

HARD TIMES: IS THE 'REHABILITATION REVOLUTION' BAD NEWS FOR ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES WITH PRISONERS?

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Abstract *The sociological literature pertaining to the nature of imprisonment has long documented the harm endured by the incarcerated. Such unease has led a range of commentators to challenge the over-reliance on imprisonment and the concomitant demotion of rehabilitative approaches, which have commonly been regarded as 'soft on crime' in a neoliberal populist punitive climate. However, recent economic and political changes have led to the promise of a 'rehabilitation revolution' relying on collaboration between the state and third sector agencies. Whilst this new direction would appear to support the use of artistic and spiritual activities, which foster empathy, healing and transformation, the intention to make prisons places of 'hard work and industry' alongside 'Payment by Results' may eradicate all such prospects. The potential benefits of enrichment activities as part of a strengths-based rehabilitation model will be considered in this article, which will review the current state of artistic and spiritual initiatives in prisons alongside empirical data gathered at a weekly yoga class in a UK adult male prison. By so doing, this paper discusses the potential impact of the proposed rehabilitation revolution on enrichment activities and considers whether their unique merits warrant a reconsideration of what should be valued in criminal justice responses.*

Keywords *Pains of imprisonment, creativity, spirituality, arts, rehabilitation revolution.*

Despite changing political agendas, which have reprioritised and refocused criminal justice responses from the welfare-based to the increasingly punitive (Tonry, 2001; Wacquant, 2009), there has always been artistic and spiritual work quietly taking place in penal institutions (Peaker & Vincent, 1990; Nicholls, 1992; Merriam, 1998; Walley, 1998; Nellis, 2002). Furthermore, the available literature shows that these 'enrichment' activities have enabled some prisoners to lessen the detrimental impact of their incarceration (Bunk, 1978; Naveen & Telles, 1997; Goodrich, 2004; Duncombe *et al.*, 2005). Enrichment literally means to endow with fine qualities, and enrichment activities are synonymous for a wide range of creative and spiritual practices, such as drama, dance, music, creative writing, drawing, painting, needlework, meditation, yoga, and tai chi. In light of the present economic and political drive to promote rehabilitative ideals once more, this paper will contemplate the role of enrichment activities in this agenda.

In the first instance, the links between the arts and spirituality as types of enrichment activities will be explored before consideration of recent policy changes, which have advanced a refocusing on the rehabilitation of offenders. In order to assess the value of enrichment activities, the growing body of evidence evaluating these interventions will be discussed and supported with specific reference to a particular case study where data was gathered as part of an ongoing doctoral study evaluating prison yoga. This data was gathered via observations and semi-structured interviews with men attending weekly yoga classes at a medium-security prison in the East Midlands, UK. In so doing, it will highlight the commonalities between the arts and spirituality, where a strengths-based model of rehabilitation is central to the activities undertaken.

Creativity and spirituality as enrichment activities

The connection between the arts and spirituality may not be so evident, but as Starkings (1993: 16) highlights '[w]here there may be no professed contact with the ideas or symbols of formal religion, the arts may be assumed to stand entirely free from religion as makers of meaning'. Thus, the act of artistic creation is about the actions an individual undertakes to make sense of the world around them; that gives them a purpose and connects them to others. The same is said of spirituality (Moss, 2005). Of course, the religious origins of rehabilitative principles should not be forgotten. The moral reform of offenders lays at the heart of early probation practice in the form of Court missionaries (Raynor, 2007), and the separate and silent systems in prisons were predicated on the belief that religious instruction and silent reflection would allow the prisoner to reform. Nowadays, the increasing secularisation of society has led to the divorce of rehabilitation practices from overtly religious doctrine in all but a minority of examples. The use of the '12-steps' approach in drug and alcohol recovery programmes being a couple of notable exceptions, although explicit references to God are often removed for the benefit of secular clients.

That being said, orthodox religion does, however, still retain an important role in prisons and Clear *et al.* (2000) have documented the way in which it functions as a form of prisoner coping. Indeed, Spalek & El-Hassan (2005) have studied the increasing number of prisoners converting to Islam, which has led to political concern in relation to radicalisation (Hannah *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, despite these examples, religion is often disregarded in our modern, consumerist and individualistic society and, consequently, is less of a concern for many prisoners. Heelas & Woodhead (2005: 6) argue that living in a secularised society means we are now concerned with 'subjective-life spirituality' rather than 'life-as religion'. What they are alluding to here is the way in which life-as religion requires the individual to subordinate their subjective wants and desires in favour of living life according to a higher authority. Whereas subjective-life spirituality is manifest in the way in which the individual cultivates the sacred in their unique and distinctly personalised manner. The significance of this apparent move from orthodox faith is that prisoners need to be afforded the opportunities to express their subjective spirituality outside of formal, organised and traditional religious services. What is needed is the space and freedom to explore artistic and spiritual activities, which can generate self-awareness and meaning whilst, at the same time, foster feelings of relatedness to

others; something which has the power to assist the rehabilitative process and the reintegration of prisoners back into their communities.

Even though they have not been an overriding area of criminal justice policy and practice, enrichment activities have occurred for some time in prisons worldwide. In the UK, one of the most notable periods for this type of intervention was during the 1980s, and Currie (1989) records the widespread use of arts in prisons in the US in the 1970s. What is noteworthy about these periods is that rehabilitation ideals were dominant in criminal justice responses, albeit that they were seen as part of the therapeutic alliance between social work, psychiatry and the individual (Liebmann, 1994). More recently, however, enrichment activities in prisons have been a target of tabloid censure, which has been particularly heightened because these activities are enjoyable and humanising. Nevertheless, the increasing number of individuals and organisations actively collaborating to inspire a renewal of such projects seems testament to the determination to keep such activities on offer for incarcerated people. The Arts Alliance and Prison Phoenix Trust are two such examples, actively campaigning to have enrichment activities acknowledged in the policy-making process.

The changing policy context

A variety of commentators have noted the harm caused by imprisonment (Liebling, 1992; Irwin & Owen, 2005; Bradley, 2009) but, even so, its increasing use as a response to criminality has not hitherto been waning. In the summer of 2010, when the prison population stood at around 85,000 (The Howard League, 2010), economic and political changes paved the way for a reconsideration of criminal justice policy. David Cameron, the newly-elected Prime Minister of the coalition government, set out his agenda for a 'Big Society' (Cameron, 2010). In his speech, he argued for the need to empower local communities through social action built on volunteering and benevolence, relinquishing government control in the form of top-down governance to promote individual responsibility. At the heart of this agenda was the rolling back of the welfare-state which, it was alleged, had fostered a dependency upon the taxpayer that was no longer sustainable. The need for welfare reform and public sector cuts necessitated a radical rethink of economic and criminal justice policy and, in turn, led to a review of priorities.

Subsequent to these events, the government set out their intention for a 'rehabilitation revolution' in the form of a Green Paper called 'Breaking the Cycle' (Ministry of Justice, 2010). This document describes a number of objectives, which include a clear commitment to integrated offender management and partnership working where innovative approaches from the voluntary and community sectors form a part of this process. On the face of it, this move to more novel and collaborative methods appears to offer some hope to practitioners delivering enrichment activities, but the planned Payment by Results on the basis of reduced re-offending creates a number of practical, methodological and ideological issues for such groups (Collins; 2011; Miles & Clarke, 2006; Parkes & Bilby, 2010). In addition, whilst there is an acknowledgement of the value of partnership approaches, it is noticeable that the role of the arts is not a feature of this policy. Although, perhaps this is unsurprising as Pratt (2005) has argued that the public's anxieties about crime have led to an infiltration of policy development, which has sought

to assuage their anger through a rejection of rehabilitation and the imposition of harsher punishment.

Combined with a hostile media towards anything deemed liberal and soft, the rapid closure of a range of enriching prison projects seems almost inevitable (Osment, 2010; Trévien, 2010). Moreover, it is worth pointing out that these cuts mirror the ever-increasing divide between the arts and sciences, as both are pitted against each other in the fight to secure government funding. Nowhere is this more readily apparent than within the education sector. Clements (2004: 169), a prison educator, argues that prison arts can foster social inclusion and act as a springboard to other forms of education, which should necessitate their provision outside of literacy and numeracy classes. Thus, he is critical of the way in which prison arts have been hijacked by New Labour's 'instrumental agenda', which has eradicated all types of learning apart from 'basic, key and cognitive skills'. In addition, he claims that this has partly arisen because prison staff have failed to recognise the inherent value in enrichment activities, reflecting some of the public hostility towards such approaches. As cognitive-behavioural techniques (which currently proliferates rehabilitation programmes) have been unable to provide unequivocal evidence of reducing recidivism (Stanley, 2009; Keeler, 2010), it is concerning that the proposals in the Green Paper may lead to the demise of a range of alternative activities. Whilst it is readily acknowledged that they are not a panacea, there is evidence that some prisoners derive real benefit from being involved in such projects.

The pains of imprisonment and enrichment activities

Prison is a harmful place and, over many years, researchers have been busy documenting the way in which those living and working in this institution are affected by it (Cohen & Taylor, 1972; Toch, 1977; Sapsford, 1983; Liebling, 1992; Crawley, 2004; Irwin & Owen, 2005; Jewkes, 2005a; 2005b; Liebling & Maruna, 2005; Jewkes & Johnston, 2006). In Sykes's (1958) now seminal study, he set out how incarceration leads to an attack on the self; both physical and psychological anxiety arising as a result of what he termed 'the pains of imprisonment'. Sykes was able to draw attention to the way in which prisoners were not solely controlled via the use of corporal punishment, but their acquiescence was achieved through more subtle and pervasive psychological means. These pains were experienced as the loss of liberty, a lack of autonomy, the denial of heterosexual relationships, the removal of access to goods and services, and a loss of security.

More recently, Crewe (2009) has built on this early work to re-examine the prisoner society and, in his analysis, the acknowledgement of prisoner agency is fundamental; something that other prison sociologists have been criticised for failing to consider.¹ Based on his ethnographic research in a medium-secure male prison, he documents how power relations and prisoner identities combine to arise in a new form of penal power. Central to the modern regime lays a variety of mechanisms (for example, the incentives and enhanced privileges scheme) which, in terms of maintaining discipline and control, are

¹ For example, Cohen & Taylor (1972) are critical of Goffman (1961), who described inmates institutionalised in asylums in passive terms.

located in '[t]he transfer of responsibility from the institution to the individual' (Crewe, 2009: 138). Prisoners are not only required to demonstrate their compliance but, in addition, have to be seen to be actively addressing their offending behaviour. This change in emphasis, combined with the ascendancy of what Keeler (2010: 305) describes as 'actuarial classification and control' has subverted the welfare-based rehabilitation agenda to a new form of authoritarian power that Crewe depicts as 'neo-paternalism'. As he is keen to point out '[Rehabilitation] [...] is filtered through the imperatives for efficiency and public protection, and its parameters are limited, with sharp edges that quickly become apparent if opportunities are not taken up or if behaviour does not suit institutional objectives' (Crewe, 2009: 141). This employment of neo-paternalistic power by the prison authorities gives the prisoner the belief that they are exercising their autonomy, but Crewe avers this is merely illusory. Instead, prisoners become self-regulatory and subtly coerced to align their attitudes, values and beliefs to the wider institutional agenda.

The idea that enrichment activities might counter this loss of prisoner independence and, in addition, foster a collective resistance to the prevailing ethos of surveillance and control, may partly explain the political (and public) hostility towards such pastimes.² Green's (2010: 298) recollections of the way in which the arts mobilised the black community to political activism in the fight for US civil rights illuminates this clearly. She notes how this legacy fostered the Prison Arts Movement and, in particular, the 'Lyrics on Lockdown' project that toured nationally to specifically generate social and political awareness of the US prison crisis. Green (2010: 295) acknowledges that the success of this project was not primarily about whether it achieved its vision 'to halt the mass incarceration of people of color', but lay in its ability to empower both individuals and communities through the consciousness-raising process. In a similar vein, O'Neill (2010: 16) describes how the film-making prison project she facilitated sought to 'challenge the dominant worldview and the normative power of dominant representations', so that prisoners were inspired to re-define hegemonic culture and their representation within it. Likewise, in a prisoner interview concerning yoga, it was credited with renewal and change in a supportive environment. A student described the class space as a site of 'community and transformation' where prisoners had 'common conversations in yoga' (prisoner interview, March, 2010).

Not only can enrichment activities empower and liberate the oppressed, but they also have the potential to provide for the prisoner, alleviating the deprivation of goods and services that Sykes (1958) defined. Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, a maximum security prison housing men predominantly serving life sentences, illustrates this point. Schrift (2006) records how inmates have capitalised on their artistic abilities to recycle, refashion and (re)create a wide variety of artefacts, which they then sell on to the community during a biannual Arts and Crafts Festival. Whilst the loss of access to mainstream goods and services represents a hardship the men endure, their ability to

² The cancellation of a comedy course at HMP Whitemoor by Jack Straw in 2008 happened as a result of media furore. Similarly, in 2009, the press reported on the public disgust at Colin Pitchfork, a man convicted of double-murder, being allowed to exhibit artwork in the South Bank Festival Hall.

salvage, scavenge and barter for a wide range of prison objects enables them to produce their art. By so doing, the men maintain links with the outside world and financially support their families through the profits they make. Furthermore, their artistic endeavours not only represent a way of achieving pecuniary advantage in a consumerist society, but the act of creation embodies and reaffirms the sense of self. As Schrift (2006) states:

Such work involves [...] the assumption of any number of roles typically unavailable after incarceration — artist, artisan, provider, entrepreneur, salesman, inventor. In this way, inmates embrace the consumer-contaminated realms of kitsch and craft to sustain a social integrity that, to some degree, neutralizes a status tied solely to incarceration. (Schrift, 2006: 273)

The act of creation, therefore, can be a powerful and emancipatory process; something that Merriam (1998) believes is vital for women in prison, who have often experienced severe forms of abuse and trauma prior to their detention. Using art therapy in such cases has allowed transformation and healing to occur because the necessity to verbally articulate emotions and feelings is redundant through the use of visual images. Through their art, the women learn to self-direct and control the world around them, whilst the bounded nature of their activity creates a safe space for self-expression. In his content analysis of prisoners' letters, Walley (1998) found similar evidence of empowerment via yoga and meditation. Prisoners reported enhanced feelings of self-esteem and control, with a corresponding reduction in drug dependency. Likewise, Nellis (2002) discovered that yoga helped prisoners cope with the regime and enabled them to relax in a non-threatening space. This also emerged in interviews with prison yoga students, where they reported that yoga induced feelings of safety and for some individuals it provided a refuge where they could totally drop all barriers that they had constantly maintained:

We were saying just last week how I feel, we all felt safe in here. We all trust [the teacher]. We all trust each other and that is [...] you can't go into any other part of this prison and get that answer or get that feeling of total [...] of just being relaxed and not being worried. In a way you escape prison and your mind goes to other places within the outside [...] ambitions [...] whatever it may be that's on your mind that day or, even if you're sad [...] yoga does show you to not be so fearful and look into that sadness and find out why you're sad. So it takes you to a lot of deep places and, from that, I think you can only get better results or you could only be a better person by not being afraid of yourself and being able to look in the mirror and accept what you see. And yoga does that for us and when we come here it's like we've got a little family [...] I look forward to my yoga. (Prisoner interview, April 2010)

Thus, it can be seen that enrichment activities in prisons enhance feelings of safety and can generate ontological security in an otherwise debilitating place. This is particularly relevant if aggression and violence is to be avoided, as Butler (2008) found that prisoners

are less likely to engage in confrontations if they feel secure in their identities and have a sense of self-worth. Harmonious relationships with their peers are essential and, for some prisoners, enrichment activities can offer neutrality where status and ego lose import as groups engage in absorbing tasks. Currie (1989), who evaluated a variety of arts projects in Waikeria prison, New Zealand, describes how the potential for gang violence in the prison was eased by enrichment activities, as gang loyalties and boundaries became permeable when inter-group bonding and rapport developed. However, despite participants reporting these improved relations, the findings are tempered by the absence of any reduction in associated adjudications.

This is similar to what one prison yoga student said when he described yoga as 'protection', although he acknowledged that many prisoners achieved this through more harmful pursuits such as alcohol or drugs (fieldwork notes, April 2009). A theme that also emerged for those doing yoga was the belonging that they felt as part of a yoga community or brotherhood. Another man remarked that he felt part of an 'enjoyable group effort' where there was no tension or friction in their 'collegiate relationship[s]' (prisoner interview, March 2010), whilst someone else recounted how he was 'uplifted' by the group's energy and felt that practising with others allowed him to trust those around him (prisoner interview April 2010). Interestingly, these feelings existed in the classroom, but also extended to the prison wings when one man described how they would greet each other with a cursory nod as recognition of their mutual membership. In an interview with a prisoner who had been doing yoga for approximately 13 months of his sentence, he described how a meditation technique he employed enabled him to consciously work on developing positive regard for the other people around him:

A practise that sort of did me good when I came to prison was to sit quietly and meditate and then consciously go round the wing or go round the cells near me and just say to everyone mentally 'I love you, hope you're alright, take care, move on'. (Prisoner interview, March 2010)

Not only is this individual security important, but engendering feelings of safety is particularly pertinent for the wider dynamic security described by Dunbar (1987). Positive and respectful relationships between prisoners and staff can build trust between the captive and the captor (Wilson *et al.*, 2009), actively promoting a harmonious institutional culture. However, mixed results have been recorded with respect to prisoner-staff relations, as some custodial staff are openly hostile to these types of projects. Shailor (2008) notes that several prison officers viewed his prison theatre programme with disgust, although, ultimately, this did not undermine the success of the project, where the power of performance enabled the men he worked with to overcome negative traits. In a more promising study by Wilson *et al.* (2009), a ripple effect in the prisoner-staff relationships was reported as their results showed that prisoners engaged in a music project viewed staff more favourably.

However, at the same time, the merit of enrichment activities also lies, paradoxically, in their ability to challenge and diminish the validity of authoritarian regimes in a personalised form of resistance. Kanter (2007) describes how, through the process of

theatrical improvisation, the imprisoned body becomes fluid and free in contrast to the disciplinary forces elucidated by Foucault (1977). The vagaries of arbitrary power can be countered through this method as participants create their own private space; the lack of audience in this art-form being partly responsible for this personal oasis. This approach has similarities with prison yoga that encourages students to utilise breath-awareness as a way of de-stressing the body and mind by coming into the present moment. Whilst the prison yoga student is somewhat restricted and confined on a physical level, the ability to use the breath in this manner can induce feelings of space and openness, bringing about a metaphorical and spiritual freedom (Parkes, 2010). These techniques are reminiscent of what Goffman (1961: 67) terms 'removal activities', which are engrossing and absorbing actions that can lift the individual out of their present circumstances and help pass time. The use of the body as a form of expression, as opposed to a reliance on written text, is apposite. Many imprisoned individuals lack basic literacy and, in Kanter's project, were also suffering from mental illness. What she reveals is that the process of collaborative improvisation enabled these prisoners to overcome their loss of identity through the requirement for spontaneity. She recalls (2007: 388), 'the inmates had to respond to the sound and movement they were given not as the murderer, the rapist, the robber, or even the tough guy they performed every day in prison, but as themselves'.

One of the key findings manifest in the literature assessing enrichment activities is the way in which they build and maintain positive relationships (Arts Alliance, 2010), which is crucial to the successful reintegration of prisoners after their release. During one class observation, a yoga student asked the teacher whether he would be able to find a yoga community outside of the institution as he was keen to maintain his practice after he left the prison (fieldwork notes, April 2009). The potential for yoga to generate social capital inside, and outside, the prison gates was very much reflected in another student's interview. He commented that:

I think it's really nice to look at someone next to you and notice that they can see you but you don't bother them [...] it's like we're all on the same journey even though we're heading different places all together. We still feel united and you feel like somebody. It's just levelled, everyone's cool, everyone's calm, we don't shout at each other [...] I'm surprised I'm in jail [...] and it's kinda saddening when you start hearing keys and 'oh it's movements' and you think 'Oh, OK, this is where I am' but, at the same time, like it's just good to be around people that are not so tense cause jail makes everything tense, and it's just nice, it relaxes every part of me [...] Plus I never really had much family time growing up, so, it is nice to have people I can relate to even though we're not of the same blood [...] I care about what they are going through and, if they ask me to even help them stretch, it's nothing for me to say 'yeah, cool'. It's a place where you give and receive. (Prisoner interview, April 2010)

Whilst familial relationships can be fostered through enrichment activities, they cannot literally relieve the frustrations associated with the loss of sexual relationships, but they

can alleviate this pain of imprisonment through their ability to act as an emotional release. As Peaker & Vincent (1990) state:

Some prisoners look to arts workshops as a means of releasing their tensions and particularly value physical activities such as drama, dance and sculpture as a means of using their energy constructively; others wish simply to 'let off steam' in a controlled and sympathetic environment. (1990: 73)

The added advantage of enrichment activities being offered by third sector organisations is that they bring members of the community into the institution (Clear *et al.*, 2000). Prisoners welcome the opportunity to have such contact as a way of maintaining their sexual identity and, even though they are not in a position to enter into a sexual relationship, they can at least be flirtatious and rehearse the social skills required to foster intimate relationships upon release. Enrichment activities also allow for the legitimate expression of feelings. Crewe (2006), for example, recounts the way in which artistic prisoners were commissioned by their peers to create romantic trinkets or portraits which they could later give to significant others. This allowed the men he studied to display their love and affection without the fear of reproach in an otherwise hyper-masculine environment which necessitated the repression of sentiment. Perhaps, more importantly, for prisoners who have inappropriate sexual desires and have been imprisoned as a consequence of acting on these predilections, there is some indication that enrichment activities can act as a potential safeguard to further crime. For instance, Derezotes (2000) found that yoga and meditation assisted adolescent sex offenders to regulate their urges to re-offend as the spiritual nature of the practice encouraged them to develop empathy, self-awareness and self-control. It is possible, therefore, to see that enrichment activities can be instrumental in easing the pains of confinement for a diversity of prisoners and they are particularly noted as beneficial for those from a Black and Minority Ethnic background, self-harming women and people with learning difficulties or mental health problems (Ash, 2009). Creative and enriching projects, through their positive effects, can assist prisoners to move towards rehabilitation.

The impact of the 'rehabilitation revolution' on enrichment activities

One of the significant elements of enrichment practices with prisoners is the way in which they foster respectful relationships so that prisoners feel connected to themselves and others (Wilson *et al.*, 2009); effective and trusting relationships being of paramount importance in seeking to promote reform and desistance from crime (Maruna, 2001). Additionally, White & Graham (2010) argue that, even though both practitioners and offenders may be subject to external constraints which inhibit their actions, a supervisory relationship built on positive values and mutual respect is crucial to the rehabilitation process.

Good relationships beyond the prison gate are especially crucial to the successful reintegration of prisoners, particularly if employment is to be secured; a key contributory factor to rehabilitation. Therefore, the coalition government's intention to address the lengthy periods of inactivity many prisoners experience during their sequestration is only to be welcomed. However, their intention to focus on tasks in areas of industry that might

be described as menial and routine raises concern for the provision of artistic and spiritual activities, which allow prisoners to develop a much broader range of interpersonal and social skills. A recent example can be found when the Howard League for Penal Reform set up a social enterprise employing prisoners in graphic design as a 'radical departure from the uninspired, repetitive and poorly paid version of prison work that characterizes modern incarceration' (The Howard League, 2011: 5). Unfortunately, the viability of this work was perceptibly undermined by the prison regime when a reduction in hours and frequent lockdowns led the business to fold (Home Affairs Committee, 2010) and this might be said to reflect the lack of credence given to the arts in the UK's economy. For example, the Arts Council (2010) is calling for creativity to be acknowledged in relation to the cultural capital that can be used to engage and sustain communities in the UK's economic recovery. Still, even if enrichment activities do not lead directly to employment in any artistic or spiritual sense, prisoners can enhance their employability skills through this type of engagement. Chubb (2010: 41) has charted the way in which yoga and meditation contributes to the enhancement of personal and social skills; the practice provides a 'stepping stone' in the employment direction. She details how yoga has the power to heal past trauma, to inculcate concentration and focus, and to motivate and engage further learning. Similarly, when prisoners feel at ease and content with themselves they become open to exploring other possibilities and, as the act of self-learning provides a positive educational encounter, they are keen to replicate and build upon this experience. This accords with the self-belief and affirmation that one prison yoga student spoke about, which they said they achieved through the practice without the need to generate an identity that might be obtained through the world of employment:

Yoga is what I do and this is what I am doing [...] rather than it being 'I've gone out and learnt a trade to become a carpenter' or 'I've gone out, done a trade and I'm the wing barber', which gives you your sense of self when it's already there rather than through something else. That's what yoga's taught me. (Prisoner interview, March 2010)

When looking at the employment of ex-prisoners more generally, one of the interesting findings from Vennard & Hedderman (2009) is the way in which effective relationships between employment specialists and probation personnel have been compromised by rigid and centrally-controlled programmes. An inability to be creative and flexible left employment advisers feeling devalued in the partnership and they were unable to focus on the softer skills that were needed to encourage offenders into work. Ironically, the impact of managerialism on probation practitioners, where the government has sought to monitor, control and enforce their performance with offenders (Ashworth, 2009), mirrors the loss of autonomy and containment that prisoners themselves experience, and it is not yet clear that Payment by Results, where the government will play a significant role in defining the outcomes to be achieved, will go any way to alleviate this situation. Ashworth (2009) argues that the attack on probation values, which were based on human dignity, personalisation and assistance, have been replaced by a strict scrutiny, command and contain ethos as part of the government's attempt to regulate the service. This has seriously undermined the relational nature of probation work so that it could be argued that what, in fact, the government is now attempting to replace with third sector

partnerships is the very diversity and flexibility that the probation service once offered. Indeed, fears that an alliance with the third sector may be yet another smokescreen behind which central government moulds and tightly monitors their practice via the commissioning process, have already been remarked upon (Johnston & Hewish, 2008). The benefits of third sector partnerships lie in their ability to absolve the government of some of the risks associated with criminal justice provision but, at the same time, there are inherent dangers in this collaboration. If the enrichment activities that they provide, the very essence of what makes them valued by prisoners, are diluted or eradicated, then the potential for effective rehabilitation could also be jeopardised. The coalition government should support enrichment activities for prisoners if they are serious in their aims to meet the diverse range of prisoners' needs when seeking to secure their rehabilitation. Whilst they may gain some negative media and public attention, there is sufficient evidence of their merits to counter this adverse publicity.

Creating the way for enrichment activities

This paper has considered the connections between the arts and spirituality as types of enrichment activities via the current literature, along with specific reference to a case study of a men's weekly prison yoga class. These pursuits have been examined in the context of a changing policy arena where the rehabilitation of prisoners has, once more, gained ascendancy. It has considered that the decline of these activities may be partly due to public anxiety about crime, which has led to calls for harsher punishments, and partly through an accentuation of this fear by a salacious tabloid press. Politicians, in seeking to appease these concerns, have ratcheted up the responses to crime in their bid to appear tough and to retain (or attain) their place in office. However, this response has led to an escalating and unsustainable use of custody and, as a result of economic crisis, radical reform is now necessary. The incumbent coalition government has espoused a decarceration plan built on effective rehabilitation, but whether there will be a significant reversal to the unprecedented prison occupation is yet to materialise. Previous attempts to reduce numbers by way of the End of Custody Licence under New Labour's government, which enabled the early release of some prisoners, met with scathing media and public attention (Whitehead, 2010). In light of the damage produced through incarceration and its ability to hamper the rehabilitation process, a parallel agenda to eradicate this harm should also be pursued. Enrichment activities have been shown to temper the pains of imprisonment whilst, at the same time, encourage and motivate some of the most difficult to engage prisoners towards rehabilitation.

As rehabilitation is predicated on the successful reintegration of prisoners back into their communities, the ability of enrichment activities to foster and sustain these links merits their use as part of a wider rehabilitation programme. Whilst the coalition government has begrudgingly accepted the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights³ that will give prisoners their rights to vote, this civic action does not go far enough. Criminal justice and, more specifically, rehabilitation provision must entail a greater inclusion of

³ See *Greens & MT v United Kingdom* (2010). ECHR 60041/08 & 60054/08.

enrichment activities which foster responsibility and empowerment. When discussing the benefits of his Shakespeare in Prison Project, Shailor notes:

Too often, prison is a place where men learn fear, submission, dependence and despair; new forms of physical and emotional violence; and narrow, egocentric pathways to "success". Arts programming in general, theatre more specifically, and Shakespeare in particular can teach something else: individual empowerment, relational responsibility, and moral imagination.
(2008: 641)

Prisoners are *people* first and their humanity and encompassing human rights must be preserved and promoted in the punishment process. When, on 25 November 2010, the Prime Minister announced plans to measure the nation's happiness, as the wellbeing of society is to become a political concern (BBC, 2010), it was clear that the happiness of prisoners is not to be captured in this study. This omission should give cause for concern if, as Dostoevsky said, the degree of civilisation in a society can be judged by entering its prisons. Making prisoners suffer in the punishment process does not promote their rehabilitation and vicariously harms their families and the wider community; prison regimes must be built on positive and mutually respectful relationships. If prisoners can be assisted to build enriching and good lives, then the risk of harm to others will correspondingly fall...and this is something that has the potential to make everyone happy.

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