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The Paradox of the 'Care' of London's Children: Discourses of 'Safety' and 'Respect' in England's Ministry of Justice Inspection Reports

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Abstract: Using English prison inspectorate reports, the article presents an Ervine Goffman-inspired sociological discourse analysis of official political accounts about the living conditions of incarcerated children held in London's Feltham prison. Through a close reading of inspection reports, we develop a critical window into their lived experiences in an exceptionally harmful UK prison regime. The construction of this prison estate conjures its dilapidation, unhygienic conditions, and endless social danger. The stigmatizing construction of the child prisoner intimates a pervasive culture of violence and bullying, resulting in their aversion to purposive activities. While, at first blush, prison inspectorate reporting is based on the policy of efficiency to ensure a safe and rehabilitative prison experience for youth, it is argued that the nature of the reporting of incarceration obviates a critique of the wider political fabric that custodial interventions will invariably reproduce. The Inspectorate operates within the state's dominant class-stratified political ideology. The adoption of a generic labeling discourse in the reports minimizes the communication of harms inflicted on children by criminal 'justice' that can only worsen their wellbeing and reproduce the harmful intensity of their pre-existing marginality.

Keywords: discourse; harm; Feltham; inspectorate; violence; safety; respect; purposiveness

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1. Introduction

Wacquant (2012), commenting on the United States, recognized a deeply punitive politics of class and ethnic marginalization extending to what he calls 'prison fare', a term implying that imprisonment is a mode of welfare for the poor and disadvantaged. Stigmatizing stereotypes are unavoidable within this milieu. Black and ethnic minority children constitute a significant proportion of Feltham's population[1]. In Wacquant's view, a post-industrial proletariat is targeted by systems of efficiency pivoted within state control that include the use of imprisonment logic (Wacquant 2009). Wacquant (2000) argues that prison has morphed into a surrogate ghetto, a conclusion this article sees as applicable to the prison estate for young persons in London.

To help explain the extent of reoffending and the persistence of a 'surrogate ghetto', we need to recognize the role that official accounts by England's inspectors of the prison estate play in the dynamics of a criminogenic form of cultural reproduction. Through the British state's deployment of appraisals of prisons through the criteria called 'Healthy Prison Tests' mask, we suggest the dysfunctionality and stigmatizing identities they inevitably project onto children serving custodial sentences. Our research question is the following: how are Feltham's inmates stigmatized? A qualitative discourse analysis methodology is utilized to interrogate this question. Based upon Ministry of Justice documentary sources, we argue that the discursive lexicon adopted within inspectorate reports frames the identities and behaviors of the inmates such that their pre-existing social marginalization is reinforced.

That form of harm occurs, we suggest, despite the amelioratory purpose of the British state's inspection regime being to identify Feltham prison's failings.

Using annual prison inspection report data from 2010 to 2022 drawn from the Ministry of Justice's website[2], this article evokes Goffman's (1963) epistemological understanding of stigma as a phenomenon that arises in social interactions across society (Frandsen and Morsing 2022). Despite work to uncover shortcomings in the incarceration of children, such incarceration continues to recirculate harm despite the prison regime's adherence to the British state's philosophy of annual inspection visits whose quality assurance logics of efficiency are common features of the governmentality associated with neoliberal modernity. The latter logic, we conjecture, varnishes over the abuse of human rights of Feltham's child prisoners. Cox (2021) argues that processes of criminalization intersect with racist, social, and economic stigma. Stigma is a prejudice based upon stereotypes that lead to discrimination and negatively modified self-identities (Byrne 2009; Scheff 1999). Our research question is the following: how is stigma reproduced through the Inspectorate's 'healthy prison' tests? It is argued in the article that despite their disclosure of negative features of imprisonment, these inspection reports may (counter-intuitively) foster criminogenic labeling (Link and Phelan 2014). The quality assurance doctrine characterizing the reports reflects a deeply held generalized commitment to the culture of efficiency pervading Western society. This neoliberal culture, Cobley (2009) argues, originates historically in industry, commerce, and bureaucracy, giving rise to a socially constrained population. Cobley (2009) is at pains to convey that seemingly benign forms of social control can give way to outright brutality.

We argue that stigma and the attendant criminal reproduction it fosters in terms of reoffending disrupts the integrity of selfhood and sense of belonging to mainstream society. Such depth of social damage is an inevitable consequence of ideologies present in the seemingly neutral construction of Feltham that prison inspection protocols help design. Evidence for these claims is apparent in the discursive analysis provided later in our article where we explore the framing of experiences observed by inspectors during their visits to Feltham. Feltham is a young offender's institution located in south London.

The original Feltham was built in 1854 as an industrial school (Adult Learning Inspectorate 2006, p. 1). There are six Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) across England: Aylesbury, Cookham Wood, Parc, Feltham, Werrington, and Wetherby (Independent Monitoring Boards 2021). The Inspectorate adopts a *Healthy Prison Test* framework to compile and focus their mandatory prison inspection visits. Most inspections span two weeks.[3] Our empirical focus is upon two of its four tests of the putative 'Healthy Prison', all of which are designed to be protective of inmates and judge the performance of staff whilst ensuring the effective use of government resources. Feltham comprises two age groups under the same management team, HMYOI Feltham B contains 'youth' offenders aged 18–21 and Feltham A's child offenders are aged 15–18.

This article's focus is on Feltham 'A' prison. This case study is conducted through an analysis of government documents composed by the Inspectorate of Prisons. To help the amelioration of social disadvantage and structural injustice, it is necessary to appreciate how ideologies and discourses present themselves in systems of prison inspection. They contribute, we believe, to entrenched sociologies that help embed structural exclusion. Each inspectorate report is around 60–70 pages in length. The article focuses exclusively on a qualitative analysis of eight recent annual reports about Feltham A.

The inspection report data are listed in Table A1 (Appendix A). The custodial age range investigated is 15–18, and the inmate population size on each visit is stated in terms of an 'N' number. The periods of the inspection report data utilized run from 2010 to 2022. That time span is sufficiently long to track patterns and continuity. To underpin the data analysis, the article exploits the theorization of stigma and negative labeling found in the seminal work of the US sociologist Ervine Goffman. His scholarship around symbolic interactionist sociology continues to inspire (Denzin 1992; Shalin 2024). Interactional sociology for

Goffman was about the interplay between structural constraints and definitional practices (Goffman 1963, 1974).

1.1. Theoretical Perspective

Stigma is a socially manufactured form of interpersonal governance available to the state and other powerful actors to produce outcomes, some of which may (unintentionally) reproduce social inequality (Tyler and Slater 2018). It is a form of social control that imposes disadvantageous self-concepts and confines opportunity. Stigma functions therefore as a form of power. Goffman (1963) constructed stigma as an organizing concept, a way of perceiving, categorizing, and understanding the origins of discriminatory practices (Tyler and Slater 2018, p. 729). In the wake of neoliberalism, Tyler and Slater suggest that Goffman's perspective aids the understanding of patterns of social decomposition, inequality, and injustice. Wacquant (2008) argues that neoliberalism intensifies the stigmatization of minorities in public discourse and amounts to symbolic violence wrought on the urban poor. Extending this analysis, Yang et al. (2007) claim that Goffman understood stigma as a process leading to the construction of often marginalized social identities.

Stigmatized persons or groups by assimilating normative standards learn to process stigma and the "discredited" status it confers on their identity development and preferred social networks of belonging. Yang et al. argue that stigma is a social identity adopted through interactions with socially constructed categories. The category 'prisoner' illustrates a discredited status that stigmatizes and impacts individual life chances. Goffman's symbolic interactionism conjures stigma within the perspective of labeling theory. The application of deviant labels alters not only self-perceptions but also the perceived availability of social opportunities. Link and Phelan (2014) coin the term "stigma power" to indicate stigma's capacity as a resource for those with an interest in keeping people down by controlling and excluding them from society in invisible ways. Link and Phelan argue the stigmatized may attempt to cope by staying "down" within the field of structural social hierarchies whose governance they internalize. Self-exclusion and disempowerment are associated with the stigma that accompanies being disabled from participation in daily life (Afroozeh et al. 2024).

1.2. Incarcerated Young Offenders

To appreciate the ways in which the Feltham prison estate inspection regime practice facilitates criminogenic cultures of reproduction infused by stigma, it is necessary to begin by appreciating the literature on vulnerability and social background. Wacquant associates the status of the vulnerable individual with membership in a marginalized transnational urban poor. Wacquant's notion of marginality conjures a world of disenfranchisement and welfare-originating interventions that exacerbate the circulation of social harm. The social worlds imported into prisons such as Feltham and re-created inside them are in this vein of analysis established truths charted by criminological research about the demographic dynamics of the penal environment that is porous to external influence.

Themes of prisoner vulnerability, violence, exclusion, and psychological ill health pervade the discourses present in the penal literature and, as we uncover, prison inspection reports. Being a prison inmate is inseparable from existential threats to one's physical and psychological wellbeing. While the state has a responsibility to punish criminal offenders, less attention is given to the Government's official reporting approach regarding the protection and safety of children in custody in the context of textual reporting models of care. Our article's contribution is to challenge the Government's policies of child protection as textual constructs evidenced by inspectorate reports about Feltham. Gresham Sykes' (1958) idea of the 'pains of imprisonment' illustrates the injurious experiences instigated through incarceration (Crewe 2011). Younger offenders are amongst the most excluded in society (Gibson 2008). Prisons inject ideology and coercive power into the prisoner's experience through constant ontological insecurity and uncertainty about the present and future, coupled with loss of trust in the controlling regime (Giddens 1991).

Scholarship on young offender institutions illuminate this somewhat secret world through rich qualitative insights about education, masculinity, goal aspiration, violence, and prison gangs (Anderson 2000; Chantraine and Sallee 2013; Fitzpatrick et al. 2015; Gallard et al. 2019; Holligan 2013; O'Grady 2017; Kennedy 2013; Mitchell et al. 2021; Poa and Monod 2017). This literature portrays the fraught and dangerous nature of incarceration. In England and Wales, 75% of juveniles held in young offender institutions (YOIs) are boys aged 15–17.

During the period 2019–2020, 40% of offending by children and young people in England were by individuals who were re-offenders. Violence, weapon carrying, and illicit drug dealing are prominent offenses in this demography. Finally, age, poverty, and class underlie the vulnerabilities that criminal justice statistics about youth further highlight. Barnes et al. (2011) uncovered six disadvantages as risk factors for youth criminality through a longitudinal survey among 14–19-year-olds in England: Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), teenage parenthood, emotional ill-health, criminal activity, and substance abuse. Emotional ill-health was the most significant risk factor. Criminal activity (fighting, knife-carrying) and substance abuse were found to be especially prevalent among boys. Barnes et al. (2011, p. 64) conclude that these multiple disadvantages constitute conditions of "detachment from mainstream society".

2. Material and Methods

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is recognized for its capacity to identify circulating discourses in texts. Magistrates' decision-making, for example, relies upon written documents produced by police, schools, and social services. A parallel point can be drawn from the interrogation of England's Ministry of Justice inspection report data. Discourse analysis explores relationships between written discourse and reality. It offers an interpretative analysis of social constructions and is congruent with Goffman's sociology. Documents and records are forms of data (Parker and Burman 1993). CDA is the most apposite methodology for this case study. The latter examines contestable discourses about the incarcerated held in Feltham. These accounts are articulated in the Ministry of Justice inspectorate reports referenced in Appendix A.

Michel Foucault's (1965) discourse analysis informs the CDA of Norman Fairclough and it is the CDA of Fairclough (Fairclough 1992) that is adopted here. It posits that language contains discursive formations (Phillips and Hardy 1997). CDA embraces a social constructivist epistemology. A social world is treated as an ideological construction (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Kress 1995; Phillips and Hardy 1997). CDA is a means of analyzing how discourses used by institutions or individuals construct and convey social reality and are themselves shaped by often hidden relations of power that legitimate pre-existing structural inequalities. Through the close analysis of inspection report texts, ideologies replete with stigmatization and neoliberal bias are the objects of interest to this study.

3. Findings

3.1. 'Safety' Healthy Prison Test

3.1.1. Behavior Management

In prisons, behavior management is an umbrella term for different practices including the management of suicidal and self-harming behaviors (Barker et al. 2014). Prison management and inmate behavior, by eliciting responses, dictate the prison environment. Inmate behavior management is perceived as the key to a safe and secure jail (Hutchinson 2009). Behavior management is a theme central to the discourse of the 'safety' dimension of the 'Healthy Prison Test'. Neither this official test regime nor the literature examines whether these practices evoke stigma.

The Ministry of Justice's inspection criteria are the official bureaucratic lens through which inspectors develop their largely qualitative analysis of Feltham, as a custodial prison regime. The 'Safety' lens, as noted, is one of four prisms adopted in the conduct of their regime appraisals. It foregrounds dimensions of the Feltham regime experienced by

prisoners in terms of different aspects of life inside that coalesce around a concept of safety within which assumptions about childhood and wellbeing fall. James and James (2004) argue that it is important to know the ways in which the construction of childhood occurs in any society, especially its cultural context of construction. Enroos (2015, p. 399), writing about children in prison in Finland, comments that institutional practices construct child prisoners as a social problem to be contained and restrained.

Undoubtedly, the stigma that accompanies entry to the prison shapes childhood construction and the management processes adopted by staff as well as perceptions of inspectors. Enroos (2015, p. 400) notes that it is rare for prison practice to be justified by reference to the UNCRC rights of the child. The data extracts below are from inspectorate reports and thus represent official constructions of social realities that, as this article suggests, occludes different viewpoints on incarcerated children, the meanings inherent in these report extracts may embed stigma as a destructive process (Li et al. 2020). Goffman (1959) argues that persons are products of 'collaborative manufacture' and thus institutional processes acting on the self inform its identity.

In the following extract, themes of restraint conjure a childhood that has become uncontrollable. The related theme of bullying highlights behaviorally dysfunctional social relations:

> "The majority of child protection referrals related to allegations of excessive use of force... 46% of young people said that they had felt unsafe at some point at Feltham against the national comparator of 25% and 30% reported in the previous survey. Gang issues were a considerable management task and involved some multiagency work. Good efforts were made to consult young people about the extent and nature of bullying, but it was clear that young people remained reluctant to be completely open about bullying and intimidation... Violence was an ongoing problem and the use of restraint remained high with a number of peaks and troughs. The vast majority of incidents of restraint involved separating young people from fights or assaults...". (HMP/YOI Feltham 2011)

Following Goffman's (1959) idea of 'collaborative manufacture', the stigma conveyed by this form of reporting lies around deficits in the capacity of children to act in a civilized manner. Their seeming unwillingness to work alongside the inspection focus about bullying projects them in terms of negative imagery and discrimination by suggesting they refuse to value being consulted (see Rao et al. 2024). Stigma power is present in the focus on these children, some of whom are constructed as perpetrators of violence whilst others are stigmatized through the lens of being the victims of severe physical restraint methods to control their recalcitrance. Goffman (1963) defines stigma at the individual level as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting", arguing that it reduces a stigmatized person from being a "whole and usual person to a tainted, discontented one" (Goffman 1963, p. 3). Nowhere is there a mention that the fighting is a product of their conditions of confinement. In the next data extract, a violent discourse is extended into the field of behavior management, prompting the use of force to control behavior. Childhood is, in this instance, constructed as a social problem requiring the application of behaviorist psychological methods, as follows:

> "The approach to behavior management was now overwhelmingly punitive and ineffective. The level of violence, much of which was serious, continued to rise and was very high. Use of force and adjudications had also increased... The number of violent incidents per boy had increased since the last inspection and was now very high. Many were very serious and involved multiple assailants and weapons. Various restricted regimes for perpetrators of violence remained difficult to manage on mainstream units... Behavior management was concentrated on the use of sanctions and regime restrictions with too little incentive to encourage or motivate good behavior... Use of force had increased since the last

> inspection and was very high. In many cases it was used to restrain and protect boys in fights and assaults. . .". (HMP/YOI Feltham 2017)

Stigmatizing processes are recognizable through labeling, stereotyping, separation, and status loss (Vahedi et al. 2022). In extract two about the theme of behavior management, we are encouraged to perceive child protection referrals in terms of "excessive use of force" and to recognize that "gang issues" challenged the prison management. Such discursive prisms of interpretation illustrate a bias that is favorable to the British state, which absolves itself from responsibility for the conditions that imprisonment in Feltham engenders. The taint of disorder is pivoted inward and then onto the children as prisoners. We are encouraged to frame the inmates negatively through the state's pathologizing lens that justifies a diet of rewards and punishments as well as forced removal. Governance through mechanistically framed tools that include "sanctions" and "regime restrictions" de-humanizes these teenagers' life world and erodes their status by discriminating.

Feltham is unable to manage the violence in its "mainstream units"; hence, a policy of containment. It is a disabling method that distances individuals from normative ideals of behavior. The "multiple assailants and weapons" discursively abstracts rather than explicates an acutely troubled culture. Allusions to discourses of consultation neglect institutionally legitimated asymmetries in power between staff and inmates. For the delivery of the inspection system, we suggest a mechanism that colludes in imposing severe modes of physical restraint on children that are likely to confirm them of the stigmas they were aware of before they were behind the Feltham prison walls.

3.1.2. Cellular Exclusion and Restraint

Practices of cellular exclusion will, as Goffman (1963) indicates, be deeply discrediting to the individual and produce discontentment. The presence of 'dangerous' boys influences the daily lives of fellow inmates emotionally in terms of fear and anxiety. Besides being stigmatized as potentially 'weak' fearful retiring individuals, they might also be 'shut down' by prison officers through solitary confinement. For many, most of their days are spent locked down in their cells, for up to 23 h. Stigmatizing images in the reports project onto the prisoner's social dysfunctionality. That nexus of pain might well be in reaction to the prison harms identified by Gresham Skyes; his 'pains of imprisonment' go unacknowledged in the report text's ideological bias.

The stigmatization of these children managed through inhumane treatment protects the state by what Frandsen and Morsing (2022) calls a "stigma shield". The latter acts to protect the official agents of reportage from claims they are stigmatizing inmates by virtue of their investments in textual labor, which reproduces stigma contingent on the intersectionality of the disablement associated with prisoner status and social class background (see Chatzitheochari and Butler-Rees 2023). In the next extract, we illustrate a 'stigma shield' in the exploitation by inspectors of the inspectorate's formal duty of care. We are struck by reporting phraseology that colors Feltham's interior dark or somber colors that ensue additional commentary on how it was that a dangerously conflicted place exits. Stigma, in the report vocabulary, is projected inward through the inspector's investments in micro-sociological observations of a concrete rather than ideological spirit: "23 h a day hiding", "averaged 5.5 h at weekends", "shocked how little outside exercise the boys had" and "health of the adolescent boys".

> "A small number of boys were too frightened to leave their cells and spent about 23 h a day hiding, locked away behind their doors. . . At the time of the inspection, the use of segregation in the bleak, unsuitable care and separation unit shared with young adults, was also high and an informal system of 'basic for violence' resulted in some boys being only allowed half an hour out of their cell a day. . . The average amount of time boys had out of their cell had reduced since the last inspection and averaged just 5.5 h on weekdays and 4.35 h at weekends. We found 38% of boys locked in their rooms during the peak working day. CQC colleagues were shocked by how little outside exercise the boys had—30 min a

> day or less—and the detrimental impact this was likely to have on the health of the adolescent boys. . .". (HMP/YOI Feltham 2015)

Goffman (1963) argues that individuals experience stigmatization personally, existentially, and emotionally damaging by virtue of the social evaluations of others, in our case, the inspectorate. Identities become threatened and undermined by processes of stigmatization, which are likely to reinforce the imported stigma associated with neighborhoods of disadvantage and marginalization (Hughes et al. 2016).

Mechanical restraints have a long history as behavior modification and control tools (Bersot and Arrigo 2011; Finizio 1992). Incarcerated children associate fear, anger, and re-traumatization with the experience of being restrained, and there are emotional and behavioral post-restraint effects (Smith and Bowman 2009). Criminologists argue youth justice systems harm through imposed punitiveness and by undermining opportunities for rehabilitation and care (Goldson 2018). Selman (2017, p. 213) found that youth 'justice' in disciplinary schools in Texas for criminal offending had failed to improve the lives of youth on their release, suggesting self-stigma may have limited inmates' opportunities. Selman's analysis of a state's official Code of Conduct written handbooks, designed for the authorities running prison regimes, prescribed harsh resocialization measures. He concluded prisoners were being 'prepared' for entrapment in a 'career' in the official system of criminal justice.

Segregation as a restraint is oppressive and denies the rights of the oppressed (Browne 2024). Segregation by color, ethnicity, and wealth impacts the social cohesion of communities including London's inner-city (Sturgis et al. 2014). Self-segregation through remaining "locked away behind their doors" represents the failure of the state to protect the children it has incarcerated. Cellular confinement for up to 23.5 h per day constitutes a form of solitary confinement. The discourse of "care" that is advised to work in tandem with "respect" in the inspection report frameworks is realized in certain ways as these disclose unacceptable conditions, but in other ways, their political leaning arguably forces boys upon whom they report into deficit. Case and Haines (2021, p. 4) argue that the entire youth justice project is harmful, inappropriate, and ought to be abolished, adding that the post-industrial construction of 'childhood', as a period of innocence, has now pivoted to see these children as being dangerous threats to a social order.

3.2. 'Respect' Healthy Prison Test

In this theme of 'respect', we explore concepts of 'cleanliness' and 'relationships' before reaching the article's conclusion. Stigma is unavoidably associated with not being respectful to others. The concept of 'respect' is difficult to operationalize. It might mean being taken seriously or recognized as an individual. Also, it may mean that living conditions are decent and not deteriorating. Quinn et al. (2021) report that data collected by HM Inspectorate of Prisons show younger prisoners and BAME are less likely to report being treated with respect by staff. The Respect test of the Healthy prison includes cleanliness and maintenance of the physical prison estate.

Respect is intimately associated with human relationships and their elaboration within the prison population's nexus where staff employed are there to ensure security and wellbeing. The next extract about cleanliness colorfully illustrates concrete or material forms of disrespect including unkempt furniture, anonymized cell accommodation, crumbling decorative features, and graffiti. These are the living conditions of the boys. Social and physical dysfunctionality engenders self-stigma. The boys will question their self-worth and the status of their peers. Political selectivity about the wider damages wrought by imprisonment is overlooked in conformity with managerial values that dictate the scope of official oversight (English 2013). The inspectorate works under the authority of the Home Secretary to whom they are accountable. Political expectations are boundaries within which they operate. English (2013) argues governance and accountability tensions that are part of managerialism privilege instrumental hierarchical governance that ignores the rehabilitative aspects of imprisonment. Living conditions that would not be out of place

in urban slum cry out from the discourse of 'cleanliness', which, in Feltham, could only undermine the boy's self-worth and antagonize them.

3.2.1. Cleanliness

> "...basic standards of cleanliness require improvement...there had been deterioration in the general state of the cells and the cleanliness of the communal areas, and particularly showers, since the previous inspection...Daily cell checks were carried out and there were incentives to encourage cell cleanliness, which was effective for some, but not all, young people. Efforts were made to eliminate graffiti as soon as possible and there were no offensive displays. Cells were properly equipped but overall, they were shabby...Some cells used for double accommodation for young adults had insufficient screening of toilets and some furniture was damaged...The residential environment had deteriorated. Most cells contained the basics, but overall, the living conditions were austere and spartan. There was little evidence of cells being personalized, or of children taking pride in keeping them clean and tidy. All the shower areas were in a very poor state, often with large areas of peeling paint on the ceilings and discolored wall panels...". (HMP/YOI Feltham 2021)

Invasion of privacy (no toilet screening), no personalization, and graffiti on walls suffuse stigma, which will be 'adopted' by how they self-identify and judge peers.

This description regarding HMP/YOI Feltham (2021) illustrates a rundown territory needing "fixing" and resonates with the argument of Kallin and Slater (2014) regarding politics being overlooked or deliberately ignored by officials governing regeneration projects that aim to remove territorial stigma from inner city areas. Feltham's reportage through an inspection audit efficiency 'fix' interferes with implementing ideological policies to address wider injustice as Kallin and Slater argue in relation to stigmatized communities that appear dilapidated.

The concept of 'cleanliness' in the extract above conveys hygiene and order both are symbolic of the inspection's interest in maintaining a focus on the more tractable or visible dimensions of stigmatizing harms. Huangfu et al. (2021) argue physical cleanliness is a metaphor for moral purity. These authors argue that degraded environmental conditions influence immoral behavior and damage adherence to higher social norms. India's poor citizens living in Mysore, deemed the 'great unwashed', are excluded from participating in society; Anantharaman and Browne (2022) conclude that the Indian state's failure to increase opportunities for cleanliness contributed to deepening pre-existing social stratification. Potential institutional racism and hostile relationship management are represented in the next extract concerning 'relationships'. At this juncture, we observe how 'respect' has become an interpersonal phenomenon.

3.2.2. Relationships

Maculan and Rodelli (2023) report that a prison officer's spirit de corps is a fundamental aspect of day-to-day prison life, fostering loyalty and cohesion among its members. Spirit de corps is a sense of belonging and being identified as being part of a common endeavor (Blumer 1951). Its exclusive nature has implications for relationships with boys in custody as they are outsiders to this community. Liebling et al. (1999) emphasize that staff–prisoner relations are at the core of the prison system, giving stability to prison life. In the prison environment, this relationship has an exceptional amount of power in it. Relations in prison, as Liebling et al. note, mean sustained periods of interaction that include rule and non-rule-enforcing encounters. The following extract displays the nuance present in relationships at Feltham; some are positive and others seem discriminatory. Challenges to the power of staff in relationships by boys, the inspection notes, appear unwelcome and "inadequate and dismissive". Stigma in the form of discrimination within the inmate population has the form of hate crime. The report denotes the boys saw 41% of staff did not

treat them with respect and bias in favor of "white young people" who rated staff respect levels more highly than minority groups.

> "...Some good work had been done at HMYOI (Her Majesties Young Offenders Institution) Feltham with some aspects of diversity, but the management of equality and diversity had recently lost focus and work with foreign nationals had deteriorated...There were efficient daily briefings to monitor young people convicted of arson but not those convicted of racist and other hate crime... only 59% of young people said that most staff treated them respectfully. We saw mainly positive interactions, with a small number of exceptions... black and minority ethnic young people reported much more negatively than white young people across a range of areas. In particular, only 53% said that staff treated them with respect, compared to 93% of white young people...more staff than boys were using the discrimination incident report form process to challenge racist behavior. Investigations, especially against staff, were sometimes inadequate and dismissive...". (HMP/YOI Feltham 2013)

In European jurisdictions, staff–prisoner relationships are at the heart of prisoner treatment and rehabilitation (Molleman and van Ginneken 2015). The Feltham report data signal a bureaucratized managerial perspective on human relations. Auty and Liebling (2020, p. 358) found that in English prisons, a high quality of prison life, including relationships, supports better outcomes on release. A discourse of calculative understatement regarding the depth of harm circulating in Feltham minimizes the recognition of impoverished human relations. The report data display neo-liberal technicist language, which de-personalizes the culture and creates the impression it is a child warehouse governed by a logic of bureaucratic efficiency.

The political bias in choices found within these reports indicates the Feltham ethos as a policed regime conforms to quality assurance governance. This model is signalled through phraseology of "efficient daily briefings", "mainly positive interactions", "much more negatively", "the management of equality", and numerical objectification of conduct infringements. Neoliberal governance is evident: the language of resilience is mobilized by capitalist international organizations and ideational content informs World Bank reports (Felli 2016). Simpson (2018) discovered how language was now seen in instrumentalist terms and language students, as neoliberal homo-economicus demonstrates interrelations between language and political economy. Both the Safety and Respect prison health tests sit within a broader zeitgeist of normality. By enforcing social conformity to contemporary norms, the prison tests examined may simultaneously and inadvertently stigmatize, as outsiders, boys who are incarcerated. Goffman's entire oeuvre foregrounds the role of interactional processes as the source of the manufacture of stigma.

4. Conclusions

We conclude that the logic of neo-liberal efficiency noted in the analyses of the inspection reports is an exemplar of processes of government that define the visibility levels the reports set out to achieve. Corbett and Le Dantec (2019) argue that formulaic reporting norms create distance in the relationship between citizens and government. Logics of efficiency are at odds, they argue, with nurturing trustful relationships, efficiency logic that is said to widen social distance. On the strength of the documentary inspection report data harnessed from the Ministry of Justice website, the attempt by this inspectorate to improve a deeply troubled and inhumane custodial environment constitutes not merely a conflicted struggle, but also the tacit recognition of a hotbed of stigma, which official penal inspection practices do not seem empowered either to adequately recognize or to critically address in a comprehensive way. Moreover, the terms of the corporate discourse color the conduct of their inspection tasks through which they de-personalize the described turbulent life world, imposing upon its occupants the stamp of miscellaneous negative labels.

Stigma power entraps the voices of children who forcibly experience Feltham's 'surrogate ghetto'. The latter's custodial regime is a likely echo of the encounters of the prisoners

regarding the disadvantaged in London. Day (2023) notes that risk-based, rather than 'child first' approaches, are on the front line of welfare interventions and that risk managerialism undermines a humanistic focus on child prisoners as individuals in need of mental and physical care. Myers et al. (2021) add that limitations in human attachment bonding require that youth justice acknowledges that it must begin by treating human relational needs. The vocabulary of the 'Safety' and 'Respect' tests of the Healthy Prison belies the troubling nature of the contents of these concepts, which this article has adumbrated.

The prison conditions experienced by incarcerated children breach many of their human rights as defined within several Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child dealing with policy criteria for those below the age of 18.[4] The outcomes of the healthy prison test analysis illustrate the problematic nature of accessing both educational and mental health provisions. The behavioral psychology regime that accompanies life in Feltham influences decision-making in the management of its children. The legal–rational authority present in reports ensues contested interpretations about Feltham's stigmatizing containment processes (Allen 2004, p. 100). The absence in the inspection reports of the political premises or boundaries that prescribe inspection regimes gives rise to the paradox of care mentioned in the article's title. This article develops the view that exercising care in this environment borders upon a conceptual and practical impossibility. References made in the inspection reports to inadequate mental health support are a tacit recognition that the prison regime inflicts psychological damage. Well-meaning attempts to educate through purposeful activities in Feltham are failing spectacularly as these children disengage, clash violently with others, or otherwise resist bullying pressure to conform. The approach to education and training in Feltham seems oblivious to the profound psychological impact that adverse events in childhood are known to have on the capacity to engage with educational opportunities. Neither the 'Safety' nor the 'Respect' tests of the healthy prison record the deeply disturbing nature of the psychological cosmos experienced by children prior to being incarcerated and modelled in terms of bureaucratic logic of efficiency. The meaning of this concluding statement conveys the intent of the paradox of care phraseology referenced in the title of this article, which introduces an Orwellian twist into the political stature of the sociolinguistics that accompanies the prison inspection reporting texts.

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Appendix A

Table A1. HMYOI Feltham 'A' prison (ages 15–18).

Feltham A N-664 prisoners	11–22 January 2010
Feltham A N = 229	18–22 July 2011

Table A1. *Cont.*

Feltham A N = 181	21–25 January 2013
Feltham A N = 180	11–15 August 2014
Feltham A N = 180	27 July–2 August 2015
Feltham A N = 126	23 January–3 February 2017
Feltham A N =140	21 December–12 January 2018
Feltham A N = 148	14–24 January 2019
Feltham A N = 106	4–19 July 2019
Feltham A N = 63	9–17 February 2021
Feltham A N = 75	21 February–4 March 2022

Notes

[1] https://hmiprisons.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmipris_reports/hmyoi-feltham-a-4/ (accessed on 30 July 2024).

[2] https://hmiprisons.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/our-reports/ (accessed on 30 July 2024).

[3] How we inspect—HM Inspectorate of Prisons (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk): (accessed on 22 July 2024).

[4] https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/ (accessed on 22 July 2024).

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