

yaq!wima Quest And Search: Benevolence and Power Preservation of Officers Job Sourcing for Inmates in External Labour

Abstract

Research on prison work is missing a fundamental link in the chain of reasoning connecting the practices of the work with its sourcing and the comprehension of inmates regarding the work they do outside the prison during their incarceration. As an opening towards remedying this lacuna, this article explores a modern-day prison work practice through the lens of the potlatch practices to delve into how work is sourced in the prisons and examine how this process influences the perceptions of inmates about the work. Drawing on interviews and observations from inmates and officers who work outside the prisons, the article revealed the angelic hubris embedded in sourcing jobs for inmates whilst exploring the meanings of comeuppance, natural selection, back-scratching and symbolic violence of inmates regarding working outside prisons. The findings refocus our attention from the dyadic inmate-officer relationship to an intricate triad of inmates as workers by shedding more light on varying processes and avenues from which work is sourced and how the processes influence the understanding and performance of inmates. More generally, the study advances knowledge on how the art of forced generosity is embedded in nuances that propel the receiver to reciprocate the kindness granted by a person of influence in multiple folds.

Introduction

Scholarly contributions on prison work mainly focus on its exploitative nature (Bair, 2020; Browne, 2007; DelSesto, 2021; Jacobs, 2018; Rymhs, 2009), rehabilitative impact (Goodman, 2012; Kantorowicz-Rezanichenko, 2015; Lopez-Rey, 1958; Scherrer and Shah, 2017; Zanella, 2020) and recidivism reduction (Cooney, 2012; Duwe, 2014; Graffam et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 1988; Sedgley et al., 2010; van Netburg, 1996). In this regard, there has been loud reverberation of the concept of prison labour as scholars concur by drawing attention to the impact of in-prison work in attitudinal change that is supposed to counteract the negative relationship that inmates too often have with legitimate employment after their release from prisons (Pandeli et al., 2019). So far, studies underscore the intricate social dynamics that shape the many different perspectives of in-prison work but have done less to advance out-prison work and the nature of the work itself. A look at the expansive literature mostly revealed that despite the significant engagement of inmates outside the prisons, empirical research that examines the dynamics of prison work outside the prisons is in its budding state as a modest body of studies has chronicled this practice. As a result, studies on prison work raise more questions than they answer about how the work is sourced, the implication of the work and how inmates understand the gradations of the work they do outside the prisons whilst incarcerated. Therefore, adopting the potlatch practices by the Kwakiutl people from the Pacific Northwest Coast in the study of prison work would make headway in permitting a more critically nuanced perspective of analysis in understanding inmates.

Against a backdrop of prison work literature, this study proposes that the work done by inmates whilst incarcerated should not be reduced to just its rehabilitative, recidivism or exploitative impact alone, as those associations are firmly established. Since the current literature neglects to satisfactorily account for the dynamic processes engaged in by the inmates in out-prison work and fully recognise that there is a need to study outside prison, the goal of this study is geared towards not re-asserting the continuing significance of the linkages between prison work and other variables previously stated, but rather, address themes that are rarely written about in contemporary debates relating to prison work and accompanied by current misperceptions and 'blind alleys' (Crompton, 2010 p. 10) relating to policy and scholastic debates. Through emulating the potlatch approach to gift-giving, the study traces the genesis of the social effort of meaning and delimitations which complemented the Kwakiutl reciprocal gift-giving ceremony to proposition a critical case to comprehend the work carried out by inmates during their incarceration and explicate the roles of the parties in organising and understanding the work. Throwing the spotlight on how work is sourced from individuals and organisations alike and how inmates make meanings of it, will demonstrate that questions about the nature of outside-prison work, particularly its impact and how inmates understand it persists and remain a fertile expanse for research due to how it can illuminate the dynamics of working relationships and its implications on employment and social policies. To expand upon the theme of prison work, understand how work is sourced, and how inmates understand the work, this study pulls data from a significant survey on the experiences of inmates, and officers concerning how work is sourced and understood by participants in the prison service of Ghana. By exploring how the work is sourced as a pretext, the study seeks to illuminate the dynamic processes at play when inmates work outside the prisons during their incarceration. In this regard, the study is made up of four sections. The first part reviews studies on prison work with reference to empirical data, the second section places prison work in a wider context with reference to the act of gift-giving that will enable us to delineate how the shared memories and meanings associated with this literary genre of potlatch could provide enlightenment of prison work in a contemporary prison. The third tackles the research methods employed in the study and the fourth presents the findings.

Prison work

A recent report by Walmsley, (2019) indicated that the prison population in the world has increased by 24% since the year 2000. This alarming increase has rekindled the ever-recurring reservations about the effectiveness of imprisonment as a deterrent for crime even though there is a proliferation of prisons and incarceration rates are ubiquitously increasing. As a result, this has turned prisons into overpopulated institutions with a new breed of prisoners more insistent on their rights than any in recent history. Consequently, in the eyes of the public, these factors associated with the prisons have nudged it from the idea of a neglected institution into one that requires major consideration as what prisoners do with their time is becoming contentious, especially given the high cost involved in running prisons. In response, reform-minded prison administrators, policymakers and governments have resorted to work programmes as the solution to prisons' economic and social concerns (White, 1999). As a result, work programmes are ubiquitous in prisons and jails across the globe as it is favoured as sound economics since offenders' work offsets the cost of their incarceration, unburdening taxpayers (Crook, 2007; McBride, 2003), aids in reducing idleness of prisoners (Atkinson and Rostad, 2003; Batchelder and Pippert, 2002; Pyle, 1997; Vuk and Doležal, 2020) and enhance the security of prisons (Pierson et al., 2014).

Prison labour can thus be explained as an experience situated at the intersection of two vital social processes: the commodification of labour and the enforced social definition of prisoners as persons who have given up their rights and freedom (de Vito and Lichtenstein, 2015). Commodification indicates that prison labour has manifested to be well-suited to other modes of production and is impeccably well-matched with current social relations such as the growth of capitalism and the outspread of wage workers. The second aspect carefully considers the state's impact in influencing unfree labour relations and underscores the slanted views and depictions of prison labour. In essence, all forms of unfree labour such as prisoners are swaddled in commodification by some third parties such as officers, prison administrators, and private employers rather than the workers themselves (De Vito and Sundevall, 2017; van der Linden, 2008). In all cases, prison labour appeared helpful in complementing the economic interests of indigenous and foreign industrialists and establishments with a tenacious hierarchy and mindset. These aspects cut across both the private and public use of prisoners and could comprise working beyond the prison walls. Although the idea of prison is a fairly modern concept, coercing criminals to work to atone for their criminality has been a practice that dates back to the dawn of civilisation (Jackson, 1927). Hence, prison labour has been acknowledged as vital to the numerous systems being advocated for by different activists since the beginning of history (Bentham, 1989, 2017; Elkin, 1948; Hanway, 1776; Holford, 1821; Howard, 1780; Mannheim, 1939; Nield, 1948). Yet, the exact nature of prison labour is greatly questioned as some reformers raise concerns regarding the nature of the work carried out by inmates, whether the work is voluntary or compulsory, whether it is punitive and unproductive or industrious and profitable, should prisoners be paid for their work, and what should the connection between the jobs inside and outside the prisons be like? (Moore, 2018). By positioning prison work at the kernel of this study, we endeavour to eclipse the fragmentation of the prevailing historiography on the association between prison work, how the work is sourced and interpretations rendered by participants. Adopting this interminable nexus of prisoners and work as the main subject matter, this article explores the traditionally ubiquitous establishment of prison work by placing it within an assemblage of forms of gift-giving and reciprocating through the potlatch system associated with the advances in modernism.

Potlatch: forced generosity through yaq!wima

The word potlatch has its root in one of the languages spoken by the Pacific Northwest Coast Indian, the Nuu-chah-nulth or Nootka word 'patshatl,' (Cole and Chaikin, 1990) which translates into English as "gift" or "giving" (Ebert, 2013) - describes ceremonial "give-aways" in which an affluent person offers things of personal property to others (Trosper, 2003). Potlatches were intricate pageantries that often persisted for many days and served an array of purposes such as the sharing of fortune and the endorsements of inherited and gained statuses within the multi-village social system (Marker, 2011). By nature, the potlatch was a system which served some privileged family and individual interests. At least one person or a group of persons (who were closely related) or a social unit proclaims their intents, invites the guests, adopts the position of the host and is viewed as the donor (Barnett, 1938). As a social and emotional substitute for war (Allen, 1981; Codere, 1956) the host group showcase some of their traditional hereditary "crests" understood as their possessions or privileges such as songs, dances, and carvings among other things whilst recounting the folklores of the root of these privileges and the accounts of their recent achievements; offered and convinced of its members as entitled to use those privileges; granted each group a new name from the group's hereditary stock according to the level of social ranks (Barker et al., 2019).

Invariably the confirmation of crests which showed the official ranks was always the main aim in potlatching, especially during the era of the most impressive wealth distributions (Kan, 2016). Consequently, the celebrations were crowned with the distribution of gifts also known as "yaq!wima" to the guests. Although there are varying accounts among the Pacific Northwest Coast Indians, its core concept of bestowing extravagant gifts on guests by the host to repay a favour granted was kept intact by all the members. Still, the account of the Kwakiutl people presents a more comprehensive picture that explains the purpose of the ceremony and how it can be applied to activities undertaken in a contemporary prison service.

Kinship as namimas among the Kwakiutls

The Kwakiutl were grouped into "*festival groups*" that were in frequent contact with each other and were linked by endogamies (Drucker and Heizer, 1967). As a result, they typically welcomed each other for potlatches and feasts, occupied abutting lands and at times even kept adjacent fishing grounds (Trosper, 1996). The formal structure of the Kwakiutl society was made up of local groups which formed the basic units of the society and consisted of kin groups made up of people who were or considered themselves as related called numaym or namima (Boas, 1920; Drucker, 1940). The kinship belief engaged in organising the groups was bilateral, but with a minor patrilineal predisposition as people usually identified with and had ties to their paternal kin, though they occasionally identified with their maternal relatives. Each namima owned lands (fishing places and other sites of economic importance); ceremonial privileges such as songs, dance, cravings, and names among other things; meaning properties belonged to the named position and not the person currently occupying it (Trosper, 2003). They also had in their possession a set of traditions that incorporated a fabulous story about the origin of the family line, mythical and at times possibly authentic exploits of several ancestors and how they acquired the family privileges and more or less factual description of the sources of privileges recently obtained. Nevertheless, members in each namima were not seen as compeers but classified in a specifically scaled order of superiority depicting a primogeniture degree of kinship from the direct line of descent of the traditional family. The initial glimpse of the potlatch depicts it as a pointless ceremony embodying copious consumption which sometimes ensued in the destruction of wealth yet, it encompassed a potpourri of convoluted internal and situated lucidities and negotiations of authority, power, influence and status. Table 1 shows a summary of the main themes captured under the potlatch and their corresponding practices

Table 1: Potlatch themes and their correspondence to practices

Potlatch	Practices
Forced generosity/egalitarianism	Status seeking Expendable differences among the tribes Implacable and invincible authority Confirming or validating heredity Served as wealth distribution
Primogeniture degree of leadership	Ranking of chiefs crucial to gifts Namima system of tribes Affinal relationship Endogamies among tribes To buffer, self-organised, to learn through property rights, ethics and leadership roles Socio-religious roles
Endless pyramiding of obligations	Non-fictitious credits High quantity of blanket and salmon distributed Expected but not closely calculated system of reciprocity Gifts produced obligations Obligation to return more than was given Potlatch before recognition
Giving in return	Believe in tangible gifts Gifts to be distributed to other nanimas Protest when gift is niggardly or failed to acknowledge status Pump-priming devices to get real wealth not mystical credits
Gamesmanship	Intense rivalry gestures Served as wealth redistribution Manipulating surpluses not necessities Everyone participating contributed to the king Used to bankrupt rivals

Research Methodology

The work engaged in by inmates during incarceration is geared towards the benefit of the prison service and the public at large and is regulated by the Prison Service Decree 1972, (N.R.C.D. 46). Prison labour or what is referred to as external labour in the prison discourse are activities that are engaged in by inmates outside the prisons under the supervision of officers who also provide the needed technical advice. Inmates who qualify for external labour (after serving one-third of their sentences) are mostly engaged in works such as clearing (weeding) compounds of government/ public facilities, loading and offloading goods for private organisations and individuals, desilting choked gutters/ drainage facilities, construction works, and conveying goods for companies or individuals from one point to another. As the objective

of the research was to explore how these jobs are sourced and comprehend the nuances underlining how inmates feel towards the jobs offered to them in the prisons, the fieldwork was conducted in four prisons.

The fieldwork for the article was undertaken over six months from January to June 2022. However, negotiations for access to the various prisons was a lengthy and bureaucratic process which lasted for more than a year as it warranted a need to establish trust and amicable rapport with the administration of the prisons acting as the gatekeepers whilst conceiving and preparing for the possibility of denial to entry. Upon reaching an agreement, four prisons (a local prison, a central prison, a medium security prison and a camp prison) were selected based on the active involvement of inmates of such prisons in external labour activities as relying on one source of data is typically not enough to develop an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Creswell, 2013). The emphasis on these four prisons was necessitated by the need to adjust to the ephemeral nature of the population of inmates, especially through prisoner transfers and adapt to the possibility of continuing with an inmate even after they have been transferred to another prison.

As the chosen theoretical lens of this work is informed by a traditional ceremony, potlatch, the exploratory qualitative approach was employed to gather evidence to answer real-life questions from inmates and officers (Holloway and Galvin, 2017) to ultimately develop an in-depth understanding of external labour activities. The research commenced with six months of observing inmates and officers working outside the prisons and documenting their experiences in a daily research diary (Patzelt et al., 2014). Some aspects of the observation were unequivocally non-participation but there were times when some participants were asked questions, specifically during break times. Initially, participants were a bit apprehensive of their involvement but as time went by these informal, unstructured interactions created a good rapport which facilitated comprehension of the work, thus creating a climate of total emersions into external labour activities which provided the opportunity to understand the nuances of how inmates perceived the jobs.

In all 45 semi-structured interviews were conducted with inmates and 20 with officers. To ensure the right participants were chosen for the interviews, the theoretical sampling method was employed. Three selection criteria were developed for inmates and officers. First of all the prisoners must have a sentence of not less than 2 years to have participated in several of these external labour activities and gained the needed experience to share their knowledge about prison work. Secondly, they should have been taken out of prison to work in the last three months to familiarise themselves with the current happenings in the world of work and enable them to give current accounts of their experiences since recollection would be much easier due to their recent involvement. Lastly, they should have a maximum of five months to complete their sentences to provide impartial accounts of their experiences knowing that they will be leaving very soon. The officers should have worked for the prison service for not less than their probation period of one year to qualify for external labour activities. Secondly, unless they are in an administrative position that is directly linked to external labour activities, they should have accompanied inmates to work in the last three months to enable them to give an ongoing account of their experiences. Finally, they should have experience with planning, scheduling and logging of prisoners themselves as well as engaged in sourcing for jobs.

An explanation was given to both the officers and inmates to assure them that though the service had given the go-ahead for the research to be conducted, their participation was voluntary. Thus opportunities were offered to participants to ask questions and clear themselves of any doubt before they participated in the work. Based on this, the participants, especially the

inmates turned out to be excited interviewees curious about the intent of the research objectives whilst expressing their appreciation of a neutral third-party outsider expressing an interest in their affairs as observed by (Cameron and Murphy, 2007; Guilbaud, 2010; Wolgemuth et al., 2014). Fortunately, all the inmates contacted participated freely with no reservations and the interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length.

The inmates interviewed were between 18 and 43 years old, serving sentences ranging from 2 to 10 years for minor crimes classified under misdemeanour and petty theft. The officers interviewed were between 32 to 59 years old, occupying positions from Lance Corporal to Officer in Charge (OIC) with external labour experiences ranging from 3 to 34 years.

The prospect of observing and interviewing inmates and officers at work enabled the capturing of their perception of real-time work experiences as they unfolded. The officers were asked about their involvement in sourcing jobs for inmates, subsequently, questions were narrowed to probe the meaning that inmates attached to the work offered to them by the officers and at the same time eliciting their personal reflections on the manner in which work is sourced and organised in the prisons.

Data transcribing and analysis

Coding involved three stages. First of all segments of content that were related to prison work were spotted together with the role of officers in job sourcing and how inmates perceived the jobs. Next, these segments of text were discursively analysed through Schatzki's practice lens identifying the sayings and doings of officers and inmates and likely to capturing their accumulated practices as systematized social actions governed by rules, teleoaffective structures as well as practical and general understandings (Begkos and Antonopoulou, 2020; Schatzki, 2002). Therefore, Schatzki's practice approach endowed us with an analytical context and a handy lexicon that facilitated the discovery officers' means of securing work, the feelings and encyclopaedic conceptualisations of work and complete strategies of how they value work. The coding categories employed were not pre-established or inferred but emerged as a result of inductively analysing the initially identified sections of text in the context in search of proof that answered the research question (Dart, 2016; McDonald et al., 2020).

The data was analysed by iteratively pedalling between the data and the extant literature on prison work seeking patterns to serve as a systematic point of reference to external labour activities to serve as a guide to discover broad themes related to the research topic. The themes discovered were interpreted and analysed iteratively to identify some common themes until the data was saturated (Fusch and Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). The themes were then sorted, reorganized and indexed to develop the analytical classifications (Myers, 2019; Sarpong et al., 2022) of the Kwakiutl potlatch themes developed in Table 1. Further probing into the findings enabled the establishment of the links and conceptual properties of the respective themes to a meaningful association between the potlatch and the experiences of participants to reconnoitre viable theoretical elucidations of the stories they shared during the fieldwork—namely; Angelic hubris, symbolic violence, natural selection, back-scratching and comeuppance.

Table 2: Categories and exemplar quotes from the participants

Category	Exemplar quotes from the participants
Angelic hubris	“The external labour activities are not clearly defined so we engage them in these activities” (Stephen, 38, Corporal) “I do engage in scouting for jobs in my free time to help the boys” (Philip, 32, Corporal) “If an inmate does not pull their weight when we go out I will drop them” (Peter, 43, Sergeant) “There are more people who want to be in your position so you have to prove yourself” (Frank, 48, ACOP) “I feel pity for their condition so I try to help them by engaging them to work always” (Reuben, 38, ASP)
Symbolic violence	“For our masters whatever they tell us to do when we go out, we will do” (Elijah, 32, Inmate) “We have no option or say in the work or activities we perform and is the fact of being a prisoner” (John, 42, Inmate)
Natural selection	“If you want to survive in this prison you have to work hard when you go out” (Ebenezer, 35, Inmate) “Help me cope and adjust to my current situation as a prisoner so I have to do what it takes” (Jethro, 33, Inmate) “To retain your authority and influence on inmates you need to give them something to do” (Paul, 37, DSP)
Back-scratching	“This is an opportunity offered to us by our masters so we have to show our gratitude” (Jacob, 32, Inmate) “Giving back and showing appreciation by working hard is the best way to ensure that we get to work every day” (Caleb, 29, Inmate) “We owe the officers so much for their sacrifices of searching for jobs for us, sometimes I feel like the work we do in the form of payment for what our masters do for us is not enough and I believe we can never repay their kindness” (Abraham, 28 Inmate)
Comeuppance	“When we were sentenced, we were told we would engage in hard labour so this is it” (Adam, 27, Inmate) “I think the work is supposed to teach us some lessons and punish us at the same time for the crimes we committed against society” (Isaiah, 32, Inmate)

Angelic Hubris: The individuality of job sourcing by officers

During the earlier traditional or pre-contact period, only the high-ranking chief in each namima was required to give potlaches hence making the occurrence less frequent. This resulted in small potlatches held both within and between tribes. In those times the wealth generated from the potlatch came from the collective effort of the entire namima. Thus, junior chiefs to the highest ranking chief and commoners contributed whatever wealth in goods they had in their possession to the chief as part of the preparation towards potlatching because everybody had to help their chiefs in putting up the best ceremony. This role of the ranking chief plays out in the role of the Chief Order (Senior Chief Officer in charge of administration) of prisons as originally, they were the only ones required to organise working outside the prisons. As a result, individuals and organisations with jobs contacted the prisons through the Chief Order to request

for inmates to work. The Chief Order then sorted out all the arrangements and assigned inmates and prisoners to work on the job as narrated by (Nathanael, 58 Senior Chief Officer):

When an individual or an organisation brings their job, we discuss it and I suggest the number of gangs that would be needed for the job. Sometimes some people come in with the preconceived number of gangs they would need but after our discussion, they realise they either need more or fewer gangs

The narration given by Nathanael recalls the duties performed by the ranking chiefs during the earlier form of potlatches. This signals a centralised, more controlled and organised program structured and monitored under the care of one person in the prison. The implication here is that like potlatch, external labour used to be conducted on a smaller scale due to the number of people involved (Trospen, 1996). However, after 1849, potlatches grew in size as a result of the increase in potlatching goods which perpetuated the proliferation of the potlatching; thus allowing the medium and lower-rank chiefs to give potlatches (Trospen, 1996). Thus, the people of Kwakiutl like the inmates were under the angelic hubris of their chiefs. Angelic hubris as used in organising this finding refers to the forced generosity engaged in by the officers who act in the guise of searching for jobs (**yaq!wima**) for inmates to help them when in fact they stand to gain from the labour of the prisoners' labour in the end. Due to the surge in external labour activities particularly during the covid 19 period, officers who escorted inmates out to work, engaged in sourcing jobs for inmates as narrated by officers and inmates alike:

There are periods of time when officers get a lot of job offers but there are times when they hit a dry spell and during these times officers go job hunting for inmates (Obed, 59, ADP)

At times the officers go in search of jobs for the inmates because as an escort officer, you have good prospects when you take the boys out to work regularly especially when you have good boys you do not intend to lose (Solomon, 56, Chief Officer)

I got some calls from people who needed our services, but I also went in search of jobs during my free time. For the urgent jobs, I called some of the ex-convicts I still keep in touch with but, for non-urgent ones, I deferred them until the prisoners were allowed to go out to work again. (Stephen, 38, Corporal)

After the lockdown, we had more flexible working arrangements that eased some tasks off my hands and allowed me some free time but I knew during that time some people needed some work to be done by inmates but could not come to the prisons so I used the time to search for jobs that would be performed by the prisoners when they are allowed to go out (Philip, 32, Corporal)

These responses show how the officers directly get involved in searching for and securing jobs for the inmates. For instance, Philip used his spare time outside work to search for jobs for the inmates to help them become more productive after the lockdown. It is, therefore, crucial to notice that these actions of communitarian egalitarianism of scouting for jobs for inmates are predicated on plutocracy to enforce their honour and prestige as indicated by Solomon, who narrated that officers with jobs in the prison earned more respect. This wave of job sourcing by officers enables them to be revered by the inmates they work with to the point that they listen to them more than some senior officers as it played out during the potlatch which saw the ratings attached to the gifts given discontinued and in some cases some chiefs of lower ranks giving bigger potlaches and receiving larger presents than their seniors (Godelier, 1999; Neikirk and Nickson, 2021). Consequently, inmates were emphatic that they held officers who

were able to give them jobs in high esteem and could listen and even regard their council as opposed to other officers:

As an officer you need to help boys by taking us out to work constantly so if I have an officer that takes me out every day, of course, I will listen to him, try my best to please him and stay loyal to him because others may wish to be in my position (Elijah, 32, Inmate)

Based on this view expressed by Elijah, the number of officers involved in job sourcing for inmates has skyrocketed over the years resulting in the expansion of the program in the prison. Consequently, it has degenerated into an individual affair- where each officer looks after their own gang and vice versa instead of a collective effort by the prison administration through the chief order as captured by an officer;

As for the inmates when you take them out consistently, they respect, regard, and listen to you as their leader when you try to advise them. When they are with you, they try to stay out of trouble because they know they can be dropped at any time and they may end up with an officer who may not have work for them or even if they did, it would not be consistent (Peter, 43, Sargent)

The individuality of job sourcing by officers indicates that the jobs offered serve as tokens of esteem and products of goodwill as they serve to complement and indulge inmates. Inmates are flattered by the gesture of the officers because it provides some sort of recognition of their worth and fulfils their wishes to be treated as ‘human beings’ though they are prisoners. Indeed, (Douglas, 2002) assertion that there are no free gifts is cautiously implanted and translated in this practice as officers do not perform this act of generosity free of charge but implore inmates to work hard eventually in exchange;

The masters sometimes have their work and come for us to help them get it done. We know it’s their work because of the passion and attention they pay to it and also at times they tell us (Judas, 24, Inmate)

As indicated by Judas, it is obvious that the most essential aspect of job sourcing by officers is the massive amounts of work the officers can get inmates to engage in at a time. Again, officers utilising their spare time to engage in the accumulation of more jobs signals their status which does not reflect their individual statuses but what they represent in the prisons to inmates (Barker et al., 2019)

Symbolic violence: Perceptions of inmates about sourced jobs

The gifts given under potlatches created a system of exchange that permitted and nurtured social relationships but intensified the predilection to be manifested as an agonistic relationship (behaviour) that endorsed competitive and vicious types of behaviour (Kowalski, 2011). Thus Mauss, (2002, p. 7) asserted that the potlatch was “the system of total services” where everything was efficiently wedged in the exchanges. It is obvious that a system of behaviour grounded on the three phases of giving, receiving, and reciprocating, and where the latter is deferred whilst the extent of its generosity is essentially larger than the original gift, is a positive response scheme redolent of symmetrical schizmogogenesis which brings with it panorama of build-ups contests that can be decelerated by the acknowledgement of harmonising themes such as supremacy, reliance, approbation, and the likes (Bateson, 1972; Kowalski, 2011). Due to the patronising nature of the generosity offered by the officers, inmates can be cast into a role that runs in parallel with that of infants (Carr et al., 1998). Therefore, the extent of the power disparity between the officers and inmates results in the creation of the possibility of

“symbolic violence” causing the inmates at the receiving end to fulfil obligations far outweighing what the officers gave them. When power is mostly wielded from one individual (officers) to the other (inmates) in its elementary form, it occurs explicitly though sometimes disguised under the cloak of enthralled relations, the legitimate means that prescribe the relationship among the participants of external labour, it must be discombobulated to be recognised socially (Haggarty, 2010). The ideological lure of the officers sourcing for jobs for inmates is pernicious as it serves as a personal-stimulating spur to performance enhancement (Kaplan, 2019) where the work serves to induce inmates to maximize and boost their performance during work. In this regard, the next section will explore the expectations and understanding of inmates concerning this gesture granted to them by the officers as organised around back-scratching, competence and natural selection.

yaq!wima as a natural selection in prison: give before counted

The Kwakiutl potlatch was not a juncture for banqueting, merriment, and bestowing or reciprocating gifts though it incorporated these essentials neither was it a system engaged in easing pressures resulting from paranormal abnormalities nor transforming such (Benedict, 1932), rather, it formed the core of the Kwakiutl’s pecking order. For instance, an individual may be entitled to a noble name- a name that identified his place in native society as one or any of the associated privileges -by birth. Even so, he will be required to give a potlatch at which he will publicly testify to his hereditary privileges to claim it (Drucker and Heizer, 1967). Similarly in the prison, external labour is one of the major activities which forms the pillar and is accepted by both inmates and officers. Yet, to participate, officers and inmates perform potlatches by giving yaq!wima to one another. Officers who qualify to escort inmates outside should have jobs available to influence inmates’ performance, concurrently, inmates have to reciprocate this generosity by working hard. Hence, the law of natural selection plays out here where each party need to give something in exchange to survive and adapt to external labour activities. To be productive and effective an officer has to take inmates out consistently whereas inmates need to work extra hard to be productive. This assertion is echoed in these statements:

If a master is good to us by consistently taking us out to work, we will be good to him and for such masters, when they tell us to even lift a whole building, we will. We will also make his work easier by letting him in on everything including those who have plans of escaping (John, 42, Inmate)

The narrative by John resonates with how officers have to give yaq!wima in the form of jobs to inmates to elicit their trust and cooperation to work when they go outside. Notably, as the potlatch was a coercive system where the leaders of Kwakiutl based on their statuses were obligated to give away their wealth to gain standing so also has it become customary for officers to engage in giving to inmates to earn their respect and cooperation as work forms an essential part of their domination in the prisons. The emphasis here is on the element that finding jobs for inmates is a requirement, like the potlatch, it exudes a system in which people involuntarily gave away yaq!wima to adapt to their environment.

As time went by, not only the chiefs but the people (House) were also required to participate in potlatches because it was coercively parochial of demur to the extent that even low-born men found their involvement dear as it safeguarded their affiliation with their group and promoted them to share a reflected gleam of the laurels of their chief. This plays out in prisons where inmates who ordinarily did not work before or thought their lives had hit a cul-de-sac due to incarceration are afforded the opportunity to work by the service. Again, the sense of service provided by the officers through the sourcing and securing jobs for inmates provides

them with the feeling of gratitude to share in the ‘*goodies*’ of imprisonment. Hence, inmates are prompted to engage in potlatches as a way of not just paying back but adjusting and adapting to their new environment. Inmates are required to inevitably engage in potlatching back to the officers as the children of Kwakiutl were involuntarily engaged in potlaches even before they got to any age of conscious decision-making - as a total social singularity which barred substitutions necessary to real choice young men were intimidated to get involved through mockery, invectives and nadowigets (witchcrafters)- the thought that they will live a despondent life amongst their people (Adams, 1973; Cole and Chaikin, 1990). Like the young men in Kwakiutl, inmates are thrust into this world of yaq!wima giving and receiving without any choice or option of their own as giving backing to the officers is the only way to survive external labour substitution as those who are not willing to participate are shunned by other gang members or touted as a pariah not to be touched by other officers as well;

We cannot complain because our masters are helping us to cope with imprisonment that is why they go out of their way to look for jobs for us when there aren't any in the yard so we have to do everything officers tell us to do including working extremely hard because disobedience and laziness can cause other gangs members to push us out at all cost and whilst out, we will also be considered as a pariah by others (Jethro, 33, Inmate)

The account by Jethro mirrors the point that inmates who find themselves in acculturation situations during external labour activities and cease to participate in giving back during work are impervious to the slights and gibes that are the only weapon of fellow gang members and the officers shunning their company, totting them as lazy and eventually rendering them as pariah not to be touched by other officers.

yaq!wima as Back-scratching: the residual feeling of gratitude by inmates

Essentially, potlatching served as a redistribution scheme that runs in parallel with a banking or loan system requiring the guests as recipients to reciprocate the yaq!wima received with an interest in some future period (Ebert, 2013). Thus, every yaq!wima item in terms of blankets or other wealth bestowed on the guests placed them under an obligation to produce twice as many items to their donors when it was their turn to host (Trosper, 2003). Consequently, the non-stop double-return requirement culminated into endless pyramiding or geometric progress of obligations (Boas, 1920) where yaq!wima were made in hundreds or even thousands with participants incurring considerable amounts of debts to be paid in double folds to all hosts they received something from. Similarly, payment and repayment form an innate part of external labour activities as officers are engaged in it for the drive of amassing any number of the work needed for distribution and redistribution among the inmates as possible irrespective of their nature and value to their lives in prison. Although the jobs are deemed prestigious investments, their direct nature in the eyes of the inmates is a favour unreservedly granted for which payments are needed in some future time by the officers when they go out to work:

As jailmen, we must work hard to prove ourselves because any time we go out is an opportunity to justify our inclusion to our master and gangmates as we have to work at a different pace to be recognised (Isaiah, 32, Inmate)

Not everyone gets the opportunity to go out to work so if you get someone who wants to help you just reciprocate their kindness by doing whatever they tell you to do. Some people want this opportunity but they are not allowed to because of their case. As staying here is like languishing in a pit, we have to take this opportunity offered to us by our masters and respect them accordingly (Abraham, 28, Inmate)

Similarly, this point was stressed by officers;

we don't have a lot of time and yet there is a lot to be done within the hours we are out so inmates have to work extra hard to get things done. If an inmate does not pull their weight when we go out, I don't go out with them in the future (Philip, 32, Corporal)

For our boys, they are being supervised and the point is that if someone does not pull their weight at work, they would be dropped the next day as many people in the queue are always willing to go in their stead. I do not tolerate prisoners doing whatever they want because there are people in the queue so if you don't work hard when we come back to the yard, I'll drop you (Frank, 48, ACOP)

The accounts by the inmates and officers parrot the idea of continuous repayment by inmates for the tasks given to them by the officers. The feeling of gratitude that accompanies the performance of the work stills lingers even after the job is done which leave inmates with some residual feeling of gratitude eventually influencing their performance to the point where they feel compelled under the obligation and impression to gratify officers. Consequently, the yaq!wima keeps piling as the officers continue to indulge inmates to work constantly for which they are never able to reciprocate the offer granted them by the officers. Additionally, the rule of the potlatch was that a guest who previously gave a considerable gift to the current host in a major potlatch needed to be given a larger gift corresponding in size based on the total amount of gift available for distribution by the current host (Drucker, 1940). Granted, the giving of yaq!wima escalated to the point where the House would give everything they possessed to each other whilst raising the stakes of the yaq!wima till the gifts were so outlandish that the bids uncovered the irrational nature of ownership (McGee, 2003).

In the case of external labour, this played out in the existence of a well-defined reciprocal relationship between the motives of benevolence and power preservation of the officers personally searching for jobs and making agendas for their gangs. This yaq!wima by the officers towards inmates incites them to give off their best towards the performance of the job as the gestures though seen as altruistic in the eyes of the officers, place an unnecessary burden on the inmates to return the favour in the future:

Sometimes when we get to the location, we start work right away with no breaks or breakfast because the officers at times feel that eating would waste time as the most important thing to them is the job, their money and future job recommendations. They do get a lot from the work which is why they themselves go in search of the job (Gabriel, 28, Inmate)

Consequently, inmates are thrust to work beyond what is required of them due to the power imbalance between them and officers signalling symbolic violence;

Due to the pace of the work, some inmates sustain some cuts and bruises but hide their injuries, unless it is very severe, and still keep on working because they would not want to be confined to the yard or be touted as lazy by the other gang members (Isaiah, 32, Inmate)

you always have to be prepared when you go out because you can be asked to do anything and even sometimes engaged in more than one job at a time. For instance, there are times we finish one job say packing blocks at a site but on our way back to the prison, our master can receive a call from another employer or be approached by one so we reroute to perform that job instead. (Judas, 24, Inmate)

The sayings by Gabriel, Judas and Isaiah reflect that the reciprocal exchanges between officers and inmates provide a method of social insurance (Suttles, 1960) as the knowledge that officers would search for and share jobs with inmates offer a solution to the prisoners' predicament of idling in the yard even after qualification to work outside. Hence, the system of giving and reciprocating yaq!wima changes the payment pattern to make cooperation the appropriate scheme for the participants which provides a buffer for maintaining the authority of officers over inmates. Like the potlatch, although officers inherit their titles and authority over inmates, sufficient input is needed by them to continue to assert their influence. Therefore, by providing jobs for inmates, officers not only get their cooperation which incites them to work assiduously but also provoke sustained control and influence over inmates. To this extent the repayment for the yaq!wima bestowed never ceases as inmates continually work to pay them off.

yaq!wima as comeuppance for inmates

During potlatches, products were presented to the people gathered in their role as eyewitnesses to the claims granted with the presumption that payment is made for services rendered during the ceremony. Therefore, houses were constructed, post engraved and elevated and ceremonial offices performed by the guest as it was perceived as degrading for the chief to build his own house or delegate same to their relatives (Barnett, 1938). As a result, only the guests were permitted to engage in these jobs and were paid for their services. This is accounted for in the practice of external labour activities as played out in the manner in which the inmates perceived the tasks involved as fuelled by the need of the officers to engage inmates and also benefit in the long run from their generosity engrossing inmates in odd jobs which have nothing but economic value;

We work in a dirty work environment and do some muddy things I have never done before and in the process get dirty and malodorous to the point that makes me feel ashamed of myself. (Mark, 26, Inmate)

The upshot of the statement by Mark is that inmates felt the practice of the work is to engage them in meaningless activities purely for economic gains as inmates reported that it served as a form of punishment for the crimes they committed and are being made to do these jobs to pay for their crimes as they were handed sentences with hard labour. Thus, as a comeuppance for the crimes as captured by Stephen, Christian and Caleb;

I know the nature of the work the inmate engage in and believe me sometimes I don't feel comfortable escorting them unfortunately, there is nothing I can do because when they were sentenced, they were told they would serve with hard labour but, the nature of the hard labour is undefined, so we engage them in these tasks as the equivalent of the hard labour proposed by the court. (Stephen, 38, Corporal)

This is not a job I will perform in my normal mental state. It is inhumane for anyone to perform these tasks or work like this in their life but when they sentenced us, we were told that we would engage in hard labour to serve the government, so that is what we do when we go out (Christian, 36, Inmate)

no human being on earth deserves to work like this or better still do these jobs. The work we do manually outside are the tasks that are performed by machines in other places, but we have no option because the masters keep echoing the fact that we were

sentenced with hard labour in our brains all the time and that makes us think that we have no choice but engage in the work (Caleb, 29, Inmate)

These storied accounts indicate how the inmates and officers perceive the job they do outside as punishment for the crimes committed and nothing else. Caleb who corroborated the account of Christian indicated that the officers made sure they reminded them daily of the opportunities availed to them by virtue of the work they are doing and as hard labour they do not have any qualms to complain about the arduous nature of the work. Thus, prisoners who are considered as low quality of labour as most people with little knowledge about external labour would, may not consider the impact of the work they do but rather look at it from the angle of punishment instead. Despite the rhetoric that stresses the allure of productivity associated with the jobs, the perceptions of inmates draw on how as a practice external labour activities are waning to embed the principles, social processes and practices of work to enable the efficient implementation of productive regimes rather than punishment. Accordingly, inmates iterated that their understanding of the task they performed during external labour activities was to engage as a means of payment for their crimes.

Discussion

The findings accentuate that the participants (both officers and inmates) deemed work (yaq!wima) as part of the obligations of the officers and were quite cognizant that the work did not just happen to appear in the prisons like spontaneous combustion. Rather, yaq!wima by officers took place after extensive and meticulous preparation through scouting job sites as well as making contacts with previous employers. Like external labour, the potlatch was more than just an insane quest for social status and prestige but rather a rational answer to economic and social forces as it served many purposes one of which mainly contributed to the overall welfare of the society most importantly as a mechanism of economic distribution (Harris, 1990). Although potlatches created obligatory generosity inducements as an avenue to resolve common pool dilemmas through which the leaders of Kwakiutl were strongarmed to give away their wealth the resources exchanged also served as an insurance system to adjust irregularity in ecological productivity (Suttles, 1960). Indeed, these features are manifested in external labour for it is solely about important relationships directed on conditions of ambiguous meanings. Thus, the discrepancy and ambiguity linked with yaq!wima, when combined with bonds of authority founded on reward and punishment, are fertile grounds for reciprocity or double binds (Kowalski, 2011). It is not that the complications posed by the impossible alternatives of the paradox of the yaq!wima are detrimental, even though they are, but that paradox of the yaq!wima is remarkably potent as it strike a chord at two levels. The first is the paradox of the yaq!wima itself offered by officers, and the second entails a bind that precludes inmates from making a choice about their participation in reciprocating the yaq!wima offered in the first place. Thus, the lopsided officer-inmate relationship is engulfed in the principle that it is feasible for officers to control the process of external labour activities and yet consider inmates as workers (de Vito and Lichtenstein, 2015; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the main dangers rest in the incapacity of inmates to withdraw from the reciprocal gift-giving system as dealing with angelic hubris that accompanies the yaq!wima given by the officers is inevitable since it arises from the superior position of the officers (Mohan, 2007). External labour like the potlatch typifies an exchange of unequal values whilst promoting dominance as power relations eventually influence the conditions of the exchange. Officers assuming the striking position as the donor of yaq!wima serves as a base of ego gratification which emanates from the angelic hubris of providing work for inmates as the flowery speeches of gratitude by the inmates are intended to reinforce this effect during work. By some means, it is the

discrepancy that the yaq!wima conveys to the relationship between the officers and inmates that furthers a sense of self-righteousness through the officers' belief in rather helping the inmates out (Kowalski, 2011).

The inmates on their part receive complementary gratification in the recognition granted them by the officers not in their capacity as people with cul-de-sac life due to incarceration but treating them with dignity by engaging in job sourcing for them. Based on the offer granted by the officers inmates obviously derive solid satisfaction in the job which eagerly propels them to give off their best when they go outside.

Another complex facet of the yaq!wima offered by the officers entails the subtle nuances accompanying the offer made to inmates. In broad terms yaq!wima is supposed to support inmates during incarceration but underneath this gesture is a natural selection where inmates are required by the compulsion to participate to survive in the prisons. Naturally, though the basis for participation can be favourable to the inmates initially as it posits a formal base where they can derive various material satisfaction whilst experiencing a little bit of freedom, this sort of situation can be emotionally draining as inmates are coerced through various means to participate in the act of gift receiving and giving back through hard work. As a result, inmates tend to constantly strive to outdo themselves to show their gratitude to the officers for utilising their time to search for jobs for them. Thus, the stimulus to excel at work turn inmates into working more jobs in a day or expedient the pace to keep up with the demands of the jobs sourced for them by the officers. Consequently, the conscious effort exerted to please officers by working assiduously makes inmates feel that the job they do is used as a comeuppance for the crimes they committed against society. However, the highlight of the yaq!wima provided by the officers entails multiple signals and responses accompanying the gifts based on the power dynamic between them and the inmates.

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