

THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED: Identities of Resistance and Docility Amongst the Boys in a Young Offenders' Institution.

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between identity and agency in a Young Offenders' Institution, through an empirical study at HMYOI Werrington in Staffordshire. It contends that 'docility' can be an intentional strategy; a product of the possession of agency rather than of its absence as Foucault would argue. Resistance and docility are seen as negotiated strategies in the processes of surviving imprisonment, necessitating sophisticated strategies of discretion in the application of the regime by uniformed staff. Resistant behaviour is conventionally seen as an indication of failure to internalise the regime, and docility of success. I suggest that failure to internalise the regime constitutes genuine survival, and docility the converse. Using Levi's metaphor, the drowned are the docile, the resistant the saved.

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INTRODUCTION

It is an egregious feature of early twenty-first century society that a substantial and ever increasing quantity of people will spend a significant portion of their lives segregated from the normal processes of human existence in prison. The quantity of time that these people spend in gaol is increasing, as is the severity of the privations imposed upon them by regimes such as that at Pelican Bay SuperMax Prison in California (Bauman 2000). We live in times that are characterised for some writers – notably Wacquant (*inter alia* 2002) by the carceral control of poverty. A circumstance in which the human effluent of the out-workings of *laissez faire* capitalism are housed in vast warehouses of humanity, the largest of which is ‘home’ to some 23,000 inmates (*ibid*: 372). In the eyes of other writers, we are returning to the position where punishment serves the expressive function of public revenge (Garland 1990, Liebling 2000) with ever increasing demands for ostentatious retribution. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that the calls of writers such as Mathiesen, Christie, Hulsman, de Haan, Cohen, Abel, Bianchi or van Swaaningen, for example – for abolition of our current carceral sanction will be heeded. The consequence of this is that failing a damascene event within the political and criminal justice structure of neo-liberal occidental states, one cannot conceive of a time when at least some members of our society will not be confined in some form of carceral institution. In these circumstances, it is incumbent upon the social sciences to inquire into what it is that we do to people when we so severely alter and control the milieu that they inhabit.

It will be the contention of this essay that one of the things that we do to people when we restrict their regular behaviour by confining them in prison is that we restrict or control the opportunities for the rightful constitution of the self. We restrict or control the expression of the prisoner’s view of himself by the enforced wearing of uniforms for example or by restricting his freedom to associate with whomsoever he chooses. We impose a complete block on the expression by

the heterosexual prisoner of himself as a subject of his sexuality where Foucault tells us that this aspect of the expression of our selves has become of such great importance in late modernity. We fundamentally control the time and the space within which performances and technologies of the self operate, and whilst this control is not total in the form of Goffman's Total Institution – modified forms of agency are available to the prisoner – such processes are severely limited by the practical inevitability of the prison process and sometimes, in addition, punitively. Practices of the self always operate within the confines of the particular institutions within which we find ourselves and within the limits that the flow of power permits within those institutions. The prison is of course a peculiar example of such an institution, and self building practices of those within the prison – staff, officers and prisoners – are subject to the discourses of the Secure Estate and the relationships of power they produce. Sykes (1958) argues that confinement inherently generates a number of “pains” or “deprivations”; he enumerates these as being the deprivation of liberty; the deprivation of goods and services; the deprivation of heterosexual relationships; the deprivation of autonomy; the deprivation of security (1958: 63-83). We might add to Sykes' list, restriction of the tools of self-constitution. The techniques of self building that are used by those in prison and the way that those practices figure in the social milieu of the prison is the subject of this essay. In particular, it will focus on the self-building technologies and aesthetics of those children² imprisoned at Werrington Young Offenders' Institution in Staffordshire.

² The term 'children' is not used emotively, although the imprisonment of such young people is an emotive issue. 'Children' is the term used by staff for the inmates at this prison.

ONTOLOGY

“All explanatory methodologies used to do practical social analysis are regulated by some ontology i.e. theory of the generic properties of social realities” Archer 1998: 72). This section will address extant sociological perspectives concerning the prison and concerning identity directly. It will also explore more broad sociological frameworks that may have a bearing on this study. On the broader front, it seems to this writer that the impact of the ‘agency / structure’ debate is of no little importance in this study. It will first examine the notion of identity and establish an orienting perspective for this study; an examination of the literature surrounding Sykes’ (1958) five deprivations and its impact upon self-constitution will follow. It will examine what major studies have contributed to conceptions of the inmate as agent or subject in order that we may establish an orienting perspective concerning the nature of agency and structure in prison and introduce to the study of prison the work of Margaret Archer.

IDENTITY

It has become commonplace that a rise in the importance of the individual as a process of late modernity exemplified in the work of Beck (2002) or Giddens (1991) for example, has produced a rediscovery of identity as a field of study in recent years. We speak of *rediscovery* since identity was considered of some importance in the earlier part of the last century as shown in the work of Mead (1967 [1938]) and Goffman (1959). Current debates surrounding identity are diverse in the extreme and have moved far from the enlightenment’s Cartesian *Cogito*. No attempt will be made here to provide a comprehensive view of the subject, nonetheless it is hoped that an adequate orienting perspective can be outlined for the purposes of this study.

Contemporary perspectives fall more or less into three not entirely discrete schools. The first of these, which might be termed 'The self as subject-of-language' approach draws primarily upon French theory and rests upon the work of Lacan and the particular notion of 'The Mirror Stage' and the onset of recognition of the self as other. It further relies upon the work of Derrida and the notion of *différance* and the 'wholly other'. Also present within this strand of thought is the Foucauldian notion of individuals as subjects of discourse. As du Gay (2002:2) puts it

...identities are constituted through the reiterative power of discourse to produce that which it also names and regulates; ... [they] are constituted in and through 'difference' and ... as a result, they are inherently dislocated (that is, dependent upon an 'outside' that both denies them and provides the conditions of their possibility); and ... 'subjects' are 'interpolated' by or 'sutured' to the subject positions made available in discourse through the operation of the unconscious.

A persistent critique of this position is that it appears to place little weight upon the individual as agent in his or her self constitution, leaving her at the mercy of the flow of power exercised through discourse and able to be only those people that their circumstance allows – that subject position into which they are sutured. In this respect, these writers have not broken away from their structuralist heritage and display a degree of determinism in their conception of the act of self-constitution. Such determinism denies endless improvisation and invention that characterises much self-constitutive behaviour.

A second strand of thought arises out of this approach and centres upon a largely Kleinian, object based, British strain of psychoanalysis. This group of writers (see *inter alia* Winnicott 1965; Menzies Lyth 1988; Rustin 1991; Lasch 1979) not only fail to acknowledge the role of agency in the creation of identity but produce the individual as subject of the unconscious and as such place him in an abstract realm away from the day to day struggles of constitution and

performance of identity. This is not so surprising when one considers that this work is a part of a therapeutic medicalised model of identity and as such is able to concentrate only on the interpretation of identity traits produced by the unconscious. This unconscious, however, does not permit consideration of the individual's relation to an 'external' social environment.

The third approach may be termed a socio-historical approach. The body of this work may be seen as an account of how people have historically come to relate to themselves as people of a particular sort. In this respect, as Rose (1996) points out, the Foucauldian project of 'genealogy' is rescued from its apparent sojourn amongst the 'subject-of-language' theorists and it is in this respect that Foucault's work becomes of interest to this study. Of significant importance in the process of subjectification – of how we come to view ourselves as a particular kind of person – are notions of 'techniques', 'practices' and 'aesthetics' of the self, an historical account of which is laid out in Foucault's (1979) 'History of Sexuality'³.

The key to what Foucault has to offer with regard to identity begins with his statement that the subject "is not a substance. It is a form" (1997:290) and as such it can and must be crafted. That is, that the self is not received or imposed but made. It is made of course within certain caveats. As Marx has said, we are each free to make our own history but not within circumstances of our own choosing. Foucault further writes, "modern man ... is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself". 'The History of Sexuality' and in particular Volume 3 'The Care of the Self' illustrates by reference to historical texts, the techniques by which people achieve a certain mastery over themselves and become the kind of person that they aspire to be – monogamous within marriage for example, or contemporarily, thin. Foucault's earlier work criticised the idea that individuals can be reduced to a biological singularity and Bourdieu removed the idea that

³ See also Martin Guttman & Hutton 'Technologies of the Self.'

we are the product of our biographies (1987) or of the tyranny of official taxonomies.

Nonetheless, these ideas were lacking in accounts of agency – a criticism that has been levelled at much of Foucault’s work – of how people act autonomously or come to resist the power of disciplinary and controlling discourses. In this later work, he contends that people ‘cultivate’ themselves through ‘arts of existence’ that not only provide the tools of agency but also establish the means of resistance to the power of disciplinary and controlling discourse. In this respect, Foucault’s account of arts of the self provides the foundation of the orienting perspective that this study will adopt with regard to identity.

A recent study of identity and imprisonment comes from Yvonne Jewkes (2002) who has the following to say when theorising identity:

[T]his study follows Jenkins’ belief that [both private troubles of milieu and public issues of social structure are] routinely related to, and entangled with, the other, and that the context of prisoners’ identities, a necessary precursor for the creation and maintenance of a convincing public persona is the construction of a healthy, private, interior sense of self, and vice versa.

Perhaps the most significant distinction between individual and collective identities ... is that the former emphasises difference whilst the latter stresses similarity. (p40)

She goes on to suggest that prisoners hold on to identities forged on the outside that are primarily related to “the continuation of occupations ... or of a particular tradesman ... typical of working class cultures.” (p41). She further asserts that;

The self ... might best be conceptualised as the emotional ‘core’ which people carry with them from context to context. It represents a place of retreat: when the public work of identity management becomes too arduous it is important to have a private place where the public façade can be put aside and one can be ‘oneself’.

This extraordinary notion suggests that the performance of identity is somehow false and that there is in contrast to it a 'true' self within as though both are not one and the same person. This appears to be in agreement with one of Morris & Morris' Pentonville inmates (1963:117)

"You need to put on a front in prison ... hide one's feelings and thoughts behind a cheerful expression... In prison one must behave and act like a con at all times, even if this is different from the way one would behave ... outside"

Apart from the internal inconsistency of this passage and its dubious language, Cohen and Taylor (1977:136) point out that in their findings this simply is not the case. She spends time considering, in the context of her study of the role of the media in constructing masculine identities in prison, a quantity of 'cultural studies' literature but manages to ignore the strong contention from that tradition that identities are no longer formed primarily by reference to one's occupation in a society where there are few 'jobs for life' and at least short term unemployment is rife.

The most significant criticism of Jewkes conception of identity, however, must be levelled at the dualism within her model. The notion that we have two kinds of identity, a public, group identity founded on notions of similarity, and a private 'true' identity where we harbour notions of difference. Firstly, public identities of similarity are always founded upon and at the expense of other people's otherness.⁴ It is axiomatic that notions of similarity and otherness are of necessity simultaneously present in our conception of our selves as individuals. It is not logical to speak as though we can consider the notion of similarity without we consider otherness; one is constructed *solely* of the mirror image of the other and in consequence similarity and otherness cannot form a structural dichotomy within the individual's identity as Jewkes insists. Second, the medicalised notion that the private 'self' is somehow *echt* and "healthy" (p40) and the public *ersatz* represents a misunderstanding of the role of the private and the public in the act of self

⁴ see Bauman 1995 'The making and Unmaking of Strangers'.

constitution. Supporters of Jewkes' position might argue that we all know people who pretend to be something that they are not, that is that their performances of self are somehow fake. It is conceded that there are those who fabricate identities for themselves to evade the law, for example or who pretend to be policemen or doctors, for example, in order to dupe people. To assume that these people are exhibiting a false aspect of themselves is to fall into the trap of Bourdieu's 'biographical illusion' (1987). These people notwithstanding, we are left with 'Walter Mitty' characters, and those whose behaviour simply seems out of place. The Walter Mittys of this world fantasise about being something that they are not, others more subtly misread the constraints of the discourses of their milieu, they exhibit what we often describe as affectation. In either case, it is a mistake to assume that what these people produce as performances of self is somehow false. The performance that they make is as much a part of the interplay between their private selves and social reality as any other aspect of their performance of self. Bourdieu frequently speaks of people as virtuosi in dealing with the social world, perhaps it would be more realistic to suggest that we all exhibit varying degrees of competence in our performances of self and that some people's performances leave more to be desired than others.

This dualistic view of identity also provides for the misguided use of phrases such as racial identity, gender identity, class identity and many others that occur in so much writing about identity. Such things are real but they are not identities they are solidarities – they constitute 'identifying with' – and as such are part of the historical, socio-cultural knowledge that informs the *processes* of self-constitution, they cannot constitute the 'snap-shot' across all these processes that constitutes identity.

A particularly transparent picture may be gained by engagement with Bourdieu's notion of Habitus. Habitus for Bourdieu consists of the habitual or typical condition and as such, represents for the purposes of this study the base condition of the reflexive processes of the self. It consists of the 'knowledge' both rationally conscious and unnoticed, (or at the level of Giddens' practical consciousness) of all previous states, of things we have been and things we have done and of the things that others have been and done and the relationships between them, indeed the entirety of our socio-cultural background. It exists, trivially (Jenkins 1996), inside the heads of actors. "It exists in, through and because of the practices of other actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of their environment; ways of talking, ways of moving, ways of making things, or whatever." (*ibid*: p74). It further consists of our "practical taxonomies" that are at the heart of the generative schemes of the habitus. These are generative schemes of the body, male/female, hot/cold, up/down etc that are rooted in the real perception of the world through the senses. For Bourdieu, the habitus manifests itself in the bodily 'hexis' the ... permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking ... The principles embodied (sic) in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation. (Bourdieu 1988:123 cited in Jenkins 1996:75)

Or captured by Sartre in his description of a café waiter "trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium" (1969:59); a part consciously chosen, part product of practical consciousness performance of self through minute, subtle somatic displays drawn from his view of himself and his view of others and the expectations and constraints embedded in the relationships between them.

Whilst it is not accepted that Bourdieu's determined and fixed notion of the 'hexis' is an adequate account of the relationship between the historical repository of the habitus and the identity of the individual and that Foucault's more plastic conception of the 'arts' of the self

more adequately fits the bill, the notion of habitus as representing the sum of historical social and cultural 'knowledge' of oneself will be adopted by this study.

We are all 'works in progress' we are all in the process of becoming. What we become is limited by our knowledge of our selves, our history and of our potentialities, it is further limited by the power of discourse, and in this respect we are partially although not entirely sutured to the subject positions that are provided for us. When we are reflexive about the work in progress and our degree of satisfaction with its previous manifestations we engage within our imagination with the possibilities and aesthetics of what we would like to be. Our private acts of self-building are acts of aspiration. Our public self is the performance, within the limits of the constraints of structures, of the work at its current state of completion. What we do in public is the outworking of what we aspire to be. In these respects, the 'private' aspects of self-building seem to be largely consistent with Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the public aspects with his notion of practice.

Identity then for the purposes of this study is perceived as being a work of historically and socially contingent agents. It is a work of 'infinite invention'. It is a process entered into both privately and publicly and is a work of reflection and aspiration. It is undertaken secretly in our imagination and overtly in public performance. It is reflexive when we consider what we have done and been, and it is aspirational when we consider how we would like to be, how we would like to change. Its scope is expanded by our observation of others and diminished by the power of structures. It is sometimes conscious and rational and it is sometimes merely a product of 'practical consciousness' or the 'habitus'. It is built by acts of ostentation and of discrete detail. It is made by the conspicuous consumption of the purchase of a mansion or by the small purchase of a mouse mat. It is obvious that we build a different self when we buy a Rolls Royce

from when we buy a 'people carrier'. It is less obvious that we build different selves when we do smaller things. When a man wears his shirt undone at the collar he is indulging in a self building act, not just in choosing to leave his collar open but in how many buttons to undo; one – starchy, two – louche (perhaps). If he smokes he makes a choice – rational or at the level of 'practical consciousness' – to hold his cigarette at the tips of his fingers – effete, between his knuckles – conventional, right down between his fingers near his palm – macho, or between two fingertips and his thumb, the lit end pointing into his fist – hard. The choice is imagined privately and performed publicly within the social environment and that environment's constraints. Almost everything we do or think forms an act of self-constitution. In this processual view, identity must be the expression of the current state of play in the continuing act of self-building. It is characterised by "the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation" (Bourdieu 1977:79). Or as Benhabib (1992) encapsulates it

... The subject of reason is a human infant whose body can only be kept alive, whose needs can only be satisfied, and whose self can only develop within the human community into which it is born. The human infant becomes a "self", a being capable of speech and action, only by learning to interact in a human community. The self becomes an individual in that it becomes a "social" being capable of language, interaction and cognition. The identity of the self is constituted by a narrative unity, which integrates what "I" can do, have done and will accomplish with what you expect of "me", interpret my acts and intentions to mean, wish for me in the future etc.

Thus identity is seen as an abstract concept; the current state of play in the continuous development of the self, which development is the product of reflexive engagement between the private self and the habitus and, through performances or practices of the self, with other individuals and with systems and structures. Phrases such as self-constitution, self-building, performances of the self etcetera, indicate therefore the processes that generate identity, which is the abstract 'snapshot' across all states, and processes involved.

SYKES DEPRIVATIONS AND IDENTITY

Sykes' catalogue of deprivations suffered by inmates in prison forms the backbone of work on prisons in the U.K., the U.S.A. and Europe (Jewkes 2002: 1). Little has been written about the deprivation of the tools of self-constitution, two notable exceptions are Bosworth (1999) 'Engendering Resistance' a study of identities of power and resistance in women's prisons and Jewkes' (2002) 'Captive Audience', which explores the use of the media as a survival strategy for prisoners in constructing an institutional masculinity. I will address the issue of the constitution of identity later and turn now to what has been written about the prison experience.

LIBERTY

It is assumed by most that the greatest hardship experienced by a prisoner, and the core of that which constitutes his punishment is the deprivation of liberty (Foucault 1977, Ignatief, 1978, Garland 1990, Bauman 2000). Bauman in particular notes that it is in direct contrast to the enhanced freedoms of late modern society that this restriction of liberty is to be placed, and that it is this aspect of the loss of liberty that makes this privation the most keenly felt. Similarly Bauman (1995) articulates the way in which societies generate their own identities by defining their outsiders so, also, Durkheim (1964) indicates that the prisoner's loss of liberty is the physical manifestation of society's expression of collective consciousness – he is both spiritually and physically cast as other.

Goffman (1961a) and, *inter alia* Caird (1974), Coyle (1994), Gibbs (1982), Sapsford (1983), Liebling (1992,) argue that the most traumatic time for the inmate is his induction, a period when the establishment, for both practical and psychological reasons applies the most dehumanising of its impositions where as Goffman puts it "his *self* is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified." (1961a: 23 my emphasis). The isolation felt by the inmate is not simply from society on the outside, but his immediate strategy for survival of the self typically

causes him to retreat into himself (Goffman 1961b) and reject the society of other prisoners and of those on the outside. This is referred to as 'situational withdrawal'. Others exhibit what Goffman calls 'colonisation' and reject the outside world and concentrate on progressing within the inmate world. Goffman's third adaptation 'intransigence' is related in part to deprivation of security in that the prisoner accepts a greater degree of threat to himself before retaliating. 'Conversion' Goffman's fourth adaptation, involves the prisoner rejecting his own values, acquiescing to those of the institution, and becoming a 'model prisoner'. Clearly, the adaptations of 'situational withdrawal' and of 'conversion' are of significant interest to this study.

MATERIAL GOODS

It is contended by many in the field of the sociology of consumption that, following from the work of Barthes, Levi-Strauss and Baudrillard that the act of consumption has become as self-constituting an act as the production of the consumed items used to be. In Miller's terms, the social act of consumption "translates the object from being a symbol of estrangement and price value to being an artefact invested with particular inseparable connotations" (Miller 1987). The goods people buy are a reflection of the self they wish to project (Bostyn and Wright 1987: 140). Hebdige (1989) argues that the possession and consumption of material things has to do with the expression of aspiration – of what we want to *be*. This has particular resonance with the notion of the self as performance, to which I shall return later. In this circumstance, the deprivation of material objects constitutes a threat to the self and the denial of these things a greater privation than at any time previously in the history of the carceral institution.

AUTONOMY

The loss of autonomy in prison is of necessity – and sometimes in addition punitively – total. Identity is a crucial issue here also, as Mathiesen (1965) argues; the inmate is 'infantilised'. He is required to rely upon a generalised notion of fairness from a surrogate parent in the form of the staff, which seldom materialises. Autonomy rests, for the prisoner in choices about the very mundane. The field of Cultural Studies has provided much literature concerning constitutive acts as performances *inter alia* Fiske (1989), Silverstone (1994), Miller and McHoul (1998). Amongst these performances may be numbered exhibitions of overt masculine posturing in the gymnasium or more mundanely, the ritualisation of cleaning one's teeth or of lying in the cell reading. Pertinent to this study, some acts of non-compliance or defiance may constitute performances and ritualisations. As Abercrombie and Longhurst argue, "all performances

involve a degree of ceremony or ritual” (1998: 41) and in the situation of deprivation of autonomy the smallest of ritual acts may be imbued with constitutive power⁵.

HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

The deprivation of heterosexual relationships has bearing on self-constitution in that a significant aspect of the constructed self is sexuality (Foucault 1979). The masculine self is maintained most obviously (Jewkes 2002: 18) discursively in overt verbal displays of masculine excess. Misogyny is commonplace as are ‘embellished’ accounts of the number of conquests and the number of children fathered (Thurston 1996). In the inmate’s world, prisoners are expected to be more masculine than in the outside world (Sim 1994). Narcissism of the body, as related above with respect to autonomy, plays a significant part in the expression of the sexual self and here in prison, masculine identities constructed around the body may carry the anti-establishment sub-cultural connotations that are to be found in the outside world. Homosexual relationships are commonplace and can serve as acts of non-compliance in a strongly masculinized regime.

SECURITY

The deprivation of security may be the most pervasive of all Sykes’ deprivations in that inhabiting a prison means living alongside other felons. Whereas Sykes (1958) found a degree of comradeship between prisoners, later studies have found a more heightened sense of the risk posed by cohabitation with other inmates. Requests to spend periods in solitary confinement are not uncommon (Brittan 1977). Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that inmates and staff alike inhabit a world of enhanced risk, if this were not alleviated in some way the institution would cease to function and in consequence prisoners develop risk averse strategies. Such risk

⁵ This is in line with Goffman’s Interaction Ritual thesis (1967)

aversion may not in itself impinge upon self-constitution but the strategies which result may be seen to constitute a further encroaching upon already restricted autonomy.

AGENT, SUBJECT AND STRUCTURE IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF PRISONS

The above notwithstanding, Sykes' account has been criticised, along with much prison sociology for an inadequate account of agency. Indeed much prison literature adopts a 'black box' approach to its descriptions of the sociology of prisons. Regimes and conditions are seen as the input to the box and behaviours as the output of the box. Little has been asked of what is in the box. What is in the box is the 'selves' of the incarcerated prisoners; selves which are the product of both agency and docility. Views such as those of Scraton (1991: 62) that "[I]f in most British prisons is an unrelenting imposition of authority" ignore the fact that there is significant variation between prisons within the Secure Estate and in consequence much variation in responses to regimes: Werrington, the site of this research is regarded as a relatively 'soft' regime, whereas Stoke Heath YOI just down the road is regarded as being more severe⁶. Whilst it is axiomatic that in the long run prisons are dominative institutions and that the regime has the power to restrain and control the lives of prisoners in the most minute aspects, should such constraint be necessary all the time, prisons would be unable to function. Prisons for the most part exhibit a sort of tacit consensus that allows staff and prisoners to co-exist in relative stability. As Sparks *et al* (1996:37) put it; prisons often "generate their own peculiar yet 'ordinary' and 'mundane' form of life". Furthermore, any narration of the life of the prisoner that neglects his or her agency is of necessity deterministic, a position that ignores the endless improvisatory capacity of the human spirit and a position that this writer rejects. Any adequate account of prison life requires an account of how agency and docility operate within the confines of the prison's strictures.

⁶ During the period of my acquaintance with the prison at Werrington a child was moved from the relatively soft environment there to a notoriously severe prison in Northumberland because he was particularly disruptive at Werrington.

Whilst it is possible to begin an account of the sociology of prisons with 'prisonisation', which Clemmer (1940) conceives of as being analogous to 'Americanisation', as indicated above, it is more conventional to begin with Sykes' (1958) 'The Society of Captives' and not unjustified in the light of the significant influence on prison sociology of this work. For Sykes, prisons generate unique patterns of interaction. Such uniqueness is understandable in Sykes' view in that the prison is physically impermeable to other 'conventional' forms of interaction by virtue of its impenetrable exterior wall. Driving these unique forms are what have become Sykes' five deprivations. In the face of these privations, Sykes' prisoners exhibit certain adaptations. These range from the individualistic, self-sufficient 'ball buster' to the socially oriented 'real man'. Both, in Sykes' view attempt to retain their sense of self, the first by continual disruptive, abusive, violent defiant behaviour, the other by stoic acquiescence. There are however several problems with this account. Sykes has been criticised for being overtly functionalist and falling into a logical trap common to functionalists that an event can be explained by its outcome. The result of this for Sykes is that it introduces a false systematicity into his understanding. Second, Sykes appears to be unaware of the permeability of the prison to outside influence, a situation shown to great effect by Jewkes' study of the use of the media in the generation of hegemonic masculinities within prison. Thirdly, having ignored the permeability of the prison wall, he loses his justification for the uniqueness of prison society and indeed as has been pointed out by Irwin and Cressey (1962) much of what goes on in prison is not peculiar to prisons at all (Cited in Sparks *et al* 1996: 37). Finally he appears unaware of the large variation that exists within different prisons a truth attested to by recent studies that gender the prison experience notably Bosworth (1999) and Carlen (1983). The sum of this is that the agent is free only to *re-act* to the unique circumstance in which he or she finds him or herself and freedom to act in accordance with 'conventional' social interaction where such interaction does not contravene the dictates of

the regime is glossed over. The inmate is in consequence seen as no more than the subject of the strictures of his imprisonment.

Mathiesen's (1965) 'Defences of the Weak' presents us with a view, analogous to that of Sykes, of power relations within prison. However, Mathiesen's view resides further along the continuum of relations between agency and subjectivity, investing the Prison with near immutable power. Whereas for Sykes, adaptations such as prisoner solidarity alleviate some of the effects of the privations of incarceration and remove some of the effect of formal rewards and punishments, for Mathiesen, such solidarity is overstated. Mathiesen argues that prisoners are more or less totally reliant upon the prison staff for their daily requirements, which may be withheld or given freely with relative impunity and as pointed out above, the inmate is 'infantilised', being required to rely upon a generalised notion of fairness from a surrogate parent in the form of the staff, which seldom materialises. This Mathiesen characterises as 'illegitimate patriarchy' (Mathiesen 1965: 100). It is illegitimate because it is discretionary and often personal and its unpredictability (like panopticism) increases its power. Mathiesen contends that in this circumstance inmates, by virtue of being in such a weak position, are forced to accept the norms and values of the regime if they are to have any effect upon the distribution of such benefits as the staff may be pleased to hand down. Once again it will be apparent that for Mathiesen, the inmate is the subject of the regime, all autonomy has been removed from him. Indeed such deprivation of autonomy is more acute in Mathiesen's account than that of Sykes. The two studies were undertaken in very different establishments; Sykes' in a high security, long-term American prison, Mathiesen's in a Norwegian 'therapeutic' institution and this may account for the difference in the two accounts. However, both accounts may be regarded as structuralist and as such, neither imbues the inmate with any significant degree of agency.

Consequently, these accounts diminish the capacity of the inmate for conscious 'free will' responses to their environment.

We turn now to the work of Erving Goffman. Goffman's notion of the 'total institution' is perhaps the most pervasive and extreme account of an inmate's subjugation to the structure of the regime. It is Goffman's contention, that it is in the nature of such institutions that they should control their inhabitant's lives in the minutest detail. These institutions include warships, barracks, boarding schools, asylums and prisons. They achieve their total control through bureaucratisation, routine, 'role stripping', 'mortifications of the self' frequently employed most intensively during periods of initiation to the institution; hence, head shaving, body searches, allocation of numbers, removal of personal effects, degrading initiation ceremonies or the wearing of uniforms. Of interest for this study is Goffman's contention that such practices constitute an assault on the pre-existing self and by inference the practices of self-constitution within the total institution. It must be borne in mind, however, that Goffman is talking primarily about psychiatric institutions where, it is argued, such control is more acute than in men's prisons. The waters are further muddied by the observations of writers such as Carlen or Dobash that more medicalised interventionist approach is evident in women's prisons. This notwithstanding, Goffman's analysis presents an extreme account of the inmate as subject of his incarceration. Nonetheless, Goffman's account begins to address the everyday, uncontested nature of some of the prison experience in his description of routine recursive activities that do not come into conflict with the structure, and indeed may not constitute conscious 'rational' behaviour but be closely related to the notion of practical consciousness.

Perhaps seen as the most forceful exposition of the inmate as subject is the work of Michel Foucault, it must be pointed out, however, that 'Discipline and Punish' was not intended

primarily as a study of the workings of prisons but as an exposition of the flow of power in prison as instrument and primary exemplar of the flow of power and disciplinary control in late modernity as a whole. Further, through the examination of the practices ('statements') of punishment in different 'epistemes', to expose the non-inevitability of contemporary practices and discourses. Central to Foucault's historically constructed account are the notions of panopticism, and control. From his observations of techniques of surveillance, taxonomy, disciplinary training and routinisation, he presents a detailed picture of the material practices of modern prisons. This concentration on the minutiae of penal technique leads Garland to assert that Foucault's account is redolent of, and indeed goes beyond those of Clemmer, Sykes and Goffman. Foucault's totality of control relies upon the observation and control by the prison of the tiniest detail of daily life in prison and its strict regulation within time. Further, it relies upon an absolute panopticism. These observations – to put it very crudely – lead Foucault to place the inmate as the subject of the flow of power-knowledge and discipline within the prison, producing them as the now famous 'docile bodies'.

Clearly Foucault's is another account that rejects or ignores the agentic nature of the individual prisoner. Its insistence on individual normalizing practices has been further criticised in the light of managerialist developments involving 'batch' processing of prisoners. As Sparks *et al* observe, further managerialist approaches mean that prison establishments are frequently unconcerned with the 'soul' of the prisoner – as Foucault would have it – giving rise to the case that "Big Brother may be ignoring you" (p65). As with other writers Foucault appears to ignore or be unaware of the significant degree of variation between and indeed within prisons, furthermore, his work focussing as it does upon Victorian institutions, has little to say about contemporary prisons. Nonetheless, the range of different approaches to imprisonment

throughout western democracies has thrown up at least one prison with which this writer suspects Foucault would be most familiar, namely Pelican Bay in California (see Bauman 2000).

The above accounts' concentration upon the inmate as the subject of his circumstances – as has been discussed earlier – restrict conceptions of self building to post-structuralist or psychoanalytical models based on Lacanian formulations of the individual as the product of 'diferance', a group of positions that we do not hold to be adequate in view of their implicit rejection of the improvisational capacities of the rational or 'practically conscious' actor. Thus, we move now to two accounts that allow in some measure the agency of the incarcerated individual

The work of Taylor & Cohen ('Psychological Survival' 1972) focuses far less upon the systematicity of the prison and more upon the prisoner's own strategies of sustaining meaning and identity particularly during long term sentences. As Sparks *et al* eloquently put it Cohen and Taylor's nuanced account of what prisoners say and feel, and their demonstration that prisoners do not passively *undergo* imprisonment but rather *live* it is theoretically crucial. In demonstrating that prisoners reflect upon their predicament and respond to it not automatically but strategically *Psychological Survival* returns to prison studies the issue of agency which an exclusive stress upon the systemic, organizational and dominative features of penal institutions too readily occludes.

This is achieved by placing the prisoner at the centre of the research, concentrating on his friendships, relationships with those on the outside, techniques of managing time and strategies for resisting threats to privacy. The research took place at the high security wing at HMP Durham and examined prisoners' discourse in the form of semi-structured interviews conversations and prisoners' letters. Agency is admitted in the form of "making out" and

“fighting back” but what might be considered ‘structure’ – namely staff and officers – are marginalized in this account. This places this account on the opposite side of the ‘agent / subject’ debate to the other accounts mentioned above, but nonetheless on one side of a dualism, the very notion of which has been criticised most notably by Giddens (1984) and by Bourdieu (1977).

Few works on prisons have avoided standing on one side or another of this dualism; regarded as the “current state of the art in British penological thinking” (Bosworth, 1999) Sparks *et al* ‘Prisons and the Problem of Order’ is the most significant of them. This work, based on research at Albany and Long Lartin dispersal prisons in 1987 and 1988, commissioned by the Home Office, draws especially upon the work of Giddens and in particular his notion of the ‘dialectic of control’. This is the notion that there is always space in a social relationship where some sort of struggle can take place, even when not all parties in a relationship have equal access to power and which exists because although power is inherent in all relationships it is never used absolutely. This study also challenges both the work of radical commentators like Joe Sim and of conservative writers like DiIulio. It opens prison study up in the realm of its infiltration from the outside in the form of ‘imported selves’ following Cohen and Taylor and from other socio-political influences from outside. It lays heavy reliance on Beetham’s (1991) Legitimation of Power as providing the basis of prisoners understanding of fairness in the actions of staff and consequently in their reaction to the behaviour of staff. However, the use of Beetham’s notions of legitimacy and fairness leave this account open to criticisms based on Bourdieu’s conception of *méconnaissance*⁷. Furthermore, Prisons and the Problem of Order does not address the ‘self conception’ of prisoners or their techniques of self constitution, and in

⁷ False consciousness in Marx.

consequence fails to deal with a significant motivating factor in the lives of prisoners and a significant forum for their agency.

The ontological social theory used to identify the interacting elements in Sparks' study is primarily that of Giddens. Whilst Giddens upholds duality over dualism⁸ and rules out the existence of agency without structure and vice versa, he conceives of structures as being 'virtual', their existence is only sustained, and their generative force is only realized, through their practical knowledgeable application by agents. Structures are both "the medium and outcome" of agency (Giddens 1984:23-7). This gives structure only a very weak ontology. Furthermore, of significant impact upon this study, Giddens' conceptualisation of structure and agency as a duality denies the ontological discreteness of the two elements that the current study intends to investigate the relationship between – there can be no analytically separate relation between them to be investigated. Whilst the 'dialectic of control' allows constant negotiation within situations of inequality of power, the prisoner is never left with the option not to work within that structure. Ultimately his dissent will have little impact upon the use of state power to imprison. Thus, the structure must be seen to have an ontology over and above the involvement of agents within it. It might be considered that Bourdieu's position rescues us from this problem in that he sees structures as being more concrete and agency more 'virtual', however this position sustains a residual determinism and as such denies the actor roles of resistance. The problem arises out of the belief in the duality (ontological identity) of the agent/ structure relationship. It is necessary to consider the two elements in the relationship as ontologically separate, that is, to consider the dualism (non-identity) of these elements. To this end, we turn to the work of Margaret Archer.

⁸ Duality; agency and structure are opposing forces in an ontological unity. Dualism; agency and structure are ontologically discrete.

The problem of the relationship between agency and structure as manifested through most of sociological history has its roots in two formulations; the reification of structure and the concept of the rational actor. The notion of the rational actor is thoroughly dismissed by Bourdieu for example as being, amongst other things, no more than the scientific replication of the actor's own fond illusion of autonomy (Jenkins 1992:73). The reification of structure is overcome by both Bourdieu and Giddens, through the notion of structuration – their belief in the duality (identity) of the relationship between structure and agency, a belief that produces a weak ontology for structure. However, for Archer, the choice is not between 'action' and 'system', but between a strong concept of social system that is nonetheless a product of action and a view that stresses a system's total isolation from action. Archer regards the polarization of the structure / agent debate and the consequent development of the notion of structuration as unnecessary and the product of the failure adequately to conceptualise either structure or agency (Archer 1979: 21).

Where duality is the distinguishing mark of the work of Giddens and Bourdieu, dualism is that of the work of Archer. She argues that it is possible to talk about structures or systems without reification, that is, without seeing them as autonomous entities divorced from the effects of the actions of human beings. Systems are seen to be emergent, relatively autonomous products of the actions of individuals. However, although produced by the actions of individuals they acquire powers that are not those of those whose actions generated them or of those who are conditioned by them. Whereas structuration theorists tend to deny the action of history and concentrate solely on the action of individuals in generating an immediate structure, and in consequence deny the actor any effect after the period of his action (or life), Archer sees structures as being historically contingent. Systems are the result of past actions and interactions; they condition the actions and interactions of those within the system such that the

emergent condition of the system is changed by them as they are by it. It is part of the ontological position taken in this study that the prison is a prime example of structure in Archer's terms in that it exhibits emergent powers that are beyond those of those whose actions generate it and of those who are constrained by it. Clearly, its powers are beyond those who are constrained by it but it is not so clear how its powers are beyond those who generate it. Its powers are beyond those of the individual officers, and they are beyond the powers of the individual governors. The power of the prison system is beyond that of the governments who generate it in that its newly revived expressive function resides within the combined sensibilities of the entire populace and their desire for ostentatious retribution. Thus the power of the individual officer is emergent from social structures that include the everyday ordering of ordinary peoples lives, as well as from the assemblages of powerful relationships within the prison or Home Office.

Thus it is the ontological position of this essay that the fluid, socially and historically contingent and self generating actor in the form of the prisoner, interacts morphogenetically with the very real structure of the prison as a part of the prison service; as a part of society as a whole. Such morphogenesis constrains and enables change in both the prison and the identity of the prisoner, in that the processes of self-constitution, private and public, are negotiated in the interstice between structure and agent.

ISSUES OF METHOD

ACCESS

This study is based upon an acquaintance with Werrington Young Offenders' Institution, which began in April of 2003 and, it is hoped, will continue long into the future. Its beginnings were serendipitous in that I was asked to help in the preliminary stages of setting up an ESRC Case

Studentship to be offered at Keele in September 2004. The Youth Offending Manager had asked for an appraisal of a work placement scheme and I was asked to observe the processes involved and report to those setting up the case studentship in their deliberations about how to turn this appraisal into a PhD study on desistance. Thus, I was able to make contact with the Youth Offending Team Manager and through him the Governor. Further good fortune was evident in that The Governor and Assistant Governors and the members of the youth Offending Team were fully supportive of my research and of my access. However, prisons would not be prisons without access problems and a conjunction of illnesses and holidays, combined with lock downs, standing counts, cancellations of ‘the route’⁹, cancelled meetings and, in the absence of senior YOT staff, the Officers unending ability to insert new hurdles to deter the ingress of ‘outsiders’ meant that it took four months to arrange the interviews with the children on which this study is based. The most significant hurdle, which was not overcome, was the insistence that tape recorders were not allowed inside the prison and that the paperwork to overcome this would take a further four months. The prison was unable to ascertain whether it was *in loco parentis* and previously arranged interviews had to be scrapped in order to re-select from seventeen and eighteen year olds only. Eleventh hour demands from Security Officers for detailed examination of the questions I intended to ask threatened at one point to prevent the use of semi-structured interviews, and a late insistence on some form of formal ethical vetting further hindered the process. Both of the latter two were complied with but neither was examined in the end! Nonetheless, eight hours of interviews were arranged for the end of August and they took place on the 20th and 21st of that month.

⁹ The period and pathway of permitted movement of inmates within the prison .

THE SAMPLE

As mentioned above, the prison was not prepared to take responsibility for being *in loco parentis* and thus all the boys who were approached were either seventeen or eighteen. Boys were selected according to their position on the points league table for rewards and incentives¹⁰. A group of boys was approached from the top of the table and a group from the bottom. Initially, of the one hundred or so boys at Werrington, it had been intended to interview six individuals and to have two peer group interviews (Sasson 1995). However, a combination of advice taken and the observed dynamic of the earlier interviews persuaded me to see two further individuals rather than the groups, thus eight individual interviews of forty to fifty minutes were conducted. The length of the interviews was limited largely by the operation of 'the route'. Some of the ten boys on 'The Champions' League' at the top of the list were on work placements and were thus unavailable; these it may be argued were the most compliant boys. Nonetheless, three of the boys selected from the top were on 'Champions' League', and one was at the top of 'The Premiership'. Of the five young men on 'Division 2' only one was over sixteen, however, he was willing to speak to me, the other three were drawn from the bottom of 'Division 1'. All those who were approached volunteered to be interviewed, or, shall we say, at least come and spend an hour away from the normal routine, one at least expecting "a fit bird from Keele", he hid his disappointment well. The point here is that prisoners will do almost anything to break the routine and consequently, volunteering to be interviewed is no indication of them needing to tell their story. Nonetheless, everything that was said has been taken to be the truth for the purposes of this study, not least because it is not my place to judge these young men in any way,

¹⁰ A hierarchy of groups operates for the purpose of allocation of rewards and privileges. The boys are divided into four groups. At the top, the Champions League, these boys have a small wing to themselves with a pool table. They each have games consoles in their 'pads', stereos, televisions in addition to other telephone, association and telephone privileges. Below them, the premiership, minus XBoxes and some other privileges, and below them Division 1 and at the bottom, with little or no privileges Division 2. Division 1 is the default level, Division 2 representing a level of *deprivation* of privileges.

and further, because they know more the subtleties of truth or falsity and its varying merits within the institution than I ever could. All names have been changed.

DATA GATHERING.

The data were gathered from eight semi-structured interviews with boys from Werrington, lasting between forty and fifty minutes each. Some could have gone on much longer, some were hard work to get to forty minutes. The interviews were conducted in a vacant office in the Youth Offending Suite, a place which the young men find to be what we might call a discursively neutral space (as far as such a place is possible in prison) in that the young men are encouraged by the Youth Offending Team to bring any kind of issues that they have to them in an atmosphere of strict confidence. It was suggested to me by one of the YOT staff that it was rather like the chaplaincy in this respect. I was given the opportunity to make the 'office' as un-official looking as I could within the constraints of available furniture and so the desk was pushed against the wall and a coffee table and two comfortable chairs were found.

Semi-structured interviews were used, not least because of my own lack of experience in prison research and I anticipated young subjects having to 'lead' me somewhat through the minefield of my own naïveté. Anything more solid than a semi-structured interview would have allowed me more easily to stumble around in my own ignorance. Furthermore, I had only a broad idea of how I was going to approach the questions of identity and resistance and little or no idea to which questions inmates would respond. Avoiding my own inadequacies was of course only one reason for using semi-structured interviews. Such interviews allow the subject to develop his (in this case) own meanings for concepts used and help to avoid the researcher imposing his meanings and other assumptions on the interview. As Liebling puts it

... human feeling is the chief agent of realist research.

The moral maturity of a subject requires sensitivity to the inner states of others, seeing others as they are and not as they initially or superficially ‘appear’ (as the projections of our subjective fears and longings). Human feeling, George Elliot argued, is the chief agent of morality. ... Positivist science strips human beings of their dignity and purpose. It is based upon and creates a false vision of what it is to be human. Human sympathy can return the dignity of the individual responsibly to its place, centre stage.” (1999)

The most significant benefit however, in this case was the ability to follow leads thrown up by the young men, allowing them (at least in part) to guide me through the issues of importance.

As mentioned above, the interviews were not recorded but notes were taken during the interviews that were written up as soon afterwards as possible. It must be stressed therefore that whilst the text is treated as verbatim it is in fact a reconstruction based on my memory and the notes that I took. It was my decision to produce the data in the form of reconstructed conversations as close to those that had taken place in the interviews in order to give as much voice to the young men as possible. Whilst this places significant strain on the reliability of the data, it is hoped that what is presented may still be of some little value.

ANALYSIS

It may be considered that the inevitable editing that had taken place in the interview – in terms of selecting what was of sufficient importance to make notes about – constituted an initial open coding. This data was coded using the NVivo programme for analysing qualitative data. It was coded at ten different nodes; Body, Space, Resistance, Constraint, Compliance, Self, Masculinity, Uniformity (with other inmates), Variance (with other inmates), and Relationships. None of these is reducible to another, nonetheless they are all interrelated and of value in understanding the complex negotiation of self within the flow of power in prison.

The analysis focuses in particular on two of the above areas of self constitution, namely resistance, and compliance or docility. It will engage with the notion of the body and of space as sites of resistance and docility and will consider relations with the staff as exhibitions of the transgressive or docile selves of the young men.

THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED: IDENTITIES OF RESISTANCE AND DOCILITY AMONGST THE BOYS IN A YOUNG OFFENDERS' INSTITUTION.

RESISTANCE, DOCILITY AND THE BODY

This first passage will consider the body as a site of self-building through resistance. It will also engage with the body as a site of compliance or docility through the application of constraint to the embodied self.

“Van-Damme, he’s a *bad* fighter he is.”

When visiting various cells within Werrington I had been struck by the posters that the young men had on their walls. No kind stood out as being most common, however, they fell into only three types in the main; cars, scantily clad women, and pictures of violent film actors, in particular Jean-Claude van Damme. The first of these three groups of posters represents aspirational self-building in the realm of performances concerned with display of desirable consumer goods. This area will be discussed again when space is considered as a site of authorship of the self below. The most obvious thing about the boys at Werrington apart from their juvenility is their clothing. All, barring one or two exceptions, wear a grey sweatshirt, grey jogging trousers and a green or a yellow t-shirt. Performances of resistance are to be seen with the sweat suits, for example I observed boys wearing the trousers with the bottoms turned up and the waist slung so low as to place the crotch of the trousers close to the knees, in the fashion that trousers – following ghetto fashion – are worn by many boys on the outside. I also saw one

child wearing his trousers inside out, which gives them a different colour (also grey). The only aspects of their clothing that the boys are allowed to have sent in are their “own socks and boxers” and their own trainers. However, one young man on the Champions’ League came into the interview dressed somewhat differently.

I’ve not seen anyone else wearing a baseball cap or a white t-shirt, would you like to tell me about that?

“You get it when you’re on servery. Like you have to wear it when you’re serving but you can wear it when you like.”

You must be very proud.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t never wear a hat normally but I wear this all the time.”

Any aspect of appearance that will set one boy apart from another is cherished making the smallest acts of significance beyond what we could imagine on the outside. Thus, acts that we would not conventionally consider acts of resistance have strongly transgressive qualities in prison.

As parents with school age children will attest, the issue of the purchase of the ‘right’ trainers is a significant one. It is also the case in Werrington. As mentioned above, much has been written about performances of ostentatious consumption in the process of self constitution particularly in the realm of Cultural Studies and where the market is allowed access to the prison, in this case in the purchase of trainers it is also the case. The boys are not always straightforward about the significance of having their own trainers, or at least not to me. Perhaps this evasion is indicative of hiding significant things from an outsider.

“It’s important to have your own trainers ...”

...

Why do you think it’s important to have your own trainers?

“You don’t want to have to wear someone else’s trainers.”

You could wear prison issue.

“Suppose.” (*SHRUGS*)

Perhaps he was simply playing with an artless interviewer, nonetheless, other boys confirmed that the issue of one's own trainers was a significant one. The following is more indicative of the boys attitudes.

Is appearance important to you, like your trainers which appear to be quite flash?

“They're Nike Shocks... (*HE POINTS TO THE 'SPRINGS' ALL AROUND THE SOLE*) 130 quid, you have to have a good name. Some people have a cheap name, like they're nobodies.”

What happens if your folks haven't got enough money to buy any fancy trainers?

“Well, then they has to have like prison issue which is a poor name.”

The key word here is “nobodies”, the difference between those with Nike or Fila trainers and those with a “poor name” is not qualitative, it is quantitative, they do not have different selves they have less ‘self’. It is worthy of note that the boys making the most of the trainer issue were from Divisions 1 and 2, the young man contesting their importance was from the Champions' League. Nonetheless, whilst the alteration of clothing constitutes a performance of an identity of resistance, it might be argued that the issue of trainers is removed from the arena of resistance as it has been legitimised by the regime. However, the issue of trainers is an area where the boys have taken some control over their self-building in an environment that reduces the fora for their agency and as such may be seen as a performance of an identity of resistance.

Similar things may be said of the sculpting of the body. One of the things that is noticeable amongst the young men in Werrington is the distinct lack of overweight boys. Of course, one would hope that the prison service provides them with a healthy diet that prevents them from becoming overweight, furthermore, a healthy level of exercise is encouraged. Nonetheless, the boys have taken this activity over in a particular self-expressive way, namely the specific building of upper body musculature. There has been a recent upsurge in writing about the

body as a site of authorship and in particular where this activity concerns women, where it is considered as an act of resistance to hegemonic notions of femininity, however, such studies also speak of their subjects expressing satisfaction at taking control of at least one aspect of their lives (see in particular Tate 1999) which is the way that it may be seen in the circumstance of a male prison.

Not all of the boys want to build bigger upper bodies, one boy who had dreams of being a footballer before getting into drugs was only interested in being (aerobically) fit. "I don't want to get bigger ... I'm happy with the way I am now I'm off drugs ... I'm kind of glad I'm in prison". Nevertheless, this young man from the Champions' League was not the norm, most boys wanted to build their upper bodies and, for those at the bottom of the compliance structure, that was all they wanted to do. An insight may be gained from these two contributions the first from a boy at the bottom of Division 1

What do you like to do in the gym?

"Weights mostly and football."

Do you do fitness?

"No, just weights really, I like to build myself as much as I can."

What exercises do you do, do you do squats or clean and jerk?

"No, I just do me upper body."

Butterflies, curls, bench press?

"Yeah, that kind of thing, and the dumbbells you know, free weights."

UhHuh. Do you try to get more built than the other lads? Is it competitive?

"No, not really, it's not competitive, it's more like doing it together."

And this from a young man at the top of the Premiership.

Most of the lads only do upper body, why do you think that is, do they get more respect?

“They get a bit of respect but mostly only from their mates, mostly they’re all bullies, I in’t a bully I help people. I do all the meetings¹¹ I do.”

The suggestion of these two passages is that successful building of the upper torso constitutes the passage to membership of a club, perhaps of bullies or at least to membership of the same club *as* the bullies, thus regaining – in Sykes terms – some security in that they will no longer be the target of the bullies. The resistance being expressed by this authorship of the body is not to the regime but to the structure of inmate subculture, a subculture whose icon is Jean-Claude van Damme.

Why is that [that you would like to be like Jean-Claude van Damme]?

“Cause he’s built in’t he and he can fight and he’s fast.”

A further issue surrounding the practice of body sculpting is that of masculinity.

Why do you think it’s important to do upper body work?

“Cause it appeals to young women.”

Or summing up both the issue of a violent subculture and of masculinity.

“Some of them cause fighting ... they think they look better, or feel better ... they think it’s more man type ... having a triangular shape.”

The expression of masculinity is severely curtailed by the total restriction placed upon heterosexual relationships. From a methodological perspective I was not going to get into the issue of active expression of sexuality on a single, first meeting with any of the boys, nonetheless it was evident that expressions of masculinity formed a significant part of the boys’ self expression. However, body building, as Sim (1994) points out can become a sign of ‘double masculinity’ in prison as the inmate uses his body signature to become dominant in a society of overtly heterosexual males engaging overtly in homosexual acts. As some homosexuals on the

¹¹ Attends drugs awareness classes and cognitive behaviour courses etc.

outside like to build what is conventionally seen as a heterosexual sculpted body in resistance to the effete stereotype of the homosexual man, so the building specifically of the upper body amongst the boys at Werrington constitutes the building of an identity of resistance in the face of the deprivation of heterosexual relationships.

Whilst there are no (or minimal) rules governing the body as a site of authorship of the self, there are norms from the outside that are imported into prison. The counter cultural use of tattoos is imported into prison, as are the sub-cultural values associated with narcissism of the body as manifested in bodybuilding. The boys who do not adopt these transgressive performances of self must be seen as conforming, as being docile. These passages from boys on the Champions' League are indicative.

Is fitness important to you?

"I don't want to get bigger ... I'm happy with the way I am now I'm off drugs – I'm kind of glad I'm in prison."

...

"I used to be brilliant at football but I can't do it no more. ... I used to have a season ticket with me dad but he wouldn't take me when I got on drugs. ... I like to beat the other lads. ... I like running, I've got silver bronze and gold for running. ... I don't want to get built – I don't try to get muscley"

Is that important to some of the lads?

"Most of them want to get big – I seen one lad taking steroids.... Most of them don't talk about football, it's 'cause of the drugs. ... They're out doing drugs instead of following the football"

Which team do you support?

"Manchester city. ... The football supervisor supports Manchester United ... He won't pick me for the team ... I know I'm better than the others ... I can't hold on to the ball but I can score a lot ... Its always the idiots who get to play football."

What do the other lads think of you?

"Small ... You know big fish small fish"

What do you like to do in the gym?

“Just running like.”

Do you do weights?

“Sometimes”

What exercises do you like to do?

“I do the lot really.”

Squats? Curls? Bench press?

“Yuh.”

Do you think it's important to keep in shape?

“Not really.”

But you look as though you're quite fit.

“That's just me init?”

What do you like to do in the gym?

“Weights, tennis.”

Do you do fitness?

“No.”

What weights do you do?

“Bench press, curls, butterflies.”

You obviously do squats. (I HAD SEEN THIS YOUNG MAN ON THE PREVIOUS DAY WITH THE DISTINCTIVE REDENING RECTANGULAR BRUISE AT THE BASE OF HIS NECK THAT COMES FROM DOING SQUATS WITH VERY HEAVY WEIGHTS.)

“Yeah, not much though 'cause I've already got really heavy thighs.”

The point of interest in these last two passages is that the boys on Champions' League are less interested in building their bodies using weights and when they do use weights they tend to do a full body workout rather than the concentration on the upper body that is common lower down the compliance structure. Furthermore, docility is exhibited in their fitness regimes in that they adopt the fitness programmes that will be recommended to them by the professionals at

Werrington, whereas the building of the upper body alone is a rejection of the healthy regimes that the supervisors would recommend.

RESISTANCE, DOCILITY AND SPACE

In our daily lives, most of us engage in performances of the self that involve the personalisation of our space, in the office or at home. I vividly remember as a younger man, the work places of older men being swamped with tokens of their masculinity mixed with statements of familial identity and sporting solidarities. Contemporarily, – as evinced by so many television programmes – we spend hours making a personal statement of our homes. We have a clear picture of the kind of person we are or at least the kind of person that we would like to appear to be, both statements of identity, in this circumstance, commonly called ‘lifestyle’. The space available to the children at Werrington is much more limited, and in this respect we limit their opportunities for self-constitution. By and large this space is limited to the children’s cells or ‘pads’. Whilst visiting some of the cells I met a young man whose cell was empty. In it was his television, his computer game box, a bed, a towel, a toilet roll and two franked (official) letters. The walls had at some time been painted cream but were now covered in blue spots where the paint had been pulled off by previous occupants’ ‘blu-tac’. I’m sure there are worse places, but my mind was drawn to the notion of less eligibility. There will be few, even of the poorest in our society living in a space so devoid of humanity. Furthermore, I have never seen a child in such abject misery and hollowness; the child, like the room was empty. The few cells that constitute ‘the block’ were similarly empty, however, they were empty in order to inflict punishment, this young man’s cell was empty because, amongst other things, he had no visitors to bring him things. He also had not earned enough money to buy shower gels or room fresheners or bottles of shampoo. Even in prison there is a big gap between rich and poor and capitalism of a type is practised in the trade of such goods as this boy was unable to afford.

These goods – bottles, room fresheners posters and rosary beads – are the objects on which the prison's equivalent of self-constitution through ostentatious consumption on the outside is based.

The young man's room smelled overpoweringly of adolescent male, he said, addressing the officer who stood at the door "It stinks in here miss." and asked for a mop to clean the cell and freshen it up a bit, but the Officer said that she had more important things to do. As Heisenberg points out, we cannot observe something without it being changed by our observation. That young man may have had to put up with a stinking cell longer than he ought because I was observing on the wing.

That young man's cell was thrown into such sharp contrast by the vibrant colourfulness of the other cells. These cells are adorned – as I now learn are the cells in many prisons – with quantities of bottles of bright coloured shower gel, shampoo, deodorant and round pink air-freshener disks. These bottles, along with sweets biscuits, breakfast cereals and other comestibles are arranged in rows and pyramids. One young man suggested that he had thirty or forty bottles.

We get posters, photographs we draw some more toys up in art ... we has rugs and toiletries ... stereo, air fresheners ... we just make it look full. Look at this room, (*REFERING TO THE INTERVIEW ROOM*) it's empty, it's horrible you couldn't live in here it's too bare."

Do you buy those rosary beads?

"Yeah, I've got about ten pair."

In addition, cheap plastic rosary beads are collected and arranged across the front of the canteen¹² shelves like a bead curtain. Identifying self-constitutive acts of resistance here may appear less than straight forward in that it was not clear what the rules were, however, I was lead to understand that the rules applied equally across the gaol and that only two of each, shower gel

¹² The militaristic title of the free-standing shelves in the boys' cells.

shampoo and room fresheners were allowed and that posters were only allowed on the picture board. Clearly then, the rules were being significantly less stringently applied by the officers on the main wing than they were on the separate wing occupied by those on the Champions' League. The fact that the rules are not being applied on the main wings does not stop the decorating of the cells with an excess of these items constituting acts of self-constitutive resistance; the resistance is to the rule not to its (lack of) application.

I asked all of my respondents "What do you do to make your cell nice?" or "What do you do to personalise your cell?". However, rather than talk about what they did to personalise their cells, by and large they were keen to talk about the constraints that were placed upon decorating their cells. This revealed considerable use of discretion on the part of the officers (see Liebling 2000) in particular, the boys on the Champions' League were most vocal in describing the limitations to their self-expression where their cell was concerned as the following attest.

What do you do to personalize your pad?

"I have rows of biscuits. I make it all lined up like a shop"

...

"You just make sure it's clean and tidy – you can get minus points or something and it might affect your early release or something"

Do you think it's tougher with things like keeping your room tidy when you're on Champions' League?

"Oh yes, on the other wings you can be a real slob and they don't do anything but when you're on champions you've got to keep your room tidy and stuff and like you can only have two each shower gels and deodorants and stuff."

Are there any things that you do to make your cell nicer?

"No, when you're on champions you can only have two shower gels and two shampoos."

What do you do to make your pad nice?

“You can’t do much on champions, you have to clean it and scrub it every day ... you can only have two of each like air fresheners and stuff.

Are you less able to personalise your pad when you’re on champions?

“Yeah”

What about the rosary beads?

“Yeah we get lots of those ... 39p from the canteen ... someone told us you can’t get them on the out so John (his cell mate) he’s buying loads so he can sell ‘em when he goes out.”

...

“[you decorate your canteen] there’s sweets on one section crisps on another cornflakes on another, you don’t eat them, just make them for show really.”

What about posters?

“We’re not really allowed posters, well only on the picture board. We’ve got a big union jack on the end of the bed and we’ve got lots of women on the canteen they come and take them down but we just puts them back up.”

What do the officers do then?

“Well, we don’t do it too much cause you can loose your early release when you’re on Champions.”

Despite these protestations, their cells are more decorated than they suggest, but they are considerably less decorated than those on the main wings where resistance is stronger –

You have your canteen where you keep all your paperwork, we have posters, only you’re not allowed posters all over the wall ... on the old wing you could have posters but now with the new governor you can only have them on your picture board, so we put them on the end of the bed ‘cause that’s not on the wall is it. ... The screws’ll come and rip your posters up and tell you off. ... We’ve got 30-40 shower gels.

Thus the personalisation of their cells must be seen as performances and statements of identities of resistance to this level of control despite the lack of enforcement, and the adherence to the rules, notably of all those on Champions’ League, constitutes a degree of docility.

Those arguing that there is always room for the negotiation of the prisoners' agency might find solace in this from one of the conformists on Champions' League.

Me and my mate, we got the cleanest pad. We mop it everyday and scrub the walls and tidy it. We set out our stuff. We always make the bed pack up. Not everyone does that.

These boys clearly think that the rules are a good thing and are happy more than to comply. It is their choice, an agentic act. However, one must consider that they are not in the outside world, they are in confinement, where nothing is as it seems. One may conjecture that these boys would not keep their rooms at home so clean and tidy. What these boys are doing is resisting the uniformity that they feel is being imposed upon them from the other boys, as one of them said to me,

I don't listen to what the other lads listen to – all *duff duff duff* – I listen to what I like. They don't listen to it 'cause they like it but 'cause everybody else listens to it. They turn it up loud with the doors open.”

Furthermore, it is more than likely that what we witness here is an example of Bourdieu's *méconnaissance* in that they are no longer responding to the constraints, punishments and rewards but have come to believe that what is expected of them in this military style existence is legitimate and the norm on the outside.

RESISTANCE DOCILITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

With the degree of discretion that is placed in the hands of the officers, it is not surprising that relationships with the officers become “instruments of Power” (Liebling 2000: 333). “The discretionary use of very high levels of power without recourse to a set of principles to guide its use leaves a wide legitimacy deficit” (*ibid* 349). That the boys at the bottom of division 1 and on division 2 express below.

How do you get on with the officers?

“Some of them are twats.”

Why do you say that?

“Cause they stitch you up.”

Have you been stitched up?

“Yeah, loads of times”

Can you tell me about it?

“Like you ring the bell to get a toilet roll and they tell you [the bell is] only for emergencies, and then they’re sniggering an making comments behind the door.”

...

“I was padded up with John and that black governor doesn’t want me to be with John so the screws separated us.”

What did you do?

“I smashed up me cell and they put me on the block.”

Why do you think Governor Jones wanted to separate you?

“Well, we was together on the out, we was convicted together.”

What were you convicted of?

“Racially aggravated assault. We was beating up these Asians only it wasn’t us it was the Asians what was doing the beating up.”

And this is why the governor wanted to separate you?

Yeah, we’d been in about a week and we had some trouble with the teacher. Any way when they asked us about it we admitted to being friends. They had us on report so when the governor found out we was friends he decided to split us up so I flooded me cell and trashed it.”

What do you think the other lads think of you?

“Some of ‘em might think I’m a twat.”

Do you think they’re right? (smiling)

“Maybe.” (smiling)

You said earlier that you had refused to go on some nickings. Can you tell me about that?

“On education we are the worstest group. We just mess about all day sitting trying to do no work. There was this other lad and he was writing on my arm ... so I was telling him off and I called him a poof ... he came after me ... the table snapped. Then the screws wanted to know who had snapped the table. I said shut up or I’ll smack your head in, I said it to him. Well the teacher said, are you threatening me, but I only said it to him ... and I threw a pencil.”

What were you telling me earlier about getting stitched up and slow eating?

Well after that ‘cause I wouldn’t go on a nicking¹³ I got on report so I can’t get no association so the screws said I was messing about on route and on the wing. Well you aren’t on the wing if you’re in your cell are you so I said I haven’t been on the wing so how could I have been messing about when you’re on bang up. Then they said I was slow eating so they got me stitched up.

... and then the screws take your stamps off you ...what can they do taking stamped addressed envelopes off you, they think stamps is money, do they think we’re going to take the stamps off and sell them for burn or something. Like they are money but not on a stamped addressed envelope so you just lose it and start shouting and kicking and you just lose it and it was just so hot.”

(The period being talked about had seen the maximum temperature record broken in the U.K. reaching over 100°F in places. The West Midlands, whilst not being the hottest had experienced unprecedented temperatures over a sustained period during June, July and August 2003. It was clear that the cells that I visited during the period were extremely badly ventilated and temperatures had become unbearable.)

As has been discussed above, all these acts can be seen as performances of the self, as acts in the negotiation of the inmate’s right to self-constitution in the interstice between agency and structure. However, perhaps the greatest statement of an identity of resistance, practised over fourteen years of institutionalised life after having been abandoned by his parents age four, is this from one of the young men at the bottom of division 1.

Do you have any issues with the officers?

“Not really ... It’s not the way a prison should be run.”

What do you mean?

Well, I’m in here getting worse ... I’m getting to know about all sorts of criminal activity that I wouldn’t get on the outside ... I could be on Champions but I’m not going to suck ass to get there. I’m more intelligent than they are, they’re all a load of fucking sheep on there.

¹³ An intermediate adjudication conducted by officers of an allegation of misconduct – less severe than being placed on report which involves an adjudication conducted by a governor.

Not all the children construct identities of resistance in their relationships with the staff. Those on the Champions' League consistently report better relations with the staff.

"The officers say I'm too polite."

Do you think that's accurate?

"I've always been like that" "They (*THE BOYS*) think that I'm sucking up to them (*THE OFFICERS*)"

Why do they think that?

"'cause I have a laugh with them (*THE OFFICERS*) when people say 'I've been stitched up'"

How do you get on with the officers?

"Fine really, we're usually treated fairly."

Do you get frustrated when you don't get what you want?

"I'm respected by the officers – the lads on champions get more stuff."

...

"They're harder on smoking with the other lads. Miss comes in the door and like the room's full of smoke and she says have you been smoking Jones and I says yes miss and she just says well don't do it again" "They had these dogs come 'round and they can smell tobacco – they can train them to smell anything – and I had two burns where I'd hid them and they found them, you know rollies but they didn't do nothing"

Relationships with the officers are significantly improved when the boys are docile, "you get more stuff on champions". In addition to the privileges awarded to those on the Champions' League, the officers may be more lenient in the enforcement of rules that are in theory applied more stringently. It is my suspicion that the rules are *both* more and less stringently applied to those on Champions' League in that the boys are clearly more aware of them, as evinced by the text, and feel that breaking of them would result in more severe penalties than for those on the main wing. However, paradoxically, when the rules are followed, these boys are allowed within the subtle discretion of the officers to break some of those same rules.

Once again, for those who believe that docility can never be total I include the following

Have you ever been stitched up?

“Yeah, when they came to do hair like I was last on the list and there wasn’t enough time. So when he came the next day the screw started at the top of the next day’s list so I didn’t get my hair done”

What did you do?

“I called her a bitch ... I got on report ... I had to apologise”

Why did you apologise?

“Just to get on Champions.”

This young man has clearly chosen to give up resistance and to comply, however it must be stressed that he is still docile. However, he still exhibits agency, he has *chosen* docility.

CONCLUSIONS

Much prison literature has a tendency to portray prisons as relatively simple organisms where the application of power is tyrannical and fixed and the responses to it heroic and uniform (Carrabine 2000). The most obvious conclusion of this study is that this is far from the case. The relationships observed, albeit small in number exhibit a complexity that would have been hard to conceive of before the research was started. Resistance is not easy to define and what resistance might be to shifts like quicksand. Conformity or docility is almost impossible to see except as an absence of resistance. One thing that may be stated with confidence is that in the light of the ontological perspective taken on identity and practices of the self, all the behaviours observed constitute either active or passive contributions to the processes of self constitution. Where these behaviours are transgressive or resistant then the boys are generating identities of resistance, it is far more difficult to say that others are *generating* identities of docility. Indeed, this is one of the key questions to arise from this study; to what extent do the compliant boys exhibit agency in their self building.

It is clear that the children perceive that many rules are more stringently enforced on the Champions' League than on the main wings. It must be pointed out, however, that the compliance that earned them a place on the Champions' League was exhibited on the main wing. Some of the boys contend that the way to exhibit such compliance is by kow-towing to the officers in a supererogatory fashion. The implication being, that ordinary compliance is insufficient to gain a place on Champions' League. Once on Champions' League, the boys are subject to a subtle and complex exercise of discretion on the part of the officers. Overtly the rules that the boys spoke of, governing the things that they have in their cells, are more rigidly applied. They are responsible for cleanliness and tidiness to a greater degree than those on the main wings. Paradoxically, however, once an ostentatious show of compliance has been made, the rules that have been so stringently applied are relaxed, but in a way that must constantly keep the boys on their toes. Smoking is forbidden anywhere in the gaol, however, 'burn' is one of the main trade goods. The boys deny that they smoke – "only the screws smoke" – nonetheless they tell stories of being caught smoking. They express that being caught smoking on the Champions' League wing might result in loss of early release but tell other stories of how the officers simply tell them not to do it again, or of how "you find some burn under your pillow". This suggests very strongly that the boys are not conforming to the regime but to the application of the regime by the officers, their docility constantly being tested by the shifting sands on which administration of the rules is built; sometimes reliant only on an officer's mood. It has been said that prisons should be in the business of making criminals into good citizens. This is a societal norm and society in general prefers docility. Workers are encouraged to refrain from resistance to their employers wishes, regardless of the cost to them. Grave injustices are glossed over so as not to rock the boat. Citizens are encouraged not to get involved with other peoples problems and political docility (apathy) is a problem which may threaten the adequate functioning of our

democracy. These norms of docility that are subtly enforced in society as a whole, in part by the outworkings of the civilizing process (Elias 1978), are imposed upon the boys by the officers who are themselves solid conformers to the civilizing process and its de-civilizing aspects, which conformity informs their expectation of the boys. Thus, the boys on Champions' League are produced as docile bodies fit for their place in the society thus civilized.

This then is what the boys are resisting when they resist, the imposition of civilization in Elias' terms. They are resisting the requirement not to resist – to be docile. The ability to observe this is clouded by those unfortunate individuals whose transgressive behaviour is no more than a tantrum because the young man concerned has a mental and emotional age of nine, as was the case with one of my boys. It is clouded by transgressive behaviour that arises out of genuine failures of legitimacy and by behaviour that arises out of sheer frustration as in the recent heat wave, but when they do resist, what they resist is the command not to resist. Their techniques and aesthetics are many. The key areas are those things over which they have some control, their cells, their bodies and their relationships with the officers. The preference for a muscular upper body is an aesthetic that is achieved by techniques of the body including targeted sculpting with weights the result is the right to access a group identity, and the performance of an identity of resistance, which consists of the display of the results of that sculpting. The preference for a cell full of toiletries is a performance of the kind of self who has access to money power and material goods, just as such conspicuous consumption is on the outside. These aesthetics and techniques of resistance clearly bring these boys into conflict with the officers as their position at the bottom of the table for incentives and privileges attests.

In his book 'If this is a man', (1979 [1958]) Primo Levi describes what he identifies as two distinct kinds of prisoners of Auschwitz¹⁴, namely those who survive the regime and those who do not. These he describes as 'the drowned and the saved'. Conventionally we would assume that those boys at the bottom of the league, who are always in trouble are drowning and that those boys on Champions' League who have work placements and are adjudged fit for Release on Temporary Licence were the successful 'saved' boys. Levi however has this to say about those who simply complied with the regime.

To sink is the easiest of matters; it is enough to carry out all the orders one receives, to eat only the ration, to observe the discipline of the work and the camp. Experience showed that only exceptionally could one survive more than three months in this way. All the *musselmans*¹⁵ who finished in the gas chambers have the same story, or more exactly, have no story ... they, the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form ... an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer.

Perhaps we might say that contrary to the conventional view the non-compliant boys are the saved, they exhibit a greater degree of agency, in their resistance they crave to hang on to that divine spark, to have a story, not to be an identical civilised person; and then we would say that our boys on Champions' League were the drowned, those who march and labour in silence, who eat only the ration and carry out the orders. The divine spark of infinite improvisation dead within them and well prepared for release.

¹⁴ This should not be taken in any way as an attempt to associate Werrington YOI with Nazi concentration camps.

¹⁵ *Muselmän*: a derogatory term used by Jewish inmates in the camps, meaning a Muslim, having connotations with lack of morality and of spirit.

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