided over and “supported a sorry state of affairs” including overcrowding, poor conditions, brutality and unsafe prisons (ibid p.33). In contrast, it has been argued that as well as enhancing the technical machinery of managerial control, managerialism has had a progressive moral effect. For example, Martin Narey, a former Director General of the Prison Service, stated:

“...show me a prison achieving all its K[ey] P[erformance] I[ndicator]s and I will show you a prison which is also treating prisoners with dignity” (Narey 2001 p.5)

This was not an argument that as has been restricted to prison managers. Prison lawyers have argued that managerialism could provide a means through which the use of discretion could be made less arbitrary and more accountable (Livingstone et al 2003) and that legalistic compliance could be a means of preventing abuses and improving conditions (Whitty 2011).

From these perspectives, the development of managerialism has tamed problematic localised cultures and has promoted a more progressive approach. However, this study has illustrated that such dualisms do not present an accurate picture of the working lives of prison managers. Localism has not been excluded by globalised developments, instead their interaction is characterised by duality and dialectical relationships. The question of effects is not therefore simply about

managerialism but is about that interaction with localism and the particular tensions and ways of operating that this created.

Starting with the effects on prisoners, whilst there have been improvements in physical conditions and the availability of services during the last two decades (as described in chapter 1), there has also been a shift in the way that prisoners have been perceived and understood by managers. As has been argued in this study, traditional prison officer culture provided a lens through which prisoners were perceived as subordinate to prison staff. The defenders of managerialism quoted above, asserted that managerialism had shifted that perspective and that a more humanitarian approach had prevailed. However, this study has revealed that managers practice and embody many aspects of traditional culture. It has also shown that the newer managerial approach did not generally foster humanitarian concern in itself. Instead, organisationally sanctioned moral imperatives such as ‘decency’ and ‘reducing reoffending’ had a managerial quality to them. Managers generally complied with them and enacted them because they were prescribed rather than through a personal commitment. As has been described earlier, this led to some managers describing morally-based policies such as race equality or the use of cell sharing risk assessments as a necessity of audit compliance rather than articulating an appreciation of their human impact. This way of thinking could also be detected in language, for example it has been argued that traditional prison culture was resistant to rights, supported legal cases being rigorously contested and viewed litigious prisoners as a nuisance, and that managerial approaches led to defensive approaches attempting to make processes ‘ECHR proof’ rather than internalising the recognition of rights (Cheney et al 2001). This mechanistic approach created affective distance and re-imagined prisoners as an amorphous, undifferentiated mass or parts of risk groups to be managed, controlled or accessed (Bettleheim 1960). Both traditional culture and managerialism acted to depersonalise and dehumanise prisoners, one from a moral perspective, positioning prisoners as undeserving, whilst the other from a technical perspective, objectifying prisoners and denying their full human character.

It may be argued that if the processes and policies were carried out effectively then it would make no difference what the motives of the person carrying them out and that if legalism or managerialism resulted in improved physical services or rights then this had some value (Liebling 2005, Whitty 2011) . However, it has been shown that the affective elements of ‘performance delivery’, such as the way prisoners were spoken to and whether they felt that staff cared, were also important in reducing suicide (Liebling et al 2005), improving quality of life for prisoners (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004) and more broadly in the provision of effective human services (Brody 2000). As has been suggested here, prison managerialism does not in itself improve the affective qualities of interactions with prisoners or concern for the humane experience of imprisonment.

For prison managers, there has been a change in the values that infuse their role and guide their actions. In the past, it has been argued that prison managers were a distinct group within prisons who offered a morally vibrant, value-laden and diverse form of leadership (eg. Rutherford 1993a, Bryans and Wilson 2000). In particular, it was claimed that they acted as moral interpreters of their working world and used this to craft the social aspects of imprisonment in creative and visionary ways (Wilson 2000). However, this study has illustrated that this role has been eroded, indeed replaced, both structurally and in the *habitus* of managers. The managers of the past have been delegitimised through representations of them as well intentioned but ineffective. Their individuality has been recast as anarchy and the past painted as a world where: “openly maverick governors ignored central instructions and little of that central instruction was translated into local action” (Wheatley 2005 p.33). The development of managerial techniques has sought to constrain managers to act in conformity with centralised prescription. Such an approach has important consequences for social power as it extends the reach of control through management at a distance (O’Malley 1994), displacing professional judgement, reinforcing management control, and subordinating other forms of power, knowledge and authority (Clarke, Gerwitz and McLaughlin 2000). The values

that are perpetuated through these actions are not neutral but instead have “tended to subordinate other principles of judgement to the managerial calculus of economy and efficiency” (ibid p.10). This study has illustrated that centralised actions are not interpreted and adapted through the distinct moral creativity of prison managers but instead through the continuing strength of traditional prison officer culture. Rather than being a moral visionary, the contemporary prison manager more closely resembles a power broker, balancing and rebalancing the pressures from above and below. That is not to say that such a role is not without its creativity and complexity, but it is markedly different from the way that the role of prison managers has been previously described.

There were risks that attached to the reduced relevance of individual moral creativity and its replacement with more pragmatic and instrumental concerns. In particular, this could lead to routinisation and “unthinking use” of practices, policies, processes and technologies (Bettleheim 1960 p.49). It has been argued that in social institutions such as places of custody, it was important to foster a questioning, curious, sceptical and challenging professional approach. Without this, shared assumptions could come to dominate, technical and social compliance spread and the ability of professionals to exercise independent thought atrophied (ibid). Whilst the unconstrained individualism of the past is itself problematic for its unaccountability and inconsistency, there is nevertheless an important role for an intellectually active, socially engaged, and self-reflective professional approach.

For the organisation, prison managerialism has been argued to have increased management control and effectiveness and led to significant improvements in ‘performance’. However, this study has indicated that below the surface more complex social forces could be exposed. In part there was what has been called ‘carceral clawback’ (Carlen 2002b), where reforming or progressive aims were subject to adaptation and change to reflect a punitive approach. This could be seen in the ways that performance management methodologies were adapted to reflect traditional culture and the ways that in pursuing managerial ends, prison

managers subscribed to traditional culture. The organisation was drawn back and infused with the weight of its historical social construction. What was also seen was a similar clawback towards managerial concerns. For example, this could be seen in the ways that managers fell back on managerial aims in exercising discretion and other forms of agency, how they understood potentially humanitarian objectives such as ‘decency’ and ‘reducing re-offending’, and how they placed greater emphasis on ‘hard’ controllable measures such as quantitative targets and audits. These were all examples of how prison management was constructed so as to prioritise and foreground managerial practices. This was also illustrated in the ways that manipulation and distortion had become a chronic feature, where the appearance of compliance was more important than almost anything else, to the extent that a prison could become a ‘virtual’ construct (Owers 2007). This had become so deeply embedded that managerial clawback was as important to understanding contemporary prison management as carceral clawback. The dominance and pervasiveness of these features meant that the range of possibility for the organisation was constrained and alternatives became more difficult to create and sustain.

There were strong claims made that prison managerialism has had a positive, reforming effect in prisons, including improving conditions, increasing consistency, enhancing management control and enriching prisoners’ experiences. However, this study has revealed that there have been deep and significant shifts in the social life of the prison that has effects for all of those who live or work in prisons, including prison managers. Whilst many of these changes were positive for some people, there were also problematic aspects and the nature of the transformations deserve the full exploration, exposition and discussion that has been offered here.

Beyond prison managerialism

This final section will attempt to combine a number of aspirations. It is intended to provide an afterword which reflects upon changes that have taken place since

the field work was concluded and consider them in light of the analysis presented in this study. It is also intended to reflect upon further research that may be useful and also some of the ways in which this research could be used to inform practice. What draws these aspirations together is that they are intended to provide a discussion of how this research could move beyond the immediate study and into the prison world.

This study has highlighted a number of subjects that would merit further research. The wider range of managers that were involved in prisons, from accountants to HR professionals, to healthcare managers and psychologists marked a shift towards greater professionalization and specialisation. These all merited greater attention than could be given in this study. Similarly, closer attention could be given to some of the processes used, including performance management measures themselves such as IMB and HM Inspectorate of Prisons. Again a wider and more extensive exploration of their use and effects would be of interest. The most important issue was that this study has revealed that whilst prison managers hold power, they are also the subjects of it and those who are more senior also deserved closer sociological inquiry. Giving attention to how policy and practice was developed at the most senior level would have value. In addition, as this study was conducted in two public sector organisations, there are questions raised about how the balance and approach varies between prisons in the public sector and between the public sector and other providers in the private sector. Some existing research indicates that there may be different cultures and ways of operating that would benefit from further study in order to understand how prison managers operate in different contexts (Liebling assisted by Arnold 2004, Liebling, Crewe and Hulley 2011).

This study raised questions about the practice of prison management. How should performance management be deployed, if at all? What other structures should be given attention? How should managers be selected, trained, developed and supported? Should localism and individualism be developed or should compliance and consistency be favoured?

Since the field work for this study was completed, there have been a number of developments in prison managerialism¹⁵.

First, there have been significant changes in the structure of performance management in prisons. The weighted scorecard was replaced in 2010 by the 'performance hub'. Whilst this still created a 'league table' of prisons, it drew upon a wider range of measures including inspectorate assessments and MQPL results as well as KPTs. There have also been changes to the audit system, with a reduced number of in-house audits being completed. There has also been a change to the methodology of external audits, with a move away from a strict compliance approach towards a 'risk assessment' approach, which allowed greater qualitative judgement by auditors on the risk presented by non-compliance. In 2011, it was also planned to reduce the number of KPTs. This all marked the slimming down and refocusing of performance management. This was partly motivated by the needs of efficiency and these changes have been used in order to generate cost savings, however, they were also aimed at refocusing management attention.

Second, there has been an increase in competition and marketisation of prison services. In 2011, it was announced that a private company, G4S, had won a competition to operate a new 1800 place prison in Featherstone and had also won the contract to operate HMP Birmingham, a prison that had up to that stage been operated by the public sector. This was the first time that a public sector prison had transferred to private operation. At the same time, another private sector company, SERCO, won the competition and retained the operation of HMP Doncaster. Their contract included a 'payment by results' provision, by which they had to reduce the level of reoffending by prisoners released from the prison or risk forfeiting part of their contractual payment. The expansion of competition for public services and the use of incentivised payments are two key strands of

¹⁵ The following information is derived from internal documentation produced by the National Offender Management Service. There is no publically published information on these changes.

government policy in criminal justice and more widely (Ministry of Justice 2010, HM Government 2011).

Third, there has been a policy shift towards larger establishments. A review of prison management conducted by Lord Carter recommended that in order to create efficiency, large prisons holding up to 2500 prisoners should be created (Carter 2007). These so called 'Titan' prisons were widely criticised as being based upon a commercial, managerial model that placed efficiency before quality (Coyle 2008b, Liebling 2011).

These developments suggest a number of risks for prisons and prison managers. First, these changes appear to be leading towards reduced numbers of targets, but those that are left have greater importance, and the organisational risks are greater. This is likely to lead to an intensification of the focus on achieving these targets. Managers are likely to experience greater uncertainty, experience greater pressure to comply and become increasingly focussed on a narrow range of issues.

Second, the focus on key performance indicators and audits could lead to a focus on short-term goals. This was also reinforced by the short-term time frame of the prison officer, which generally focused on the day in hand (Liebling and Price 2001). The recent changes to performance management mitigated this to some degree by giving greater prominence to inspection and MQPL, and so extending the time perspective. However, addressing culture could be a long and difficult process. It would also be likely to result in short-term deterioration in performance as the foundations of team cohesion were disturbed and resistance encountered. Focussing on short-term targets was likely to militate against this and therefore entrench the current way of doing things, closing down alternatives and solidifying the status quo.

Third, the shift towards larger prisons put at risk the quality of life for prisoners and prison staff. One former Chief Inspector of Prisons presented evidence to

suggest that smaller prisons provided better environments than larger ones (HMCIP 2009c) and this was also the recommendation of a review of women's imprisonment (Corston 2007). Larger establishments would also be likely to lead to less personal relationships between staff and prisoners and between staff and managers, increasing social distance. The resistance led to Lord Carter's proposals for Titan prisons being modified, although there are still plans to open a new prison holding 1800 prisoners (Liebling 2011).

Are there alternatives to this approach? Are there other ways of thinking about and approaching prison management? I will end by suggesting four ways, which in combination, could provide a way forward that retains the benefits of measurement and monitoring but is also sensitive to the social and moral aspects of prison management.

First, the amount of nationally prescribed performance measurement could be reduced. As well as the changes that have taken place to date, there may be scope for further reductions in the amount of performance measurement so that it would be less dominant in the thinking of prison managers and they would have the space to be creative.

Second, there should be more creative thinking about what is measured. There are benefits in performance measurement in the ways that they direct attention and improve accountability. However, measures are largely centrally prescribed. There should be greater scope for locally developed targets that reflect particular priorities and problems. This more localised approach would allow prison managers to take a role in developing measures to support a strategic vision. In addition, there is a case for developing measures more collaboratively with prison managers, staff, prisoners and others with an interest, including local community representatives. In this way they could take an active role in thinking about what was important and how best to address these issues.

Third, it is suggested that there is a move towards smaller rather than larger establishments, in order to enable managers to be more responsive to the prisoner population and to staff. The professional resistance and the evidence presented in opposition to the proposals for Titan prisons illustrated that alternatives are available, based upon smaller establishments grounded in strong, affective relationships. Such establishments could be more responsive to the individual needs of prisoners and could be more closely linked with the local community (Woolf and Tumim 1991, Corston 2007).

Fourth, there is a case for the use of structured discretion amongst prison managers, who can then act to humanise the environment and to counter the dehumanising aspects of managerialism and traditional prison officer culture. For example, in his research on prison managers, Cheliotis (2006) suggested that they acted with agency by resisting or mitigating the excesses of managerialism and humanising practice. Similarly, Carlen (2001) has argued that prison managers could lead a ‘remoralisation’ of prisons by setting an ethical framework and directing practice to achieve this. This has also found support from senior prison managers, including the current Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service, Michael Spurr, who has argued that:

“...targets are a means to an end and not an end in themselves... Measures are important but they are there to be able to move behaviour in the right way, to achieve compliance with process that is important, but they are not an absolute be all and end all. If anyone decides, for example, not to pay attention to a prisoner who is threatening self-harm because they are too busy with targets then we have lost sight of what we are about” (Spurr and Bennett 2008 p.59-60)

This presented an alternative perception of how managerialism and managers should operate. This recognised the limitation and fallibility of performance measurement and highlighted the role of humane practice and agency to enable the achievement of the aims of measures, with sensitivity to the social, interpersonal and psychological aspects of prisons, rather than unthinking

compliance. That is not to say that there should be a return to unconstrained individualism, which would be problematic, but instead it is an argument for the creative application of skills informed by a clear moral framework. Such an approach needs to be developed, supported and nurtured if it is to flourish.

The occupational context of contemporary prison managers was not one which supported, fostered or nurtured the alternative approach suggested above. This study has proposed that prison managers do not exist in the value-laden enterprise of the past but instead their outlook and practice is shaped by managerialism and traditional culture. The alternative that has been articulated could be termed as a form of 'craftsmanship' (Sennett 2009), where practitioners do not simply comply with what they are asked to do and do not mechanically apply rules, but instead strive to do their job well for its own sake and take time to pause, reflect and critically explore their work in its context. In prisons this would involve reigniting moral debate and encouraging a more reflective and creative form of practice. This has significant implications for human resource practice including selection, development and appraisal.

As has been illustrated throughout this study, prison management is located at the intersection between the past and present, global and local, agency and structure. Prison managers are neither all powerful nor are they powerless. The development of practice is constantly evolving and is contested. The future shape of prison management and prison managerialism is at least in part, in the hands of those who practice it.

Annex A

Management roles and responsibilities

This Annex briefly summarises the main roles and responsibilities of each management grade described in this study.

Governing Governor – The manager who is in charge of the whole prison. They line manage other senior managers and are accountable for the prison as a whole including safety, security, efficiency and performance. They are usually an experienced prison manager who has worked in a range of operational management roles, including uniformed roles.

Governor Grade – A senior operational manager who will normally be in charge of a part of the prison. Prisons are divided into ‘functions’ including residence (the living accommodation or wings), security, operations (such as gate, reception, visits), regime (including catering, work, gymnasium) or reducing reoffending (sentence planning, offender management, links with probation, psychology and external organisations). A governor grade is normally in charge of a function and will also be a member of the prison senior management team. They will periodically take operational charge of the prison as ‘duty governor’. They are usually experienced prison managers who have worked in operational roles, including uniformed roles.

Principal Officer – The most senior uniformed grade. They generally run a department, which forms part of a function. This may for example be a number of wings, security intelligence, part of operations and this would usually involve managing a team of staff. Others manage discrete policy areas such as audit, life sentence prisoners or suicide prevention. Principal officers are also periodically responsible for the day-to-day operation of the prison in the role of ‘orderly officer’.

Senior Officer – The first line manager of prison officers. They generally operate as shift managers in particular areas such as wings, visits, reception or activities. They are generally part of a team of senior officers who provide the day-to-day shift management of those areas.

Head of Learning & Skills – A senior non-uniformed manager responsible for the management of the education contract and the broader development of learning and skills in the prison. However, their roles expanded in some prisons to encompass line management responsibility for areas such as workshops, gymnasium and catering. They generally have an education background and have not worked in other roles in prisons.

Human Resources Business Partner – A senior non-uniformed manager responsible for the human resources aspects of the prison, such as recruitment, training, appraisal and attendance management. They also act as a strategic advisor to the Governing Governor and senior managers regarding change management and consultation. Some had previously worked in administrative roles in prisons whilst others were recruited directly without prison experience. They were expected to have relevant professional qualification and affiliations.

Head of Finance - A senior non-uniformed manager responsible for the budget planning and resource management aspects of the prison. They also acted as an advisor to the Governing Governor and senior managers regarding financial management. Some had previously worked in administrative roles in prisons whilst others were recruited directly without prison experience. They were expected to have relevant professional qualification and affiliations.

Head of Psychology - A senior non-uniformed manager responsible for the psychological services provided by the prison, such as psychometric testing of prisoners, report writing and delivery of offending behaviour programmes. Generally they were experienced forensic psychologists who had worked in

prison psychology departments. They were expected to have relevant professional qualification and affiliations.

Area Manager – A senior civil servant responsible for a number of prisons in a geographical area. They acted as line manager to Governing Governors. They were generally experienced prison managers who had themselves been in the role of Governing Governor.

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