

Criminals with ‘community spirit’: practising ‘ideal’ citizenship in the hidden world of the prison

Abstract

Contra the notion of prisons as discrete, ‘hidden’ spaces, contemporary research has stressed a range of connections, transactions and exchange. The relationship between the offender and the outside communities – captured in the policy rhetoric of rehabilitation and the promotion of good citizenship - is just one of these connections. This paper explores contemporary, liberal imaginations of the ‘ideal’ citizen; it goes on to critique formal rehabilitation programmes and highlight informal mechanisms developed within the prison environment which disrupt these constructions. Ultimately, this allows a deeper appreciation for how, despite attempts to practise citizenship in an environment that renders conventional rights and responsibilities absent, the prisoner remains altogether ‘less than ideal’.

Introduction

In recent years, prisons and the penal system have come to be understood as something more than peripheral to the societies that build and populate them. Contemporary research has highlighted that there is in fact a whole range of connections, transactions and exchange that contradict perceptions of a boundary between a ‘hidden’ inside and the world outside (Baer and Ravneberg, 2008, Gilmore, 2007, Loyd *et al.*, 2009, Martin and Mitchelson, 2009, Pallot, 2005, Vergara, 1995, Wacquant, 2009, 2001, 2000). In this paper, I consider one such area of in-betweenness, namely societal expectations of modern citizenship (in general) and the mechanisms via which penal authorities negotiate a particular rendering of these as they seek to create/recreate/reform ‘ideal’ citizens who have been subject to a penal system of punishment and rehabilitation. Using empirics drawn from a longer-term study of voluntary-work programmes for offenders, I investigate how an ensemble of societal duties such as those of good parenthood, and an obligation to neighbours – as well as a formal suite of rules and regulations pertaining to good behaviour, are all visible within an environment that renders most conventional rights and responsibilities concerning citizenship absent. In highlighting what I see as tensions within the construction of a prisoner identity, I am critical

of the ability of these formal mechanisms to generate individuals who remain anything other than 'less than ideal'.

Prisoners = 'not good citizens'

Citizenship is a complex analytic as well as object of inquiry. As a critique, it is useful because it offers a tool with which to explore the 'systematic discrepancies between the obligations required of and the rights extended to members of the nation state' (Smith, 1989, p. 148). And, traditionally, the acquisition of rights associated with the granting of citizenship has been a normative expectation. Yet, as Jessop (1988) observes, contemporary society has re-evaluated citizenship to focus upon duties and obligations. Certainly in the 'Big Society' manifesto of the current British coalition government, there is a strong emphasis on the articulation of citizenship at scales beneath those of the nation state and on the significance of locality or 'place' as a grounding for modes of citizenship based both on the assertion of individual rights *and* the appropriate performance of obligations to the community.

Scale is an important organisational mode here because the state acts to reconfigure the levels at which citizenship is defined and expected to be practised. We are moving from the concept of 'national citizens' who benefit from rights offered by managed liberalism and the welfare state, to the 'active citizen', wherein membership is imbued with responsibilities, often implemented in the local community through associations like Neighbourhood Watch (Rose, 1996). Fyfe and Mulligan (2003a, 2003b) highlight how cities, neighbourhoods and other locality-based 'communities' have been envisioned as key sites for democracy and participation. This has been done both by governments seeking to *downscale* citizenship in

the context of neo-liberal reforms and by groups seeking to advance particularly rights, including claims over territory (Desforges *et al.*, 2005, p. 440).

Importantly for this discussion, academics have considered the significance of such things as geographical difference and global mobility, which complicate the relationship between territory and belonging. These factors have revealed emerging (re)negotiations of the normative dimensions of the meaning and practice of contemporary citizenships (Smith and Guarnizo, 2009); allowing us to consider how prisoners ‘outside’ of any conventional territory might be included in such practices. Yet, there is a larger dynamic of exclusion; borders are rendered as imagined, particularly through discourses of fear (Pain, 2009). Similar to the identity of ‘undesirable’ often constructed for ‘non-nationals’, the prisoner is often determined as the ‘other’, and at a distance, metaphorical as well as physical, from the citizen majority.

Combessie (2002), for example, examines notions of good and evil manifest in the labelling and identities of officers and inmates, and the stigma that a prison can transfer beyond its walls to the outside. In a different vein, Thompson (2000) notes the paradoxical rhetorics associated with prisoners, insofar as, ‘The ‘good citizen’ is both a rhetorical object of the prison process – it is what they state they are taking the prisoner towards – and also a reference point that defines the prisoners’ difference. They are labelled as *not* good citizens. The words citizen and prisoner function as a dichotomy to include and exclude’ (Thompson, 2000, p. 183). Prisoners, in juxtaposition to the ‘outside’ citizen, default defined by the absence of some of the rights of the latter. Their fundamental loss of liberty denies their access to the rights of their peers on the outside, such as unemployment and child benefit, and limits others such as access to or choice of health service providers. As some scholars have

noted, this can often have differential detrimental effects upon prisoners, tending to weigh most heavily on minority groups such as deaf prisoners (Gahir *et al.*, 2011, McCay, 2010) or those who require specialist education (Miller, 2004). Media outlets have found hot topics in contentious issues such as women in labour losing their rights to privacy and sometimes being made to give birth in chains (BBC, 2010) or the limited nature of facilities to keep children with their mothers in prison (ITV, 2011). Another notable example is the case of prisoner Martin Tate, from Caernarfon, Wales, who reported that he was not allowed to make phone calls in Welsh without giving 48 hours notice, in order that an English translator be able to listen to conversations to comply with security provisions. The Welsh Language Society deemed it ‘unacceptable’ and Arfon MP Hywel Williams commented that it was ‘a complete injustice’ (BBC News, 2012). On coming out of prisons, further curtailments often continue to apply, including access to certain jobs, the ability to foster or adopt children (sentence dependent), and obtaining a mortgage or insurance (Dietrich, 2002, Metcalf *et al.*, 2001). All of these ‘in turn, make performing the duties of citizenship difficult’ (Uggen *et al.*, 2006, p. 282).

One of the most highly contentious aspects of recent scholarly and public discussion has surrounded the consideration of whether prisoners should be prohibited from voting in elections. American Judge Dennis Challeen (1986, p. 37-39) illustrated a glaring paradox in highlighting that, ‘We [the USA] want people to be responsible, so we take away all responsibility’. And, scholars have noted how this issue of disenfranchisement and a ‘civil death’ has been a debating point since the ancient Greek and Roman times, through medieval Europe and into the present (Dhami, 2005, Ewald, 2002, Itkowitz and Oldak, 1973, Keyssar, 2000). Currently, the UK, alongside other states such as Russia, China and the USA, does not allow convicted prisoners to vote. However, once released, UK prisoners – other than

those convicted of treason – regain this ability. Other countries have differing legislation. For example, in Belgium, those who are incarcerated for five years or more are disenfranchised for life (Blais *et al.*, 2001). Contra this, there are member states in the council of Europe which do already allow voting. For example, Ireland views voting in elections as part of the wider struggle for rehabilitation through normalisation (Behan and O'Donnell, 2008). In a similar vein, the Australian electoral system makes voting compulsory for those who are eligible, which includes prisoners serving a sentence of three years or less (Hill and Koch, 2011). Canada and South Africa have struggled to overturn a ban on prisoner voting, noting that their electoral commissions have no power to deny what is deemed a 'constitutional right' (Rottinghaus and Baldwin, 2007, p. 689). Voting is a duty, it is argued, just as one's very imprisonment is recognition of the moral requirement to act in accordance with responsibilities. There is a clear recognition, clarified here especially well by Robert Patrick of the Young Foundation (no date, no page) that 'release from prison is not the point at which prisoners should re-engage with society. It is observed that people only experience social wealth if they believe that their voice will be heard.'

UK-based organisations, such as UNLOCK, the National Association of Ex-Offenders, and the Prison Reform Trust (PRT) contest the electoral ban on sentenced prisoners voting, arguing that a reform of the law is necessary for several reasons, including the claim that a ban infringes basic human rights that people have died to protect, that it bears no relation to the causes of crime, and can cause minority ethnic groups to be disenfranchised (in particular black men). Thus, 'The notion of civic death for sentenced prisoners isolates still further those who are already on the margins of society and encourages them to be seen as alien to the communities to which they will return on release' (UNLOCK, 2004, p. 1; see also Slapper

2011). By removing the right to vote, we signal to serving prisoners that, at least for the duration of their sentence, they are dead to society.

Bolstering such arguments are reports that disenfranchisement during incarceration has contributed to a spiral of decline of prisoners having little or no expectation to perform obligations, such as active parenthood or paying attention to financial burdens. Harman *et al.* (2007), for example, use evidence sourced from wives of incarcerated prisoners who are affronted and dismayed at the degree of free time and relaxation that their male partners enjoy when in prison, at precisely the time when they are having to manage both the family finances and the children themselves. Furthermore, May and Woods (2005) demonstrate that many American prisoners would prefer to go to prison than do community service, house arrest or 'boot camp' when offered the choice.

However, as Baer intimates, although 'the confinement of prisoners hides their daily lives from most of society', that 'hiddenness does not mean that their experiences are inconsequential. Prisons form their own complex cultures that are interwoven into and through the rest of society' (2005, pp. 209-210). Thus, I use the remainder of the paper to illustrate the case of the prisoner as one which offers a vantage point upon the demands of citizenship in general, from the perspective of those 'less than ideal' citizens existing at the boundary between the prison and society. To do this, I bring to light some of the schemes designed to rehabilitate prisoners in the UK, and the expectations regarding obligations to a larger community therein. In offering examples of these, I critique the implementation of systems designed to enfranchise prisoners with a sense of belonging or 'citizenship' to the so-called 'outside' community, despite their physical absence from it. My analysis reveals a paradoxical situation where, despite an intent to generate a sense of duties and obligations,

the prisoner continues to be positioned as altogether 'less than ideal,' a subject identity that, moreover, inflects their perception of themselves.

Constructing the prisoner as citizen

Focusing on the development of the responsible citizen, Burchell provides a lucid account of an attentiveness toward 'the promotion in the governed population of specific techniques of the self around such questions as, for example, saving and 'providentialism', the acquisition of ways of performing roles like father or mother, the development of habits of cleanliness, sobriety, fidelity, self-improvement, responsibility and so on' (1996, p 25). And, Rose describes an ensuing paradoxical situation, wherein detention has been used to detain members of society who detract from the ideal, even though these 'incurable individuals' are then supposed to conform to the concept of the responsible, modern citizen. Rehabilitation strategies used in order to create this condition, she argues, are a form of 'work experience' in this regard (2000, p 330). The intent here is to 'remoralize' and 'responsibilize' individuals such that they are able to work without benefit and further support: in short, 'to reconstruct self-reliance in those who are excluded' (ibid, p 334).

With this in mind, I developed a research agenda that focused upon rehabilitative strategies directed towards UK prisoners and ex-offenders both during and after their imprisonment. In England and Wales, this may involve inclusion on one or more of the 47 accredited OBPs on offer, which focus on reducing reoffending. Based on evidence from the 'What Works' literature, these programmes vary in length, complexity and mode of delivery. In the year 2010/11, there were 8981 OBP and Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) completions, from a year end average prison population of 84 920 (Ministry of Justice, 2011, no page). This represents an 86% achievement of the targeted number of completions

(NOMS, 2011). Alongside these courses, different institutions may offer additional opportunities specific to the prison security category and/or in partnership with external charities or other organisations. Participation is ‘targeted according to risk and need’ (Ministry of Justice, 2012, no page); and may be subject to further eligibility requirements.

In terms of empirical case studies, I looked at OBPs such as the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), Focus on Resettlement (FOR) and Short Duration Programme (SDP), which are run in prisons such as Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP)¹ Hull, HMP Lindholme and HMP Newhall. Other, work-based projects that I looked at include prisoners employed at *The Clink* public restaurant at HMP High Down, and the Oxford Citizen’s Advice Bureau, amongst others. Observations and/or interviews with facilitators and participants (undertaken according to UK Research Council ethical considerations, and restricted access) were conducted at these sites, alongside an analysis of prisoner blogs and narratives, media outputs and ethnographies as part of a wider research project on carceral geographies.

Formal mechanisms and associated rhetorics developed as part of strategies to decrease the level of recidivism make clear that the goal is to help individuals meet the expectations of good citizenry, including a respect and tolerance for others. Characteristics outlined in directives such as Race Equality for Staff and Prisoners (RESPOND) include ‘eliminating all forms of discrimination within the Service’ (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002, p. 152); and the Challenge to Change programme, which promotes a development of ‘positive

¹ Her Majesty’s Prison Service is a part of the Ministry of Justice department of the British Government tasked with delivering public prison provision in England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own independent services (The Scottish Prison Service, and the Northern Ireland Prison Service, respectively).

social skills, mutual respect for others and renewed trust in society' (Kainos Community 2012, no page).

And, interviews with those responsible for running these confirmed such goals. According to a facilitator at HMP Newhall, for example, skills-based and self-development courses 'can improve the relationships between staff and prisoners, especially officers. This is usually as their assumptions are proved incorrect and they see a different side to officers. The course is quite intense and there needs to be a balance of trust between prisoners and staff and prisoners and prisoners' (*Interviewee F25SP, Mar 29 2011*). Community spirit is a symbiotic skill facilitated through participation in these programmes. However, a fundamental constraint on such efforts is the emotional, as well as physical distancing of friends and family of the prisoner. As one of my interviews highlighted:

Psychologist: The programmes have reviews whereby they can invite family members/friends to them. I think this is very important so that parents/friends are aware of what risk factors the offender has and they can help them look out for them and prevent them. Unfortunately, in my establishment offenders do not usually want to invite family/friends, either because it is too far to travel for them or they do not think they will want to come.

(Interviewee F25SP, 29 March 2011)

At HMP Durham, 'better father' workshops have been developed whereby prisoners can see their children. And, HMP Dartmoor has also addressed spatial problems such as the distance families must travel to Category A prisons (those which house offenders with the highest likelihood of escape and have limited visitation rights). Here, technological innovations have allowed the scheme StoryBook Dads to produce over 5,000 CDs and DVDs in 2010 of

fathers in prison recording bedtime stories, and incorporating personal messages for their children. An example drawn from the StoryBook Dads website sounds,

Well Maisy, I hope you enjoyed that story. It was the story of a little princess just like you're my little princess who I miss every day. I want you to remember that Daddy's always thinking about you and I hope one day soon that I'll be able to read you this story myself and tuck you in at night. Be good for Mummy. You're always on my mind. Bye-bye!

(Personal message at the end of story, Transcript, StoryBook Dads, 2012)

Currently, 90 other prisons take part by recording their stories and sending them to Dartmoor where they are edited and returned for the nominal cost of the postage. There is also StoryBook Mums. StoryBook Soldiers has now been set up following the Dartmoor template and is open to all the British Forces. According to proponents, schemes like this return a fundamental human right of familial interaction for prisoners, and also allow them to participate in some of the responsibilities of parenthood. It can also, of course, enhance the well-being of children:

I miss my Dad so much. When I feel lonely I listen to my CD and hearing his voice makes me feel better.

(Chloe (Age 7) StoryBook Dads, 2012)

The idea of participating on otherwise 'outside' activities can also be manifest in more concrete examples. The Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau (OxCAB), for example, developed the idea of training serving prisoners to become volunteer citizens' advisers in order to increase capacity and meet growing demand. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) delivers advice services from over 3500 community locations in England and Wales, run by 382 individual charities. The membership organisation of the bureau is run by Citizens Advice, which is itself a registered charity. Following much debate, prisoners at HMP Springhill are

now able to become Citizen Advisers. Springhill is one of the country's twelve category D open prisons, to which male prisoners at the lowest level of risk are allocated. It does not take sex offenders or arsonists. Owing to the fact that people who visit the Citizens Advice Bureau are also, often, vulnerable members of society, the selection of prisoners is rigorous and they must comply with certain eligibility requirements. At a focus group with prisoner-advisers and a facilitator, members commented,

Liam²: We know the sort of process you have to come through, you don't just let any old Joe Bloggs come here ... prison is full of

Ian: Piss takers!

Liam: You know what sort of people are in prison and ...

Oliver: Yeah, the thing is, before we even get to see [a CAB interviewer] we have to go through a rigorous risk assessment like, from the prison side of things...

Facilitator: They have to do this more than any other... they risk access on the suitability of coming out and working with vulnerable people.

Oliver: It's more rigorous than any other project.

(Focus Group 2, 12 January 2012)

Alongside other volunteer advisors, their training and performance monitoring is on-going. Most prisoners complete the training within 6-8 weeks – quicker than for most other volunteers as the prisoners are available on a full-time basis. Furthermore, as prisoner volunteers typically work four times as many hours, the OxCAB can now give advice to many more people than ever before.

The CAB aims to equip people with the knowledge required to deal with any problems they face, as well as endeavouring to shape the way policies influence daily lives. According to the Citizen's Advice service, their service provides 'free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities' (2012, no page). It is

² Pseudonyms have been used.

interesting that in this case, then, that the CAB is staffed by less-than-ideal citizens. And, interviewees spoke about the development of their personal knowledge database as a result of their work experience; particularly their ability to find sources of support and information for themselves following future release. Facilitators explained scenarios where prisoner-advisers had been asked to help with form filling and make suggestions about appropriate organisations for their fellow inmates. In this respect, it can be argued that, this turns the CAB itself into a training ground, both in terms of the users and the prisoner-advisers themselves.

Although the OxCAB-Springhill partnership was originally developed to aid the Bureau rather than act as a rehabilitation project, prisoners have found many benefits in their preparation for release. For the prisoners interviewed, certainly, work at the CAB was very different to anything they had ever done before: their role gave them a sense of normality and social inclusion. A comparison was sometimes made with this ‘intellectually-challenging’ employment and ‘mundane’ or ‘mediocre’ jobs (repetitive and low-skilled tasks such as laundry work) that have typically been deemed appropriate for the prisoner:

Liam: I’ve never been in this line of work ... building sites, warehouses, things like that, but ... I’ve now discovered ... that it is something that I enjoy doing, compared to what I was doing before, which was something that I didn’t like doing ... so, yes ... I’ve discovered something new about myself ... I didn’t think I was into this sort of thing but now, obviously, I’ve changed completely.

Oliver: What I like about this is here is that it’s not mediocre work ... Some of the community work jobs that people do are a bit ... mundane if you like, they have to steam clothes and press, that sort of thing.

(Focus Group 2, 12 January 2012)

Further to this, prisoner-advisers relished the feeling of ‘fitting in’ with other non-prisoner colleagues, and expressed a great enjoyment at having a conventional ‘9 to 5’ working week

outside of the prison environment. Indeed, the importance of achieving regular work in the future in order to legitimately provide for themselves and their families is a fundamental concern. For many prisoner volunteers, the reference from the CAB is a major contributing factor to their decision to participate, as it goes a long way to prove their credentials to potential employers, particularly in the face of the decreased opportunities owing to their criminal record:

Liam: ... the fact that it's good for future references obviously you're going to do well to get a reference, yeah, for when you leave prison, because obviously you've got the thing of having a criminal record, coming out of prison to get a job with employers not wanting to take you on, so obviously if you've done this you've got a head start, haven't you?

(Focus Group 2, 12 January 2012)

Brownlow has conceptualised citizenship as something merited or deserved (2011, p. 1271), which aligns with other ideas of citizenship as a performative act that recognises and legitimises one's status within society (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003, p. 127). As well as feeling as though they have been given the opportunity to give something back to the communities that they have been removed from, some of those involved report that the CAB work has allowed them to put their own situations into perspective, often by finding their lives to be much better than the clients they help:

Oliver: It is giving something back to help people who are probably, although it sounds a funny thing, even less fortunate than us who are in prison ... but there are people who are in a worse position, they could be homeless, I can't imagine what that is when somebody hasn't got anywhere to sleep at night sort of thing ... It makes me feel ... erm ... good about myself, that's the main thing, to you know, help out ... that's the way I see it anyway

Liam: Yeah, I definitely feel better. It sort of, redeems yourself, a bit.

(Focus Group 2, 12 January 2012)

Prisoners are given the chance to take on a responsible role and help others – exerting their citizenship responsibilities whilst incarcerated. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, for example, found that CAB work ‘allows prisoners to retain or develop active citizenship during a period when they would otherwise be excluded from it’ (2004, p. 3). Isin and Nielsen refer to these as ‘acts of citizenship’; that is, situations that facilitate a status that empowers people enough to be able to claim their rights as well as perform their obligations (2008, p. 2). Similar examples of projects designed to help prisoners gain a sense of ‘giving something back’ through purposeful endeavours includes such things as the US ‘Puppies behind Bars project’ where prisoners raise guide dogs for the blind (Cheakalos, 2004) or ‘strengths-based’ or ‘restorative’ activities with ‘worthy causes’ including repair of wheelchairs and community regeneration schemes (Burnett and Maruna, 2006), and helping the elderly (Toch, 2000). Uggen *et al.* (2004) comment upon how prisoners often feel that they can use their personal stories to prevent other people making similar mistakes.

However, these techniques can be critiqued from a number of perspectives. They are clearly intrusive, overstepping the boundary of the crime itself to allow the state to enter into a much broader moral project of reconstruction of the individual. But there is something more insidious here, which is the way in which even the prisoner is brought to desire their own reform. As exemplified by Liam talking about redemption (in the previous focus group excerpt), the successful functioning of these schemes require the criminal to confess their loyalty to a market anew, articulating their aspirations to be released from prison and actively participate as a good and productive cog in the wider machine of a capitalist, liberal society. This relates to Cruikshank’s (1999) Foucauldian critique of self-help initiatives, in which she argues that tools that promote empowerment, self-improvement and democratic participation

are also techniques of subjection. The rehabilitation packages draw forth a repentant criminal, a grateful criminal, a self-loathing criminal, keen and anxious to complete the detailed work on the self that is required of them by a liberal order.

There is, arguably, a cynicism inherent in the rehabilitation packages: they give on the one hand – a connection to a child, a ‘chance’ to get back into the job market – but at the expense of those who do not meet the stringent eligibility requirement of, for example, the OxCAB assessment. Furthermore, it is clear that there still remains a necessity for anonymity to be retained with regards to members of the public using the Bureau. Although it is advertised that the branch acts in partnership with Springhill, the prisoner-advisers have never been identified as such to any clients. When asked to comment on anonymity and disclosure, the comments were varied:

Oliver: I think it’s quite important, but not to the people who volunteer ... they might not like prisoners giving them advice.

Liam: I don’t mind them knowing. They might look at it as ... you’re giving back and you’re changing your life around.

(Focus Group 2, 12 January 2012)

Although CAB staff recalled instances where the media were critical of the use of prisoners as advisers (with one referring to the ‘Con Advice Bureau’), facilitators maintain that the prisoner status is of no more relevance to the job role than someone’s age or sexuality. This is largely based on the quality of work that CAB has received from their prisoner volunteers, the positive feedback, letters of thanks, and even monetary contributions that members of the public have offered as a return for the service. Certainly, the invisible nature of the prisoner-adviser renders them able to exert their participation in ways which may not be afforded by

their exposure in this environment. However, it could be argued that the elision of volunteers' identities as prisoners serves precisely to erase the 'prisoner' as 'citizen' while ensuring that he/she must simultaneously reproduce problematic civic regimes.

Performing *less than ideal* citizenship

In addition to these critical perspectives, I would like to use the remainder of this paper to consider the ways in which prisoners perform informal activities that disrupt contemporary notions of good citizenship, including developing the notion of the prison as 'home' rather than a physical and emotional displacement from home.

There are many informal mechanisms that prisoners have developed to enable themselves to recreate a sense of 'normalcy' in their everyday prison lives via a belonging to broader networks and allegiances. A BBC documentary about life in the women's prison HMP Cornton Vale in Scotland, for example, describes how inmates Debbie and Gemma found that celebrity gossip magazines helped them to keep up-to-date with the goings on of the famous and glamorous; a world they were not likely to participate in in a more corporeal sense if they were not incarcerated (BBC, 2008). There are also examples of attempts to retain the citizenship of other less-territorially grounded communities, such as those of football supporters. An Art Teacher facilitating classes within prison noted that although Steve hardly spoke, when he did, one very obvious thread of thinking permeated everything and this was Liverpool Football Club (Rudesind, 2006).

There are, of course, ways in which the 'civic death' of incarcerated offenders leads some to want to exert their citizenship rights in illicit ways. One prisoner blog explains his attempts

to keep his non-taxable incomes to maintain his ability to provide for his family. He comments that, he is ‘desperately trying to keep a few projects going on on the outside, but people are just not responding quickly enough’ (The Prisoner's Diary, 2006, 9 January). Their desire to re-assert the rights they have lost also extends to the many attempts to acquire contraband items, such as alcohol and mobile phones, resulting in vast commodity networks of supply and demand. Observational research within the prison environment by Valentine and Longstaff (1998) and Baer (2005) has also revealed that there is also a desire for much more mundane, yet still contraband items such as herbs and spices, or toiletry items like perfume – those things that prisoners do not have regular access to on a daily basis, and yet which command a sense of home and belonging therein.

For other prisoners, non-sanctioned activities constitute their only ability to access contact time with their family. Here one can see how one inmate describes the activities of his cellmate at Parc Prison in Wales, UK:

His missus would turn up outside the prison every night with the kids to talk to him. She would park up on the pavement opposite the magistrates’ court, facing our cell window. He would flick the light on and off three times. When she parked up he would know because she would toot her horn twice. They would shout to each other and tell each other about their day. He would ask her about how she was running his take-away and ask if there were any problems, and his son would shout as loud as he could, “Abba, I love you!”

(Arif, 2009, p. 57)

For many, they become accustomed and even welcomed into the community of the prison – a hidden world which Adrian Rudesind describes as ‘Prisonland’ (2006, p. 17). And, the same careful delineation of the rights and responsibilities of a British citizen can be applied to the unique, national identity of the ‘prisoner’. Even within the prison itself there are formal

mechanisms which create the discourses of behaviour and punishment. Sara Ahmed describes this as the creation of prisons within prisons and bars within bars, where the punished 'prison citizen' will be forced to spend time in such things as the Segregation Unit – jail within prison. Thus, 'inmates suffer the same social consequences of convicted citizens from the outside, such as being forced to leave their prison families, cellblocks, religious communities and jobs, to be placed under control within control and subjection to even greater episodes of discipline' (Ahmed, 2008, p. 2).

Moreover, it can be argued that the right to participate is not automatically guaranteed by merely the serving of a sentence at Her Majesty's Pleasure. In order to ascertain citizenship of Prisonland, inmates are expected to exert their responsibility as a convict by abiding to the new rules of prison. As Hayner and Ash illustrate, 'even though he may wish, as an individual, to adhere rigidly to the rules and regulations of the administration, he must at the same time live up to the convict rule – 'You must not squeal' (1939, p. 364). There exists a whole host of informal ways in which an inmate can exert belonging to the prison community. This may be altering their use of language to adhere to prison jargon such as using references to 'screws' and 'grasses', 'going down the block', and 'doing bird'. Inmates may also become part of the structure of the prison wing, slotting into the hierarchy of the order, aligning themselves to particular gangs within the walls, or even altering their behaviour to deviate from conventional sex codes. They might become part of the system of supply and demand which is prominent in prison life, where everyday objects such as the foil in sweet wrappers become valuable trading commodities due to their alternative use as aids in drug-taking.

Ian Gunn, Governor of HMP Cornton Vale, intimates that the lives of prisoners are often so totally chaotic that ‘prison becomes a haven in their chaotic lives ... Prison life gives [them] the security [they] didn’t have in her childhood ... Some of these women believe this is the safest home they’ve ever had’ (BBC, 2008). One prisoner, Gemma acknowledges: ‘What you see here. This is what I’ve got. This is my house’. This ‘inside’ world soon becomes a way of life, and in many cases a home; something that became clear to me even through the conversational language used when talking about the prison:

Me: And so when you get *home*, oh sorry, I’ve said it again ...

Ian: [laughs]

Oliver: It’s alright it is home.

Liam: I find myself saying that all the time ... when I’m on home leave, for instance D-cat prisoners can go home, I say to the missus or whatever, “I’ve got to go *home* [back to prison] tomorrow”, I’m at home but I still say it.

(Focus Group 2, 12 January 2012)

Conclusion

To conclude this discussion, it is clear that despite attempts to foster the notion of rehabilitation as geared toward the re-composition of the prisoner alongside contemporary imaginations of the ideal citizen, there are many reasons why prisoners will consistently achieve anything but that. In examining rehabilitation programmes developed to allow prisoners to exert their obligations and access the rights of the ‘outside’ world, this paper has illustrated how prisoners must perform as well as conform to these ideals with many genuinely desiring their own reform. Yet, despite all efforts to conform to the ideology of liberal society, the prisoner experiences a civic death both during imprisonment. What is also apparent is that, once incarcerated, prisoners become intrinsically incorporated into and practise citizenship to the community of the prison, which is in many cases contra the manifesto of the ‘outside’ ideal. Furthermore, upon release offenders are still reminded of

their status as ‘prison citizens’ and will inevitably be bound to this by their criminal record, prison experience and social stigma for the remainder of their lives. Thus, I want to suggest in closing, that despite their struggle to achieve the aspirations that the penal system drives them towards, prisoners paradoxically become part of an ideology which functions to still posit them as ‘non-citizens’.

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