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Psychology, prisons and ideology : the Prison Department Psychological Service

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Introduction

A number of critiques of applied psychology have been produced in recent years. The most sustained and effective of these has probably been the campaign against the use of IQ tests as a means of educational selection. Psychologists in industry are also a familiar and in one sense obvious target for polemical attacks from the left. Generally, with the exception of some contributions to the IQ debate (see, e.g., a forthcoming article by Les Levidow in Radical Science Journal), these critiques have been limited; deep and thorough Marxist analyses of applied psychology in Britain have yet to be produced. Anti-psychiatry, for example, derived much of what little theoretical content it had from writers as unremittingly bourgeois as Szasz.

The building of a revolutionary movement requires that a wide range of popular struggles be drawn to it and led by it. Marxists are limited in their ability to do this, to appropriate diverse resistances for revolution, by the limits of their understanding of the conjunctures in which resistances develop. It is not obvious why and how applied psychology has taken the forms it has, when it has. Without historical understanding of its development and contradictions, we are not going to be able to inform political practice in struggles where applied psychology is involved — in education, health, production, prisons. The practice of applied psychologists is usually constituted by highly mediated contradictions at a number of different levels. Faced with the complexity of psychology as the reproduction of bourgeois ideology, we cannot make do with simplistic analyses of psychologists as conspiring ideologues, or as direct agents of the repressive state, or as simple reflections, ideological effects. The practices and experiences of psychologists and those around them must be recognisable in the analysis, which must be pointed towards the construction of a general theory of ideology (1).

In this article we offer the products of some preliminary investigation and theorisation of one area of applied psychology. The investigation is restricted to a small, well defined area — the work of psychologists in the British prison system. The growth of the Prison Psychological

Service is traced (Section A), and set against parallel developments in penal policy and prison management (Section B). The work of the Service is outlined in relation to those developments and to the general objectives of prison (Section C). The concluding discussion (Section D) presents some formulations with which we might begin to locate psychology in the discourse of prison, and vice versa.

We will not be considering the work of psychologists in the special hospitals (which are administratively part of the NHS), nor the work done by other psychologists for the Home Office, whether employed in the Home Office Research Unit or receiving Home Office grants. Nor will we discuss the contribution made by psychologists to the discipline of criminology. The justification for taking as our object the circumscribed phenomenon of psychology in prisons rests not on its discreteness in terms of bureaucratic organisation but on the specificity of the prison system as part of the repressive state apparatus, and of prison as a component of bourgeois ideology.

A. The Development of the Prison Psychological Service

The first appointment of a psychologist in the British prison system was made in 1946. The appointment was to the medical side of the service, and the psychologist was expected to give most attention to borstal allocation work (2). Other early appointments were made to a male borstal recall centre, to the Training School for prison staff, and to a training prison with a psychiatric centre (3), but the expectation was that the main contribution of psychologists would be in the allocation of prisoners to different establishments. The initial concentration on allocation to borstals and corrective training was soon extended to the court work of local prisons (2). Psychologists were introduced to assist in the preparation of reports for the courts by prison medical officers and assistant governors, by assessing the inmates of local prisons awaiting trial or sentencing.

However, given the very high turnover in a large local prison, it was impossible for psychologists to be routinely involved in court reports, despite the early introduction of psychological testers (see Table 1) to perform routine testing. Moreover,

> ... it seemed doubtful whether, in a large proportion of cases, psychological information would really assist the court. (3)

The courts were seen as being

> not yet fully adapted to the most efficient use of diagnostic services. (2)

Thus the psychologists came to see their energies as being best directed into the prison system itself (– we will consider the significance of this later), and to develop their role accordingly. During the 1950's they began to work selectively with convicted prisoners in a treatment role,

to be involved in counselling work and in group psychotherapy in prison psychiatric units. The emphases though were increasingly on work with prison staff, and on research. They became involved in staff selection and training, and in more general advisory work, assisting other staff in problems they met with in dealing with inmates. According to the 1959 White Paper 'Penal Practice in a Changing Society',

> ... in all establishments in which they are employed they
> may be called upon to advise in the treatment of trouble-
> some inmates. (4)

In this White Paper, however, prominence is still given to work directly involved in the treatment of individual inmates — assisting "in the psychotherapeutic work and otherwise" at the three psychiatric units (Wakefield, Wormwood Scrubs and Holloway), and working at the centres where borstal boys and recidivists were classified.

TABLE I.
PRISON PSYCHOLOGISTS: GROWTH IN ESTABLISHMENT

1946:	appointment of first psychologist.
1949:	17 psychologists, 13 psychological testers.
1955:	19 psychologists, 12 psychological testers.
1963:	34 psychologists, 17 psychological testers. (At this time there were also 10 vacancies for psychologists, and 3 for testers.)
1970:	61 full-time and 6 part-time psychologists, 25 testers.
1973:	70 full-time and 5 part-time psychologists, 28 testers. (These were based in 33 establishments, with 26 others being visited.)
1975:	84 full-time and 2 part-time psychologists, 30 testers.

Source: Reports of the Commissioner of Prisons (to 1964), and subsequently of the Work of the Home Office Prison Department.

In the next White Paper on prisons in 1968 (5), it is observed that diagnostic assessment of prisoners on remand is still done by psychologists, as is further assessment work at allocation centres and training prisons. It is also noted that psychologists have played a considerable part in the development of group counselling. But in general the psychologist is now seen as someone who aims:

> ... to assess and understand institutional processes, and the ways
> in which they can affect both prisoner and staff.

and

> ... to provide recommendations on which operational decisions
> may be made, and to collect data for evaluative research into
> the effectiveness of the system to which he is contributing.

Similarly, the Prison Department Report for 1970 describes one area

of psychologists' work as being:

> assisting management to understand and deal appropriately
> with processes and events within the establishment.

Evaluative research is also mentioned here, and the inspection of establishments. The Report for 1971 says that psychologists are involved in advising management on institutional processes, the "evaluation of operational processes" and in the planning of new prisons and regimes.

By the late 1960's, then, this advisory and evaluative research work had become a major activity of the Psychological Service. In 1968, the Chief Psychologist of the Prison Department was able to say that all of the 50 or so research projects then in progress in the Prison Department (Two thirds of which were directed by members of the Psychological Service, the rest by members of the Medical Service) were broadly 'operational' in nature, i.e. they were concerned with problems confronting prison staff. Some of this research (6) will be discussed in Section C.

The organisation of the Psychological Service within the Prison Dept. is now fully consistent with the primary function of the Service being to carry out research for the purpose of assisting in management and in planning and other "supra-establishment tasks" (7), e.g. work on procedures of staff selection. In July 1974 the Prisons Board accepted the recommendations of a working party which had been set up in 1970 to investigate the work of psychologists in the Prison Dept. Guidelines were thus established according to which psychological resources should be assigned primarily to tasks involving design, development and evaluation. The 1975 Report referred to "some progress" in the implementation of these guidelines in the establishment of an Adult Offender Psychological Unit at Head Office (Eccleston Square SW 1), to coordinate all research relating to adult offenders. A Young Offender Psychological Unit had been set up at Head Office in 1973, with 4 psychologists and 2 testers, built on the work of psychologists at the Borstal Allocation Centre at Wormwood Scrubs. There appears to be an increasing concentration of staff at Head Office; in 1970 only the Chief Psychologist and one other were based there.

The 1975 Report also described modifications to the overall structure of the Prison Service, The Directorate of the Prison Psychological Service is the responsibility of the Controllerate of Planning and Development, which has responsibility for medium and long-term planning and development of the prison system. There are two other Controllerates — for Personnel and Services, and Operational Administration. There is also the Inspectorate, and the Directorate of the Prison Medical Service. The heads of these five sections comprise the Prisons Board, under the chairmanship of the Director-General of the Prison Service.

We can therefore trace the development of the Prison Psychological

Service, with its origins as an assessment service and its tendency towards becoming a research and development department. Some prison psychologists are still involved in much work with individual inmates — a recent estimate (8) is that two thirds of them are still involved in assessment. But in general the shift is from a para-medical role to a social engineering one. This contrasts with clinical psychology, which emerged at the same time and in a similar way as a technology of assessment and classification (of which educational psychology was the first example), but has not made any substantial contribution to management in the NHS, despite the wishes of many clinical psychologists that it should do so, and their greater numbers. To understand why this shift has been taking place in the prison system, and its implications, we must place it in the context of changes in British penal policy since the war, and the adaptation of the prison system to the changing requirements of the capitalist social order in contemporary Britain.

B. Penal Policy and Prison Management

Since 1945, the major and broadly consistent trends in penal policy have been away from imprisonment for certain categories of offence, and towards longer sentences for those still sent to prison.

TABLE II.

PRISON POPULATION: ANNUAL INTAKES, AVERAGE SENTENCES. AND AVERAGE DAILY POPULATIONS

(PRISONS AND BORSTALS)
1961 taken as index year

	Receptions	Sentence Length	Population
1913	342	17	18155
1938	76	39	11086
1948	86	83	19765
1958	84	99	25379
1961	100	100	29025
1962	113	92	31063
1963	114	84	29925
1964	109	84	29600
1965	112	84	30421
1966	124	94	33086
1967	119	93	35009
1968	89	119	32461
1969	99	126	34667
1970	111	132	39028
1971	109	131	39708
1972	103	128	38328
1973			36774
1974			36867
1975			39820

Source: Reports of the Commissioner of Prisons (to 1964), and subsequently of the Work of the Home Office Prison Department.

The first trend has generally been argued for on grounds of rationality and humanitarianism, as the failure of prison to reduce recidivism and to rehabilitate became more apparent. However, those arguments became decisive when it was necessary, for rather more concrete economic reasons, to effect some change in sentencing practices. As we can see from Table 2, during and immediately after the war the population of British prisons nearly doubled. Prisons became far more expensive to run and more dangerously overcrowded than they had ever been before. As Klare points out (9), this was, .

> ... at a time of general austerity when little money was
> available for general reconstruction, let alone the building
> of new penal institutions. As a result, a number of open
> prisons and borstals were set up, not really as an expression
> of penal philosophy but as the cheapest and easiest way of
> housing the growing number of inmates.

At the same time, a move to reduce the number of inmates was begun. The 1948 Criminal Justice Act restricted the powers of the courts to imprison young offenders, extended the scope of fines and probation orders, and made formal provision for courts to discharge defendants. The First Offenders Act of 1958 extended some of the provisions of the 1948 Act to adults, and the 1961 Criminal Justice Act imposed further restrictions on the imprisonment of young offenders, although it also made wider provision for shorter detentions of 3 to 6 months. The prison population was then relatively stable during the early sixties, though at an uncomfortably high level, and it began increasing again in 1965. Thus the Criminal Justice Act of 1967 introduced the suspended sentence and parole, and allowed a wider use of bail, in a further attempt to ease the pressure on the prison system. The Criminal Justice Act of 1972 was another stage in this development, although the general trend has been offset to some extent by changes in judicial practice (e.g. the parole system has led to some judges passing longer sentences). Hawkins (10) argues that

> The debates on the 1972 Bill suggest that Parliament has
> established a presumption that all adult offenders should
> now be dealt with by a non-custodial measure unless they
> fall into a small, clearly-defined group.

A fall in the number of indictable offences in the early '70's also helped to reduce the population, but in 1974 that number rose by 21%. Since then the prison population has on occasions passed the 40,000 mark. We cannot here go into the reasons for the general increase in 'crime'; we must simply note that for most of the period under discussion, overcrowding has been the major problem in the British prison system. The resultant shift away from imprisonment has not only transformed penal policy but also redefined the internal principles, problems and objectives of the prison system.

The primary objective of prisons must be to detain their inmates, yet for a long time, as the system came under increasing strain, inadequate resources were devoted to security (10). Until, that is, the Mountbatten report of 1966 (12), which marked the reassertion of the priority of security and control, as opposed to the treatment and rehabilitation orientation which had been the dominant post-war rationale. Mountbatten's inquiry was established in response to a sustained agitational campaign in the national press over the frequent escapes from British prisons, particularly those of train robbers Wilson and Biggs in 1964 and 1965, and that of spy Blake in 1966. (Again, we cannot go further into why this preoccupation with escapes and security should have become dominant at this specific time — political embarrassment does not always lead to effective action.)

Mountbatten gave expression to what has since become a key principle of prison management: *segregation*. He set out a four-fold classification of prisoners according to danger and security risk — Categories A to D. His recommendation that all top security (Category A) prisoners should be concentrated in one purpose-built institution on the Isle of Wight was not adopted, on the grounds that such an institution would present impossible problems of management and staff recruitment. However the classification system has since become the operational basis for the gradation of security regimes and the separation of different classes of prisoner. Following the report, security became the top priority. New constructions and new technologies (e.g. seismic detectors) were introduced to strengthen perimeter security; dogs were brought in and dog-handling became a full-time specialism for prison officers.

These changes did reduce the number of escapes but brought other problems in their wake. The new restrictions and tightening of internal discipline which were involved brought further tension to the system, and in 1969 the first serious large-scale disturbance in a British prison for 37 years occurred at Parkhurst. In 1972 there were the widespread strikes and protests organised by PROP, and there have since been other episodes of struggle in various establishments, e.g. the riot at Hull in 1976.

Thus the security problem has changed from being one of preventing escapes to one of internal security. The response to internal disturbances has been to pursue the principle of segregation. The Prison Dept. report for 1970 said:

> The serious disturbance at Parkhurst in October 1969
> underlined the need for measures to cope with the special
> problems arising from the concentration of difficult and
> disturbed prisoners there. One of the wings was therefore set
> aside as a medically-oriented unit to provide, in conditions
> of closer control, individual care and support to emotionally
> disturbed prisoners who in the main body of the prison
> might become the focal point of unrest.

This passage states particularly clearly, in relation to inmate unrest, two themes which are familiar as explanations of crime in general: medicalisation, and what can be called the 'rotten apple theory'. Together these provide a rationale for pursuing segregation in the name of treatment as the means of dealing with internal disturbance. Cohen (13) also points to the interweaving of segregation and treatment. As we have noted, the rhetoric of prison-as-treatment was sharply demoted in practice following Mountbatten, but statements of policy continued to express a commitment to rehabilitation. In 'People in Prison' in 1968 we find the aims of the service reasserted as detention and (after Rule 1 of the Prison Rules) rehabilitation — "to encourage and assist them to lead a good and useful life". At this same time, though, this document introduces the policy of 'humane containment', which we can identify as the other component (with segregation) of the response to the new problems of management which emerged in the late sixties. This involves the recognition that, at least for certain categories of prisoner, active rehabilitation is not possible. The function of prison then becomes the *storage* of these prisoners.

It is only long-term prisoners who can be stored; it is also from this group that Category A prisoners are drawn, i.e. those for whom maximum security and segregation is required. Following the rejection of Mountbatten's proposal for concentrating all security risks in one completely segregated prison, Category A prisoners have been 'dispersed' to long-term wings in six top security prisons, and the 'special wings' in which they were previously housed have been closed down. The dispersal prisons have been strengthened (e.g. in perimeter security and staffing), and segregation has been practised internally. In the face of considerable publicity, a notable failure in this strategy occurred in the case of the control units. In 1973 it was announced that control units would be established at two of the dispersal prisons, Wakefield and Wormwood Scrubs. These were the furthest development of the segregation principle — the isolation for 180 days of "intractable troublemakers". Five men passed through the Wakefield unit, and the one at the Scrubs never opened. The 1975 Report said

> There had perhaps been an underestimation of the skill and
> ability of the staffs of the various dispersal prisons to contain
> intractable troublemakers and to deal with the problem which
> they caused locally without recourse to special accommodation.

In addition to the public campaign against the units, there may also have been a difficulty with the rotten apple theory behind this climbdown. The problem of identifying troublemakers is one on which psychologists have worked, and will be returned to in Section C.

It is unlikely that such failures could lead to the abandonment of the systems of classification and segregation around which the British prison system is now organised. Cohen argues that the principle of segregation

has become the organising logic of control, and reports that

> There is a near-perfect unanimity among prison reformers,
> official policymakers and prison staff that segregation is
> one of the master-keys to a 'successful' system. (13)

Who then are the prisoners who are being segregated for long periods of storage? We observed at the beginning of this section that a major trend in penal policy is towards longer sentences for many of those who are still sent to prison. As Table 2 shows, the 1967 Act played a major role in this. The suspended sentences which it introduced were used most in cases of fraud and forgery, least in cases of robbery (14), a step towards taking 'white-collar crime' out of the prison system. This is part of the strategy of paring down to an "irreducible minimum" (10) the number of offenders who have to be sent to prison – and they are to be sent away for a long time.

This irreducible minimum comprises four main groups: murderers (the majority of murders are 'domestic'), serious sexual offenders, 'professional criminals', and 'terrorists'. This population, and the problems of storage which it poses, has formed largely in the last twenty years. Before that, murderers were usually hung, there was much less large-scale organised crime, and though there had been an IRA bombing campaign in the fifties, the 'terrorist threat' had not developed its present dimensions.

There is clearly a long way to go in this restructuring of the prison system, before prison would become mainly a place in which the irreducible minimum are stored, all others being dealt with by non-custodial measures – suspended sentences, community service etc. However there already exists a substantial number of prisoners who are serving long fixed term sentences, or life – and with minimum recommendations increasingly being made by judges, the average time served by lifers has been increasing (15, 16). There are about 1200 lifers at present, 240 of whom are Category A (17). There are currently 77 Irish republican prisoners serving life or fixed terms of at least ten years (18).

In the final section we shall consider the themes of segregation and storage at a different level, as ideological moments of prison in general. From this very brief sketch of some major trends in British penal policy and problems of prison management over the last three decades, we can return to our specific concern with the question: why has the prison psychological service been expanding steadily, in the direction it has, during this period of increasing strain within the prison system? Chronic overcrowding has meant strong pressure from within the system to reduce the prison population. With indictable offences generally on the increase, this has meant changes in penal policy and a gradual recomposition of the prison population, with the trend towards bringing it down to an irreducible minimum. This in turn is producing

new problems of management — how can the system contain people in long-term storage? — which were exacerbated by the changes made after Mountbatten. Social engineering within the prison has therefore come to the fore.

We can therefore see the development of the psychological service, and its increasing involvement in design, development, and evaluation, as part of the urgent need to reorganise the prison system. This reorganisation is demanding the production of techniques, categories, and information which psychologists, trained to the limits of positivism (especially in statistics) are well suited to provide. We can now look at some of their efforts to do this, in relation to the specific management objectives described above, and to the more general development of a management technology within the prison system.

C. The Work of Prison Psychologists

The work of the Psychological Service is described only briefly in the Prison Department Reports, the fullest account being in the Reports for 1970 and 1971. Initially, as we have observed, the work was mainly that of clinical assessments, with a later involvement in therapy. A piety redolent of a 'casework' style of approach characterised some of this early work. Thus the psychologist contributing to the Report of 1954 referred to the work of "supportive therapy", and stated

> The common factor among the majority of the men whom he
> (the prison psychologist) has to investigate is one of
> emotional disturbance.

In the 1955 the emphasis on the inadequacy of the individual was even more sharply put:

> ... not poverty, but failure to spend wisely

is identified as a common reason for incarceration.

At the present time there are a number of psychologists engaged in work with inmates designated as 'psychotherapy' or 'supportive therapy', and projective tests are used by some. On the whole, though, the triumph of positivism, in its most consistent forms of behaviourism and statistical research, seems to be fairly complete amongst prison psychologists. Thus the British Psychological Society, in its 1966 Memorandum to the Royal Commission on the Penal System in England and Wales, enthused that psychologists

> ... are thoroughly trained in experimental procedures, the
> systematic observation of behaviour, and the use of
> statistical techniques of analysis and evaluation. The most
> valuable and distinctive contribution of psychologists ...
> reflects this basic training.

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The Memorandum also stressed the central, unifying role in prison work of an "integrated programme of research". However the assessment and treatment of individual inmates (or 'special groups', as at Grendon and Parkhurst) are still the first two areas of work listed in the 1971 report — though in 1970 it had been noted that there was "less time being spent on inmates' problems and more on the problems arising from the management and treatment of inmates."

The assessment work may be related to sentencing, allocation, training or parole decisions; an increasing number of clinically trained psychologists are available to do it (the Home Office seconds a number of psychologists for clinical training; others join the prison service after a clinical training — the salaries are higher than in the N.H.S.).

Much of the treatment is now behavioural. In addition to work with individual inmates, proposals have been made for behavioural regimes. An operant conditioning regime was planned for Holloway in 1972, and also in that year a prison psychologist was seconded for nine months to Cambridge University to investigate the treatment possibilities of behaviour modification. The product of this was a paper entitled 'The Design of Imprisonment'.

Psychologists have also been active in the application of 'scientific management' to prisons, e.g. through their membership of the Management Review Team they have been involved in a 'Management by Objectives' exercise at Feltham Borstal.

Reports of some of the research work carried out by prison psychologists are available in university libraries, under the title of D.P.S. (for Directorate of Psychological Services) Reports. There have been five of these so far, though the series extends further back under the title of C.P. (Chief Psychologist) Reports. There is also a series called Psychologists' Monographs. Occasionally, papers by prison psychologists appear in the British Journal of Criminology or other journals. The following account is drawn mainly from these sources, and from the Prison Department Reports.

We can point to a number of examples in which the work is addressed directly to solving the management problems described in the previous section, by developing methods of classification (which underpins the segregation principle), and by investigating the effects and problems of long-term storage. Thus in his 1968 review paper (6), Straker refers to four studies concerned with the problem of classifying inmates. One of these related to the process of allocating inmates to different wings within a prison, and another he summarised as follows:

> Where the institution receives a special group of inmates from
> many points in the system, a more rigorous attempt is being
> made to sub-group the inmates in such a way that inter-group

differences are minimised and intra-group differences maximised. This is being attempted by making cluster analyses both of the inmates in terms of their behavioural characteristics and of those characteristics in terms of the inmates.

If this does not refer to the segregational problems of the dispersal policy, it refers to something rather similar. The third of the studies was part of an attempt to find the most rational ways of organising resources (buildings and staff) to cope with the complexities of prison 'traffic'. Under the heading of studies of institution regimes, and their effects on inmates and staff, he refers to one of the changes in inmate behaviour during long sentences. Such an investigation is also mentioned in the 1967 Report, as are unspecified studies of lifers, and in the 1969 Report there is reference to research into attitude change during sentence, as well as to studies of the parole and classification dossier. The 1971 Report speaks of "a study of a prison population to find suitable subgroups in terms of wing populations". This may be the cluster analysis project we have already noted. (With the material to hand, a detailed examination of all these research projects is not possible. The survey presented here is limited, but adequate for our purpose of identifying some of the problems which psychologists are being called upon to help solve.)

More recently, the problems of segregation and storage have been taken up in studies of Rule 43 and of 'subversives'; the Home Office has also funded a large research project on the psychological correlates of long-term imprisonment. (In this study, cross-sectional comparisons found decreases in perceptual-motor speed and in self-respect, increases in hostility and introversion with increasing time served. In their longitudinal analysis, though, the authors found no deterioration over time and refer to the "beneficial effects" of imprisonment − 19, 20, 21, 22.)

The work on the identification of subversives was reported in the Sunday Times (23). Here numerous statistical operations performed on 18 variables failed to distinguish the 25% of prisoners designated 'subversive' by prison officers from the rest of an inmate sample of 200. This study raises particularly clearly some important questions about the effectivity of psychological research. Much research, in prisons and elsewhere, may appear to be reproducing in a simply reflective way the ideology and practice of the state apparatus and specific institution within which it is produced. Here the research results appear to conflict with a working assumption of the institution − that there are rotten apples which can be identified. We might expect this conflict to be resolved either by an intensified search for variables which can discriminate the 'subversives', or by a sophistication of the conceptualisation to accommodate the research results. We could imagine, for example, the abandonment of the rotten apple theory in favour of a system theory approach to prison disturbances.

The degree of influence which psychologists and their research have

within the prison system is hard to assess from the outside. We can say fairly confidently that research results are unlikely to cut much ice with the majority of prison officers, even if they should hear about them; the uniformed staff are frequently in contradiction with the relative liberalism of the governor grades and the Home Office. It is only at higher levels of the system where their work is commissioned, that psychologists can expect to be taken seriously. Williams (24), after summarising various largely unsuccessful attempts to develop predictive techniques, and some negative outcome studies, nevertheless states that "the results of much of this research exert a continuing influence on the organisation of the prison system, particularly in respect of the young offender." Certainly psychologists have gained in influence, and have been or are now involved in managerial processes such as reviews of the dispersal policy, the selection of Assistant Governors, and, as we noted in Section A, the inspection of establishments. Thus we cannot understand prison psychology solely as an exercise in legitimation, as an ideological support for the repressive apparatus of prison, providing a scientised rationale and justification for policies and decisions made for reasons quite external to the activities of psychologists. To some extent we can attribute concrete effectivity to those activities and their products, an influence which may at times be liberal, and at times be more directly coercive.

Some of the work that prison psychologists are employed to do is therefore related in a direct way to the specific management problems of segregation and storage. They are commissioned to provide a technology of data to facilitate those policies. Other work is determined less by such specific requirements than by the general objective of the system — containment of its population. The 1975 Report refers darkly to a project in progress concerning "the general area of the maintenance of control". This seems likely to be the catastrophe theory study also described in the Sunday Times article. A mathematical method for predicting when gradual increases in two variables will produce a massive jump in a third was applied to events at Gartree before the 1972 riot, which it retrospectively predicted. The two independent variables, measures of "tension" and "alienation" in the prison, were arrived at after discussions with prison staff. So here, unlike the 'subversives' study, it seems we have an instance of research straightforwardly confirming the ongoing conceptualisation prevalent in the institution, the only modification being in the greater degree of 'precision' offered by the mathematical model.

Not surprisingly, the development of predictive techniques is often the aim of research in prisons. Straker emphasises this aim in his survey. We have already noted his account of the projects dealing with the classification of inmates, and with institution regimes. There were also at that time three studies of "administration" (the Mental Health Act, court reports, and medical criteria for release), and five of psychological tests in use in prisons. The largest category of projects, though, nearly half of those directed by psychologists, he calls simply "des-

criptions of inmate populations". In this work we can include psychological research as such, e.g. the production of psychometric and psychophysiological data (it should be clear that by 'data' we mean things *produced*, rather than the literal 'given'); and work in which the raw materials are data already produced elsewhere in the system, e.g. in 1971 work was done on "the development of prisoners' records and the procedures which they serve".

Thus a major activity of prison psychologists is in the production, refinement and manipulation of large amounts of information about inmates. This data is organised as a statistical technology which relates to the rest of the prison system in various ways. We have considered the directness with which some of it relates to the particular problems of management of the present period, and the question of the concrete effectivity of the research. In the next section we locate this analysis of psychology as 'technology' in a discussion of psychology and prison as ideology.

D. Prison, Ideology and Psychology

The specific constitutive principle of psychology is the individual, as a central component of bourgeois ideology and line of epistemological defence against the social totality. We can here make only passing reference to the ways in which the discourse of criminology has been constructed with this principle. Most of the major schools of psychology have made their contribution to the individualisation of crime. Basic to this has been the massive research programme to distinguish criminals from the rest of us. Prison psychologists have had at least some participation in this endeavour, in studies to establish cognitive or psychophysiological differences between offenders and non-offenders (25). In the main, though, this crucial ideological task has been undertaken by academics, of whom Eysenck of course is one of the most important. His particular blend of behaviourism and biologism offers the least varnished confirmation of 'commonsense'. The blatancy with which he re-presents to us, as scientific discovery, the deep and pervasive conceptualisations of bourgeois ideology, has been noticed even by those who work on his terrain, it seems. Thus Burgess suggests that a new variable, h ('Hedonism'), be computed (EXN) as a plausible parameter of criminal tendencies, to develop the "general theory of morality" which is implicit in Eysenck's theory of criminality (26).

It is probably to behaviourism that we can turn for the closest ideological articulation between prison and psychology. As Cohen suggests (13), the principles of behaviour modification are perfectly coherent with those of segregation as a means of control. The system of graded return from segregation to normal prison life can be described and designed fully in terms of the principles of reinforcement; 'time-out' is an established punishment in work with psychiatric and mentally-handicapped patients. The logic of the control units is the logic of behaviour modification (although psychologists do not seem to have been directly involved in their design). We can also find learning theory

hand in hand with attempts to establish direct physiological control of deviance.

> The psychological rationale for hormone implants is derived from operant conditioning experiments. The implant allows a period during which there is an increased probability of the patient's behaviour coming under the control of "normal social reinforcers", with the consequent development of behaviour incompatible to the deviant behaviour. (27)

More generally, learning theory is the furthest development within psychology of the atomisation of social relations (the S-R unit, and Law of Effect); prison is the most developed achievement within capitalism of an atomised social order. Such an order is the aim of segregation. The principle of segregation is not only a contemporary expedient of prison management, but also at another level a founding principle of prison itself. Foucault (28) states it thus:

> But once capitalisation had (physically) put invested wealth in popular hands, in the form of raw materials and the means of production, it became absolutely essential to protect this wealth. Because industrial society requires that wealth should be directly in the hands not of those who own it, but those whose labour, by putting it to work, enable a profit to be drawn from it. How was this wealth to be protected? By a rigorous morality, of course; hence the formidable layer of moralisation deposited on the nineteenth-century population. Look at the immense campaigns to christianise the workers in this period. It was absolutely necessary to constitute the populace as a moral subject and break its commerce with delinquence, hence to segregate the delinquents and to show them as being dangerous not only for the rich but also for the poor, as vice-ridden instigators of the gravest social perils.

In the same way Foucault also identifies a longer and more fundamental history for the 'storage' principle than our earlier analysis might suggest, in the eighteenth-century transition in penal practice from once-off punishment to "surveillance". Prison was constructed not so much as a 'warehouse' for particular individuals but as a store or repository of immorality, a negation of morality by which the moral order is maintained. (Fitzgerald (15) offers a brief but suggestive discussion of this and other aspects of the ideology of prison.)

Research to identify "the nature of criminality" (1976 Report) is clearly determined by this need "to constitute the populace as a moral subject". Prison, in all its concrete repressive functions, is also the reproduction of this moral ideology, by segregating the immoral. The segregational imperative extends into the prison, its architecture and organisation. Rothman (29) has documented the establishment of the penitentiary in terms of the segregation principle: not only must

criminals be separated from the rest of society, they must also be separated from each other, to prevent mutual recontamination with their criminality.

In our approach to locating psychology in the developing ideological moment of prison, we do not on the whole find a close isomorphy or homology between psychological concept or technique, and the specific policies and practices of prisons (though as we have seen in the case of some psychological work, these relationships do exist); but rather an elementary identification between the discourse of prison and that of psychology, particularly behaviourism and data production. (With this in mind we can understand the decision of psychologists to direct their attention to prisons rather than to the courts, where the possibilities, as well as the needs, for the social engineering of applied psychology are far less.)

It is likely that a number of prison psychologists see their emergent role as social engineers and planners as a liberalising influence within the prison system, and that as liberals they may often find themselves in contradiction with the demands of their working situation. The founding in March 1977 of a Division of Criminological and Legal Psychology of the B.P.S. is in part the result of the need of prison psychologists to secure for themselves a stronger professional organisation and so enhance their influence within the Prison Dept. An important example of where liberal rationalism leads in prison design is probably the new industrial prison at Coldingley, which is worth a substantial study in itself.

We have characterised the psychologists' contribution to social engineering in prisons as consisting in large part of the production of a technology of data by means of which the problems of prison management (especially those of internal security) can be conceptualised, and attempts to deal with them facilitated. Thus it seems that in prisons we have a developing instance of the direct recruitment of psychologists into the new management programmes of the state, with the emergence of statistical data production and behavioural design as regulative principles in a volatile prison system.

All we have done here is to present, provisionally, something of a framework for investigating and theorising the practice of psychologists in one particular field. Its further specification is part of the task outlined by Foucault (30):

> The problem is then to find out what role capitalist society
> has its penal system play, what is the aim that is sought and
> what effects are produced by all those procedures for punish-
> ment and exclusion? What is their place in the economic
> process, what is their importance in the exercise and mainten-
> ance of power? What is their role in the class struggle?

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(N.B. Foucault's book on prison has been translated and will be appearing in Penguin.)

The Reports referred to are, until 1964, those of the Prison Commissioner, and thereafter those of the Work of the Prison Department of the Home Office.