Transformative power: a study in a human service organization

Tim May

Abstract

This article focuses upon the relationship between power and organizational change. It specifically considers the question of under what conditions and utilising what tactics can people be induced to see their organizational existence in new ways. At the same time it focuses upon the basis of resistance to the methods employed within the organization and in so doing delineates the limits of such transformative power. For these purposes, it draws upon a three-year study conducted in the probation service and employs Callon's concept of a sociology of translation alongside the ideas of Weber and Foucault. The argument then extends beyond the probation service to note that the form and methods of these tactics are currently being employed throughout the public sector.

Mission statements, performance indicators, deliverables, targets, devolved budgets, objectives, evaluation schemes, efficiency, effectiveness and economy. These are just a selection of terms used on a daily basis in public sector human service organizations. Education, health, the police, probation and social services are representative of those institutions in which this language is now common. Whilst it is tempting to view these terms as simply stemming from changes imposed on organizations as the result of a Government led squeeze on public expenditure, this does not adequately characterise the methods through which transformation takes place, nor their effects on organizational life. Accompanying these changes has come a new way transforming organizations – from 'within'.

This aim of the article is to examine this process of transformation within one of these public service organizations: the probation service. The first part examines the mechanisms through

which this took place, whilst the second part examines the nature of the transformative power employed for this purpose. In so doing, it draws upon a three-year study which examined policy-making and day-to-day working practices in a probation service organization known, for reasons of anonymity, simply as 'Treen' (May, 1991a; 1991b).

Part 1: Mechanisms of change

Catalysts of transformation

Public human service organisations have been subjected to a considerable degree of restructuring in recent times:

> There is not a school, hospital, social service department,
> polytechnic or college in the country which has not been so
> remodelled (Hall, 1991: 11).

In relation to the probation service, this has been precipitated in several ways. For example, the government's Financial Management Initiative (FMI) with its emphasis on economy, efficiency and effectiveness (see Fowles 1990; Humphrey 1987; 1991); the Audit Commission's (1989) examination of the costs of probation practices; budgetary control arrangements for proba-tion service areas, now enshrined in criminal justice legislation (1991 Criminal Justice Act Part V, Section 94), as well as Home Office 'Action Plans' and 'Statements' which sought to lay down national objectives for local probation organisations (Home Office, 1984; 1988; 1991). There has also been a working party on management structure and practices within the service (Home Office, 1980), whilst the Probation Inspectorate has undertaken what are termed 'efficiency scrutinies' (Home Office, 1987). In addition, there has been considerable alteration in its nature and function resulting from the agenda of a 'law and order' govern-ment concerned to punish, as oppposed to rehabilitate, those sen-tenced by the criminal courts (see Broad, 1991; Harris, 1992; May, 1991a, 1993 and McWilliams, 1987).

From an organizational point of view, changes have been rapid in response to this agenda. This has led to a focus on measuring the outcome and performance of probation work tasks. The

increased use of information and monitoring systems, as well as staff training and development in the pursuance of efficient and effective working practices, is symptomatic of this trend. Thus, how did such transformations take place?

Tactics of transformation

Stuart Hall (1991) characterises the recent restructuring of public services as being centred around three main strategies. First, a new layer of managers who function as the 'New Model Army' whose aim is to restore managerial prerogatives. Second, the recruitment of business people into the governing strata whose 'task is to tutor and educate public institutions into the mysteries of market calculation' (1991: 14) and third, independent consultants who are imported to advise on efficiency measures. Within Treen, the first and second strategies were performed by those who had risen from within the organisation and who fostered and perpetuated a form of managerialism generally symptomatic of public sector changes (see Hoggett, 1991; Pollitt, 1990). These individuals alluded to their 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977) in the organization and reflected the new order by challenging outdated beliefs in the old. In terms of the third strategy, Treen also employed organizational consultants.

The Treen hierarchy itself consisted of a chief probation officer, a principal administrative officer and three assistant chief probation officers. Below these came information and administrative officers and then senior secretaries and secretaries situated within functional probation teams. On the probation-work side, each team was headed by a senior probation officer and consisted of probation officers and probation assistants. Although probation officers are employed by local magistrates through a Probation Committee, it was the probation management of Treen (defined as assistant chief probation officer and above) whose assumed responsibility for the strategic changes which I shall discuss below.

The message of what I shall call these technicians of transformation, had to spread throughout the organisational body to ensure effective change. A process of widening the need for organisational change was therefore required: incorporation and persuasion, not imposition and exclusion, was the tactic. After all, as Michel Foucault observes, if the exercise of power were simply repressive, would people really obey it?

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse (quoted in Gordon, 1980: 119).

A unique opportunity was afforded to witness a process of persuasion and organizational transformation during the period of the fieldwork. I was able to join and observe a major policy forum in action. A series of what became termed 'Senior consultative Groups' (SCG's) took place over two day periods at six-month intervals. In these settings, probation management met senior probation officers to discuss organizational problems, probation work practices and policy changes.

In the first of the meetings, twenty pages of documentation outlining the two-day programme and a 'Planning for Action: Priority Areas' document were intended to guide the proceedings. The document was to:

constitute the foundation for all our work together on this occasion; in effect, it is the Programme for the next two days. As you will see, it also constitutes a management Programme: taking broad directional objectives on to specific targets and methods for achieving those targets in draft form at this stage (Treen Probation Service Circular, 1987).

The allusion to 'management programmes' began the incorporation of organizational actors into an administrative problematic which stemmed from a reaction to the conditions outlined above. The senior probation officers who attended the SCG's were strategically placed in the organisational hierarchy for the dissemination of the message of change. Indeed in 1984, David Faulkner, the Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, spoke of the need for probation areas to define 'targets', set 'timetables', assign responsibilities and measure achievements. Such changes, he noted, should not 'be confined to probation service headquarters' (1984: 4), but go all the way to local probation teams. In this sense, as heads of probation teams, senior probation officers were pivotal in spreading the message of transformation throughout the organization.

The methods employed to incorporate these persons may be understood by employing Callon's (1986) concept of a 'sociology

of translation or enrolment'. Through such means, the technicians of transformation sought to link their interpretation of organisational 'problems' to their proposed 'solutions'. Their ability to fix this connection, in policy terms, constructs what Callon (1986) calls 'obligatory passage points' through which views of organisational life (in this case by senior probation officers) had to pass if they were to be regarded as valid by probation management. As Stewart Clegg (1989) has noted, there are parallels between this idea and those of Laclau and Mouffe (1990), for they refer to the concept of 'articulation' as:

> any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice (1990: 105).

The structured totality of this process then becomes a 'discourse' and within this, 'nodal points' represent the fixing of meanings which are normally fluid and dynamic. The attempt to fix organisational representations and construct obligatory passage points is central to an examination of the SCG process.

The first stage of enrolment involves what Callon (1986) calls 'problematization'. As Clegg puts it:

> Problematization involves the attempt by agents to enrol others to their agency by positing the indispensability of their 'solutions' (their definition of) to the others' 'problems' (1989: 204).

In the first of the SCG's, this problem-solution connection became evident. In introducing the purpose of the event to the assembled company, the metaphor of the ship was used by a member of senior management: 'Our boat is in the harbour and we will set sail to see where we go at sea'.[1] Policy formulation, he noted, was not predictable in human service organizations. In recognising this, the purpose of the SCG was to provide navigational instruments by targeting work practices and managing the organization through the formulation of objectives. It was also recognised that probation officers worked in 'difficult and demanding environments', but management had identified a need for the 'co-ordination and the setting of objectives' between probation teams as the result of a disparity and lack of uniformity in working practices.

These problematizations were a translation of the Government's Financial Management Initiative which aimed to:

> direct attention to outputs and the measurement of performance . . . to improve the effectiveness of government administration, through 'good management' of resources (Humphrey, 1987: 52).

In other words, objectives, targets and methods – the nomenclature which permeates this and other human service organizations – was to offered as a 'solution' to the 'problems' identified in organisational performance. The establishment of such connections began the second process of enrolment: 'interessement'. This involved the stabilization and imposition 'of the other actors it defines through its problematization' (Callon, 1986: 207–8). Thus, having raised a problem (a lack of consistent work performance) probation management then sought to 'sell' their 'solutions' to these problems to the assembled company (practice consistency through the setting of objectives and targets).

Given that it was only senior probation officers who attended the SCG, tactics of incorporation were required which filtered down to the front-line.[2] Seniors, being strategically placed between management and the front-line, were in a position to return to their teams and convince them that the identified problems existed and propose the solutions offered by the SCG. Another tactic to mobilize incorporation involved setting individual team objectives in terms of larger organizational objectives as defined by the SCG itself. For this reason, seniors were told that in two months time, the 'Planning for Action' document was to cease being a 'draft' proposal. Management thus set an agenda for seniors to return with to their teams and set local team objectives within broader organizational objectives.

As well as the above problem-solution persuasive mode being employed, a time mode was used to further guarantee the success of this strategy. A six month period was allowed before the next SCG which was to examine team objectives to ensure their 'congruence and viability (measurable, achievable, time-limited)' (Treen Circular, 1987).

This monitoring of objectives also allowed for the exercise of surveillance through the measurement of team performance against organizational objectives. Due to the geographical spread of the organization, there was a need to stabilize the representation of

management interests within these new practices (Callon's concept of 'mobilization'). To further guarantee this, surveillance power was employed via instructions to probation officers and probation assistants to fill in forms and keep records of tasks performed. In terms of the mode of persuasion, organization-wide Staff Circulars indicated the rationale for the transformations:

> measure, evaluate, estimate, appraise your results in some form, in any terms that rest on anything beyond faith, assertion and the 'illustrative' case (Treen Staff Circular, 1987).

Change also required a third moment of translation. Alliances with the methods of transformation took place through the tactic of 'enrolment':

> To describe enrolment is . . . to describe the group of multilateral negotiations, trials of strength and tricks that accompany the interessements and enable them to succeed (Callon, 1986: 211).

This involved the fixing of the proposed solutions to be identified administrative inconsistencies in the minds of seniors. In this policy forum, agendas were set for small group 'brain storming sessions' with instructions to seek solutions to identified problems. The small groups then returned to the larger forum to report through their elected 'spokesperson'. The modus operandi in the larger forum coordinated the groups replies, guided by a technician of transformation, within the set agenda. This minimised overt dissent by the constant tactic of referring to the problem-solution connection and by focusing discussions within smaller groups where alliances between dissenting seniors could not easily take place. Contributions were then deemed irrelevant if they did not address the agenda. On two occasions, however, dissent did bring proceedings to a halt.

On one of these occasions, a senior asked 'how' they were to motivate staff towards particular objectives when they were already working in busy and demanding environments. Interestingly, this called the tactics of the SCG into question by a need for management to give tangible answers to practice questions which resulted from their own organizational problematizations. To question the basis of the SCG in such a way needed more than the modes of persuasion, time and surveillance could

allow for in the formation of obligatory passage points. A more overt form of power required deploying. Government edicts were alluded to in reply. A member of management simply said: 'this is the way it has to be and we have no choice'. A final and overt tactic of power had been employed: the fatalistic mode. The time mode was then quickly activated by another member of management and the SCG moved on to the next agenda item.

At the end of the first SCG seniors expressed a feeling of exhaustion: 'Planning for Action' had been an 'action-packed' two days. In what was termed a 'feedback session', they expressed concern over both the lack of time devoted to topics and of the lack of consultation over policy decisions. This prompted a member of management to respond in an irritated fashion: 'we have consulted. We have consulted here'! Another interjected to explain that consultations could take place at team level around the formation of local objectives, thereby placing the onus on seniors to 'sell' the document to team members.

The incorporation of seniors into the SCG, together with the time, persuasive and surveillance modes, served as tactics of transformation. In particular, the surveillance mode possessed the potential for activation in the face of front-line work practices which ran counter to administrative edicts. To take just one instance. A probation officer needed to visit an offender in a prison which was outside of the probation area's jurisdiction. Organizational instructions required her to record this and request travelling expenses. However, rather than using her own transport, she was instructed to use the train. The officer then spent the whole day visiting her client and complained of achieving little else given the restriction of her time.

In justifying this decision, management replied that she could 'catch up' on her paperwork on the train', thus making up for the time differential between travelling by car and by train (the environmental issue did not feature in any of the discussions). This was further justified by the time period which had now been set for probation work tasks. As the train journey was three hours each way, the officer was told that she could have written a social inquiry reports for the court in that time (6 hours). The officer, however, did not accept this justification given the variation in the time it takes her to prepare such reports and the need to visit people and collect information in their preparation.

Budgets and organisational control

The collection of information on working practices not only served as a means of organizational surveillance, but was justified during the SCG for the external consumption of funding bodies in order to maintain the existing budget, or to gain increases. As a result, the question of budgets featured high on the transformative agenda. An entire SCG (two days) was devoted to the subject of information production and budgetary management.

The written introduction to this particular SCG noted the volume of information seniors were expected to digest (90 pages). Nevertheless, they were told that this was the type of data they would need in order to perform their work tasks in the future. Given the extensive agenda, members were again told there was: 'not much room for any other business'. A member of management then continued by explaining the issues which surrounded the organization's budget following an SCG document entitled: 'Planning for Action: The Budget and Structures for Court Impact'.

To satisfy the budget criteria set by the probation paymasters, seniors were told, existing staff had to 'take on' more clients. The means for controlling staffing levels in the probation service was achieved either directly or indirectly. In direct terms, central government controlled the number of additional probation staff who may be employed in probation hostels: for example, based on the number of offenders accommodated within a hostel (these hostel are funded directly by the Home Office). Indirectly, staffing levels were calculated by the number of offenders that the probation area processed through the local courts. For this reason, 'court impact' needed to be increased to heighten credibility in the courts, to gain more offenders on probation orders and then be able to recruit more staff through an increase in probation caseloads. For this to take place, seniors had to spend more time in courts in addition to the existing court probation officers.

A senior probation officer interrupted the speech. She highlighted a conflict between staff resourcing criteria and organizational goals. As a measure of effectiveness, court impact ignored the crime prevention goal of the organization. It could be that Treen was successful in its crime prevention goal, hence fewer people were processed through some of the courts in the first instance. Yet crime prevention was being ignored in the SCG because it was not a measurable outcome or one to which the

criteria of increased funding was attached. In replying to this criticism, the fatalistic mode was employed for the second and last time. The organization 'had no choice' if it was agreed that more staff were needed due to high workloads. In this, there was general agreement.

A representative of the Local Authority's Treasurer's Department then joined the SCG to explain Treen's budget. He began his speech by stressing that his department was not a police force who function to: 'take away the underspends, discipline for overspends and lock people up for discrepancies. Without you we wouldn't have a job . . . we are here to help you'. The probation budget he went on to define as: 'An attempt at predicting, in advance, the cost of service delivery taking into account all known variables and policies'. Members of management were attentive and often asked the speaker for clarification of the points he made. As said on one of these occasions, this helped the seniors to understand: 'some of the decisions we have to make'.

Although it was stressed that the Local Authority Treasurer's Department was not policing the work of seniors, statements of accountability featured in the speech. It was emphasised that the Service was spending taxpayers' money and the budget was: 'very strongly controlled from the centre'. Overspending was described in the following manner: 'it's like taking away from your next door neighbour'. Seniors were told: 'at the end of the day the pot is only so big'. In reflecting upon these statement in terms of his previous remarks on policing, the representative added: 'I said we were not policemen, but we would show the overspenders that they have a responsibility for their budget'.

Incorporation could now be enhanced by fixing team budgets and devolving the responsibility for their management to seniors (now called budget holders and/or team managers). During observed team discussions, questions of expenditure then moved from the political-allocative to administrative-distributive, enabling yet another tactic of organizational control to operate. For example, in discussions over team budgets, time was spent querying car mileage allowances and the use of first class mail and afternoon phone calls. Whilst such considerations were reported by one senior to be only '10 per cent of 10 per cent' of their budget and offset by his increased time in managing such expenditure, these criticisms were discredited on the basis that budgetary considerations were constituted by a new nexus of power: the control of budgets and the collection of information on team expenditure

were required to sustain and justify not only existing, but also additional, organisational funding.

Information production and organisational identity

As noted, there was a vast outpouring of documentation in Treen: working papers, discussion documents, information systems, mission statements, objectives, reports, targets etc. In terms of the 'circuit of power' (Clegg, 1989) operating in this process, it would be a mistake to simply characterise such documentation as false according to an 'implementation gap' (Dunsire, 1978) or as a result of a conflict between an 'administrative' and 'professional' rationale (Etzioni, 1969). These documents possessed a power of their own by structuring the agendas of meetings and images of the organisation. As Ben Agger observes:

> the boundary between text and world has blurred to such an extent that it is nearly impossible to identify where text leaves off and world begins. This is the secret power of textuality today: *Texts write our lives without the apparent mediation of authoriality* (1991: 2. Original Italics).

As a result, managerial decision-making became increasingly unable to recognise any discrepancy between the simulation of organizational life (as mediated by information systems and organisational documents) and its reality (according to the views of its front-line workers). The ascending discourse around these transformations in organisational existence added to a refusal, by the central technicians of transformation, to examine the basis of front-line dissent. On the occasions that it was addressed, it was viewed as either symptomatic of the 'dynamic conservatism' of organisations (Schon, 1971), or as resulting from a need to reduce staff anxiety in times of rapid organisational change (thus becoming a social-psychological problem of individual adaption).

From the vantage point of front-line workers, decisions were increasingly made which had no bearing on their working environment. Criticisms of the validity of the information and presuppositions of the SCG – from the front-line workers – fell upon 'deaf ears' for they did not move through the obligatory passage points constructed by the SCG process. This gave rise to common complaints that measures of performance outcome were retrospective and not helpful to everyday practice at the front

line. One probation officer, in seeing the implications of these moves for working practices, put the case more strongly:

it's like living in a one-party State. We should get back to our core task – the supervision of offenders – and buy in professionals for other tasks and not try to do them ourselves.

Whilst another, in reflecting upon the volume and nature of the paperwork produced in the organisation felt that the Treen headquarters was: 'an incestuous unit that could function nicely if we did not in fact exist'.

The increased production of information formed more than organisational images. From observation of managerial meetings, this documentation also structured relations among the technicians of transformation for they constituted what has been termed an 'organizational knowledge' (Smith, 1988). Management meetings, like those of the SCG, were characterised by volumes of working papers and full agendas concentrating on matters of administrative procedure. This information increasingly became a form of consciousness that was the property of the organization and its relations, rather than of the individuals who comprised it (Smith, 1988: 220).

The above process reached such a point that during one management meeting its purpose was apparently lost in favour of the need to move rapidly through agenda items. In the process, a member of senior management dropped their agenda documents on the floor. In picking them up, he missed one agenda item and found difficulty in finding the relevant papers for the next one, thus preventing his contribution to the discussions. Further, during a meeting on research in the organisation, a probation officer asked where a target of 15 per cent as a measure of the effectiveness of a particular work task came from? A member of management, in replying, gestured upwards to signify that it was 'plucked from the sky'. The probation officer therefore asked if it was 'open to negotiation'. However, this meeting was chaired by a central technician of transformation and their intervention brought the agenda back to the question of the target's measurement, not its rationale.

In the circuits of power created and the absence of criticism and its neutralization where it did occur, organisational data was viewed as 'objective'. This enabled the evaluation of individual performance on the grounds of its apparent 'neutrality'; even

though such techniques represent yet another strategy of power (see Hollway, 1984). Given that such documentation was not regarded as legitimate by front-line staff, this gave rise to their frequent amazement that certain individuals should have gained promotion. The basis of such a critique, however, ignores the points made earlier: transformation requires the incorporation of strategic members for its effectiveness and such subjects had themselves moved through the obligatory passage points. Furthermore, incorporation accrued personal benefits. At a social-psychological level, it reduced a confusion over organisational identity which came in times of change by providing a diagnosis of and prescription for, organisational ills. At a material level, a pecuniary incentive would be attached to such incorporation despite budgetary restraint.

Part 2: The nature of transformative power

Rationalities in conflict

A series of transformative practices have been charted. The use of time-limits, persuasion through a problem-solution connection and surveillance across organisational space, formed obligatory passage points through which organisational images and communications then flowed. This resulted in a re-writing of organisational images through the plethora of information required to serve its practices. This formed an organisational discourse which placed emphasis upon matters of detail and procedure, but which led to heightened conflict within the organisation itself.

These practices are characteristic of what Michel Foucault (1991a) termed the 'art of governmentality'. Its methods, therefore, did not rely on changing organisational beliefs, only practices.[3] On the other hand, whilst it targeted practices, it was challenged by those for whom its practices did not make sense in terms of their own organisational existence. Despite this tension, this resistance can be conceptualised in terms of one of the later strands of optimism which Gordon (1991) has identified in Foucault's thinking on governmentality. A sense of the 'credibility' of governmental practices is regarded as a condition of its success:

> Foucault seems to think that the very possibility of an activity
> or way of governing can be conditional on the availability of a

certain notion of its rationality, which may in turn need, in order to be operable, to be credible to the governed as well as the governing (Gordon, 1991: 48).

The lack of credibility among front-line workers that these changes possessed, did not ensue as the result of 'misunderstanding' the rules of the discourse. Conflict arose as those organisational members began to see the implications of its attempts to alter the definition and purpose of their work. As a result, it was not considered to have any bearing on the day-to-day 'realities' of dealing with probation clients in difficult and demanding environments at the front-line of the organisation.[4]

From these propositions, we may characterise the SCG as underpined by a formal rationality which Weber characterised as the: *'calculability of means and procedures'* (Brubaker, 1984: 36, original italics). Its very exercise, according to Weber, is dependant upon an unequal distribution of power between, in this case, the producers (managers) and consumers (front-line workers) of organisational transformations. However, in pursuing this characterisation it should be borne in mind that: 'formal rationality requires certain substantive supports if it is to be successfully institutionalized and developed' (Holton and Turner, 1990: 52). In these terms, the clash of interests around policy formulation – between management and the front-line – can be understood by referring to the different dimensions of formal and substantive rationality; the later being *'the value* (from some explicitly defined standpoint) *of ends or results'* (Brubaker, 1984: 36, original italics).

Although conceptually appealing, two issues cloud this distinction. First, these transformative practices have been argued to possess their own substantive justifications through the problem-solution connection. Value-based criticisms of the methods of the technicians of transformation were then either ignored or neutralized. This was justified by the need to control budgets and collect information on working practices to further, or simply maintain, organisational funding. This process, in turn, produced an image of the organization which structured managerial decision-making. To take the emphasis on budgetary control. The growth of accounting practices within the organisation was not a neutral instrument. As Power and Laughlin note of accounting practices in general:

Increased accounting-based specialization engenders a control of information which is much more than the appropriation of

knowledge; it is more generally the monopolization of modes of reason. The expert culture of accounting, rather than its particular elaborations, propagates an economically based discourse which can control the public definitions of social and organizational reality and hence the 'problems' and 'needs' of these domains (1992: 130).

Second, according to Weber, the very success of the formal calculations implied by the SCG, depends upon a unequal distribution of power (see Holton and Turner, 1990: 52). In the process of enrolment, that situation did not hold uniformly for all members of the organisation. The mode of persuasion was severely weakened by geography and those of time and surveillance were then utilised. At this level, monitoring took place in relation to the outcome of work tasks and exceptionally, as in the case of the officer wishing to travel to a prison by car, in terms of resource inputs. Whilst the assumptions of such calculations have been generally criticised (Fox, 1991), unless the service had adopted Draconian measures, monitoring could not have taken account of the actual performance of work tasks.

For these reasons, the form of rationality which this art of governmentality represented, became the affair of those over whom it attempted to govern.[5] Yet in order for such dissent to have taken place and its credibility challenged, the transformative power employed was not fully effective. I have explored what Foucault (1991b) has termed the 'form of appropriation' of the discourse and begun the process of examining its 'limits of appropriation'. The next section looks at the latter in more depth.

The boundaries of transformative power

One of the limits of appropriation was itself constitutive of organisational identity and provided a substantive justification for working practices. During the research, there was a clear identification of what was eventually termed a 'binding ethos'. Members of the organisation viewed the purpose of their work in terms of helping people and in practical terms, of having the organisational autonomy to achieve this (see May, 1991a: 86–98). This carried with it a justification for resisting organisational transformations. This established a link between organisational politics and ethics, which affected the success of the new practices. As Foucault puts it:

ethics is a practice; ethos is a manner of being . . . I think this attitude is an ethical one, but it is also political . . . and one which those who govern, here or there, will sooner or later be obliged to take into account (Rabinow, 1987: 377.).

As the transformations moved through the organisational hierarchy and away from the central technicians of transformation, the outlet for dissent, informed by the above, heightened as organisational controls altered in form. In probation team meetings, chaired by senior probation officers, dissent was commonplace and members drew readily upon the binding ethos to represent their interests. They complained that the setting of objectives was about: 'upholding common processes, not standards'; that the increased need for information was for 'managerial purposes, not practice *per se*' asked where, in all the SCG documentation, 'the social work values were'? Whilst this provided a justification for resistance, it was the position of organisational members in the hierarchy which affected their abilities to refuse these transformations.

Senior probation officers were, as noted, subjected to the persuasive mode. In addition, the measurement of organisational performance by seniors was increasingly re-defined. They were then judged by their ability to meet performance standards as laid down by management and the SCG criteria. For those with a strong allegiance to the binding ethos, this rendered it possible to resist, but not ultimately to refuse, these transformations. For probation officers, on the other hand, their work situation was very different for they could mobilise other resources for refusal. These centred not only upon their organisation distance from the technicians of transformation, but the nature of their working tasks: probation officers had to fulfil statutory responsibilities in variable settings (criminal and divorce courts, prisons etc) which placed limits on transformative power.

These settings were not amenable to the *apriori* calculation of action as presupposed in the practice of transformation. Given these transformational impediments, accountability was extracted through form-filling and budgetary control. Whilst anomalies were produced in working practices, they could not prescribe *how* a task would be performed in these settings. Alongside working with offenders whose experiences were of social and economic deprivation, interests were then formulated which ran counter to policy prescriptions. A resulting clash of rationales produced a

heightened struggle over organisation identities, with these settings providing the basis for effective agency in terms of a range of reactions to change: from resistance to refusal and the dilution of policy prescriptions.

The limits to the transformative power applied by the administrative discourse thus stemmed from both the exercise of episodic power (in terms of the value-based protests by front-line personnel) and dispositional power (originating from probation work environments). As Clegg puts it:

> There is always a dialectic to power, always another agency, another set of standing conditions pertinent to the realization of that agency's causal power against the resistance of another . . . *rarely will intentions be realized, if we mean by intention the outcome projected by the agency at the outset* (1989: 208)

This is not to say that it did not have an effect on practices. However, it is to say that *the central technicians of transformation*, as 'micro-actors', were prevented from becoming 'macro-actors' (Callon and Latour, 1981) for they could not speak with 'one voice' for the organisation.

Summary

In order to persuade members of the probation service of the solutions to problems they defined, the technicians of transformation selected strategic individuals for the implementation of policy changes. These senior probation officers found difficulty in mobilising resources to resist these changes as their own organisational identities were increasingly defined in new terms. Through the construction of obligatory passage points, policy changes moved away from political questions such as the desirability, feasibility or purpose of transformation, to technical questions surrounding the measurement of organisational performance, targets and the monitoring of work. This resulted in an attention to the minutiae of practices.

In this process, past organisational goals were replaced by a new orientation to short-term objectives which structured rewards for its members on the basis of their adherence to this new mode of operation. It therefore constituted a way of seeing, discussing

and acting within the organisation. 'Other' organisational mem-
bers then felt themselves to be evaluated not valued and con-
trolled to manage, not enabled by management.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Significantly, this is the very metaphor which Foucault notes is 'inevitably
  invoked' when considering the art of governmentality (1991a: 93). I shall return
  to this point in Part 2 of the article.
2 By front-line workers I mean those who are in daily contact and work with
  those people for whom the organisation is largely intended to cater; in this case
  offenders who have been apprehended and processed through the criminal
  courts. In the case of the probation service this includes probation officers and
  probation assistants (see May, 1991a).
3 Foucault's work is increasingly recognised as of importance to organisational
  analysis. See Burrell 1988. For an excellent exposition of the concept of 'gov-
  ernmental rationality in Foucault's work' see Gordon 1991.
4 This proposition does not assume a consensus as to the nature of working
  practices within the organisation which does not exist within the probation ser-
  vice. See Boswell, 1982; May, 1991a.
5 It is recognised that in using the works of Foucault and Weber, that Foucault
  did not consider himself a Weberian, if by that it means considering rationality
  as an 'anthropological invariant'. See Foucault 1991c: 79. At the same time,
  authors have noted the importance of exploring the connections between these
  two authors. See Gordon, 1987 and O'Neill, 1986.

References

Agger, B., (1991), *A Critical Theory of Public Life: Knowledge, Discourse and
  Politics in an Age of Decline*, London: Falmer Press.

Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H., (eds), (1992), *Critical Management Studies*, London: Sage.

Audit Commission, (1989), *The Probation Service: Promoting Value for Money*, London: HMSO.

Bourdieu, P., (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Broad, R., (1991), *Punishment Under Pressure: The Probation Service in the Inner City*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Brubaker, R., (1984), *The Limits of Rationality: An Essay On The Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber*, London: Allen and Unwin.

Burchell, G., Gordon, G. and Miller, P., (eds), (1991), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Burrell, G., (1988), 'Modernism, Post Modernism and Organizational Analysis 2: The Contribution of Michel Foucault, *Organization Studies*, Vol 9 (2): 221–235.

Callon, M., (1986), 'Some elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay', in Law, J., (ed.), *Power, Action and Belief*.

Callon, M. and Latour, B., (1981), 'Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: How Actors Macro-Structure Reality and How Sociologists Help Them To Do So', in Knorr-Cetina, K. and Cicourel, A., (eds), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro and Macro Sociologies*.

Clegg, S., (1989), *Frameworks of Power*, London: Sage.

Dunsire, A., (1978), *Implementation in a Bureaucracy*, Oxford: Martin Robertson.

Etzioni, A., (ed.), (1969), *The Semi-Professions and their Organisations: Teachers, Nurses and Social Workers*, New York: Free Press.

Faulkner, D., (1984), 'The Future of the Probation Service', in *Probation: Direction Innovation and Change in the 1980s. Proceedings of a Professional Conference*, London: National Association of Probation Officers.

Foucault, M., (1991a), 'Governmentally', in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P., (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M., (1991b), 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P., (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*.

Fowles, A. J., (1990), 'Monitoring Expenditure on the Criminal Justice System', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol 29 (2): 82–100.

Fox, N., (1991), 'Postmodernism, Rationality and the Evaluation of Health Care', *Sociological Review*, Vol 39 (4): 709–744.

Gordon, C., (ed.), (1980), *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Gordon, C., (1987), 'The Soul of the Citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on Rationality and Government', in Whimster, S. and Lash, S., (eds), *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*.

Gordon, C., (1991), 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction', in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P., (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*.

Hall, S., (1991), 'And Not a Shot Fired', *Marxism Today*, December: 10–15.

Harris, R., (1992), *Crime, Criminal Justice and the Probation Service*, London: Routledge.

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walkerdine, V., (eds), (1984), *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*, London: Methuen.

Hoggett, P., (1991), 'A New Management in the Public Sector', *Policy and Politics*, Vol 19 (4): 243–256.

Hollway, W., (1984), 'Fitting work: Psychological Assessment in Organizations', in Henriques, J. *et al.*, (eds), *Changing The Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity.*

Holton, R. and Turner, B., (1990), *Max Weber on Economy and Society*, London: Routledge.

Home Office, (1980), 'Report of the Working Party on Management Structure in the Probation and After-Care Service', London: HMSO.

Home Office, (1984), 'Probation Service in England and Wales: Statement of National Objectives and Priorities', London: Home Office.

Home Office, (1987), 'Efficiency Scrutiny of Her Majesty's Probation Inspectorate' ('The Grimsey Report'), London: Home Office.

Home Office, (1988), 'Tackling Offending: An Action Plan', London: Home Office.

Home Office, (1991), 'Action Plan for the Probation Service', (Press Office), London: Home Office.

Humphrey, C., (1987), *The Implications of the Financial Management Initiative for the Probation Service*, Manchester University: Department of Accounting and Finance.

Humphrey, C., (1991), 'Calling on the Experts: The Financial Management Initiative (FMI), Private Sector Management Consultants and the Probation Service', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol 30 (1): 1–18.

Humphrey, C. and Pease, K., (1992), 'Effectiveness Measurement in Probation: A View from the Troops', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol 31 (1): 31–52.

Knorr-Cetina, K. and Cicourel, A., (eds), (1981), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro and Macro Sociologies*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C., (1990), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Third Impression, London: Verso.

Lash, S. and Whimster, S., (eds), (1987), *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, London: Allen and Unwin.

Law, J., (ed.), (1986), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, Sociological Review Monograph, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R., (eds), (1994), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

May, T., (1991a), *Probation: Politics, Policy and Practice*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

May, T., (1991b), 'Under Siege: The Probation Service in a Changing Environment', in Reiner, R. and Cross, M. (eds), *Beyond Law and Order Criminal Justice Policy and Politics in the 1990s.*

May, T., (1994), 'Probation and Community Sentences', in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R., (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology.*

McWilliams, W., (1987), 'Probation, Pragmatism and Policy', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol 26 (2): 97–121.

O'Neill, J., (1986), 'The Disciplinary Society: From Weber to Foucault', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 37 (1): 42–60.

Pollitt, C., (1990), *Managerialism and the Public Services: The Anglo-American Experience*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Power, M. and Laughlin, R., (1992), 'Critical Theory and Accounting', in Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H., (eds), *Critical Management Studies.*

Rabinow, P., (ed.), (1987), *The Foucault Reader*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Reiner, R. and Cross, M., (eds), (1991), *Beyond Law and Order: Criminal Justice Policy and Politics in the 1990s*, London: Macmillan.

Schon, D., (1971), *Beyond the Stable State*, New York: Random House.

Smith, D., (1988), *The Everyday World as Problematic: a Feminist Sociology*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.