

PRISONS RESEARCH CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

INTRODUCTION

Greetings and good wishes to everyone who is living or working in prisons, carrying out research at this time, or otherwise involved in criminal justice. These are certainly challenging times. We begin a new academic year with as much hope and energy as we can muster, working supportively together, and renewing our vision of the Prisons Research Centre as a place where we can carry out methodologically rigorous and theoretically relevant research. Prisons are opening up, slowly, following the devastating effects on regimes of the Covid pandemic.

Our work as a Centre focuses on how prisons operate, socially, morally and operationally, how they are experienced, and the relationship between these moral and social qualities, and their effects. We look forward to working with colleagues, here and elsewhere, on prisons, punishment practices, the organisation and effects of aspects of prison life, and the problems of human and social values they raise. Our aims are: to conduct research of the highest quality, of interest to penal scholars, practitioners and policy makers; to continue to develop our role as an internationally leading, interdisciplinary prisons research centre; to help to develop a next (third?) generation of prison researchers, and to support the development of outstanding prisons research/researchers locally and worldwide; to respond to global interest in understanding and reforming prisons; to maintain a balance between funded and

non-funded, empirical and theoretical work; to collaborate with colleagues in other universities, nationally and internationally, to improve knowledge; to host conferences to facilitate the above mission; and to publish and disseminate our research findings widely, and in a variety of ways.

Alison, Deborah and Katherine are hosting a two-day symposium in November 2023, for example, to support teams from five countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria) to adapt and use MQPL surveys to help steer reform efforts in their prison systems. This reform project is funded by the Norwegian Government.

We are delighted by the appointment of our new Institute colleague Professor Leo Zaibert, Andreas von Hirsch Professor of Penal Theory and Ethics and Director of the Centre for Penal Theory and Ethics, in 2022. We plan to develop a sustained and stimulating dialogue between our two Centres, to forge closer links between what is known about the lived experience of punishment, its theoretical underpinnings, and questions of justice. The appointment of Peter Dawson, formerly Director of the Prison Reform Trust, as Radzinowicz Fellow provides us with an opportunity to organise a symposium on prisons and punishment later in the academic year. More to follow. We have said a sad but deeply grateful goodbye to Dr Bethany Schmidt, whose time at the PRC has officially come to an end, and we watch with interest as her new career plans develop from her new home in Berlin.

As a new academic year begins, with both of us returning from research leave, with new projects to lead and major books to

finish, we are very aware of the difficult periods we have emerged from and are still entering into. As Director, and Deputy Director, Ben and I can only add our personal hopes to build, and rebuild, a mutually supportive, lively and rewarding Centre in which meaningful work is possible. We are grateful to our colleagues, here and elsewhere, for making that possible.

ALISON LIEBLING AND BEN CREWE

ALISON LIEBLING



I have been working on my Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship, *Moral Rules, Social Science and Forms of Order in Prison*, and hope to have a full draft of the book prepared by the end of this year (the Fellowship ends in October 2023). Using extensive empirical work on suicides and suicide attempts in prison and in contrasting high security prisons as the groundwork, I show how much the human soul vibrates in resonance with the relational world around it. Moral feelings, values, and human relationships pervade prisoners' accounts of their experience. The differences between prisons with poor and better outcomes align powerfully with what philosophers have to say about 'the virtues that human beings need'. I gave a keynote lecture to the *Universitäre Strafvollzugstage* (a corrections-academic conference) in Vienna on this project in September 2023

and have also been in dialogue with the relational practice movement orchestrated by Nick Benefield and the OPD (Offender Personality Disorder Pathway) team. In the meantime, I have also completed a study of MQPL thresholds and their relationship to violent outcomes, with Katherine Auty (see below) and embarked on a new study operationalizing and measuring the concept of PIPEYness: articulating what goes on in Psychologically-Informed Planned Environments when they operate at their best.

I am delighted with our new edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (published in September), particularly as it has undergone such substantial revision, and has the youngest and most diverse authorship to date. With Ryan Williams, I have also published an article on the difficult and contested issue of whether prisons cause radicalisation, which required multiple drafts and much feedback from valued colleagues.

Publications

Liebling, A., Maruna, S., & McAra, L. (Eds.). (2023). **The Oxford Handbook of Criminology** (7th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Liebling, A. (2022). Penal Legitimacy, Well-being, and Trust: The Role of Empirical Research in 'Morally Serious' Work. In A. Liebling, J. Shapland, R. Sparks, & J. Tankebe (Eds.), **Crime, Justice, and Social Order: Essays in Honour of A. E. Bottoms** (pp. 273-302). Oxford University Press.

Liebling, A. (2022). The Changing 'Regime of the Custodians': Visions of Order and Authority in High Security Prisons in

England and Wales, 1988-2019. In B. Crewe, A. Goldsmith, & M. Halsey (Eds.), **Power and Pain in the Modern Prison: Revisiting the Society of Captives** (pp. 253-272). Oxford University Press.

Williams, R., & **Liebling, A.** (2022). Do Prisons Cause Radicalisation? Order, Leadership, Political Charge and Violence in Two Maximum Security Prisons. **British Journal of Criminology**, 63 (1), 97–114.

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1093/BJC/AZAB122](https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab122)

BEN CREWE



I have been working on various projects in recent months. The first is a follow-up to the research I conducted with Dr Susie Hulley and Dr Serena Wright in 2012-13 on prisoners serving long life sentences from an early age, in which we have re-interviewed 120 men and women almost a decade on from their original interview. Most remain in custody, but a number have been released on life licence into the community, which means we will be able to analyse post-release as well as prison experiences. One of our emerging findings is that the ‘middle phase’ of a life sentence is much more volatile than our previous analysis suggested, particularly for men serving sentences with especially long tariffs. The second project is the ERC-funded **COMPEN** study, comparing penal policy and prisoner experiences in England & Wales and Norway. In particular, I have begun to write up one element of that study: an analysis of ‘deep-end

confinement’ – the Close Supervision Centres in England & Wales, which hold men considered too difficult or dangerous to manage anywhere else in the prison system. Here, I am drawing on ideas of tragedy and extremity to communicate the complexities of the Close Supervision system, and am employing the metaphor of a ‘crucible’ to capture the challenge to survival that CSC confinement represents and to describe its tendency to add ‘heat’ and intensity to orientations, identities and relationships that are already highly charged.

In an article co-written with my colleagues Julie Laursen and Kristian Mjåland, we compare and contrast deep-end imprisonment in England & Wales and Norway, demonstrating how such corners of the penal system differ across jurisdictions, and also how the experience of these sites of exceptional restriction are shaped by the more typical experiences of imprisonment *within* each jurisdiction. The most restrictive units in any prison system are worthy of study because they sit at the edges of state coercion and humanity: what it is legally possible to do to a citizen, and what it is possible for such citizens to endure and survive.

Publications

Crewe, B., Schliehe, A., & Przybylska, D. A. (2023). 'It causes a lot of problems': Relational ambiguities and dynamics between prisoners and staff in a women's prison. **European Journal of Criminology**, 20 (3), 925-946.

Crewe, B., Laursen, J., & Mjåland, K. (2023). Comparing deep-end confinement in England & Wales and Norway. **Criminology**, 61 (2), 204-233.

Crewe, B., Ievins, A., Larmour, S., Laursen, J., Mjåland, K., & Schliehe, A. (2023). Nordic penal exceptionalism: A comparative, empirical analysis. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 63 (2), 424-443.

Wright, S., Hulley, S., & **Crewe, B.** (2023). Trajectories of hope/lessness among men and women in the late stage of a life sentence. *Theoretical Criminology*, 27 (1), 66-84.

Rennie, A., & **Crewe, B.** (2023). 'Tightness', autonomy and release: The anticipated pains of release and life licensing. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 63 (1), 184-200.

Schliehe, A., Laursen, J., & **Crewe, B.** (2022). Loneliness in prison. *European Journal of Criminology*, 19 (6), 1595-1614.

Crewe, B., Goldsmith, A., & Halsey, M. (2022). *Power and Pain in the Modern Prison: The Society of Captives Revisited*. Oxford University Press.

Schliehe, A., & **Crewe, B.** (2022). Top bunk, bottom bunk: cellsharing in prisons. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 62 (2), 484-500.

SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATES AND POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

KATHERINE AUTY

I have recently finished a research project (with Professor Alison Lieblich), which involved a secondary data analysis of



the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) survey dataset (518 prison MQPL surveys comprising 55,665 individually completed surveys).

In this study, we provide an empirical demonstration of how quality of life thresholds may be determined and examine their relationship to five violence outcomes: serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, serious assaults on staff, self-harm incidents requiring hospital treatment, self-inflicted deaths, and homicides. The results suggest that thresholds exist for most of the MQPL dimensions, and has produced both a set of lower 'unsafe' and higher 'minimally safe' thresholds. I am now starting two new research projects examining life in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs). The first project is an evaluation of the experience of participating in a music programme (facilitated by Hoot Creative Arts) in PIPEs and the second aims to develop and test an instrument that measures the quality of life in prison PIPEs from the perspectives of both staff and prisoners.

In our forthcoming paper *What is a 'good enough' prison? An empirical analysis of key thresholds using prison moral quality data* we provide an empirical demonstration of how quality of life thresholds may be determined using data from 518 prisons (2009-2020) in England and Wales and their relationship to several violence outcomes. Our motivations in carrying out this work are to understand and evaluate the prison experience as accurately as possible, building on cumulative and well-

grounded empirical research, and testing a new methodology. By conceptualising and measuring what matters most to prisoners, exploring differences between prisons, and investigating links between moral quality measures and outcomes, we can gain important knowledge of the real (e.g., often harmful) rather than imagined (e.g., rehabilitative) effects of imprisonment. We also gain some understanding of what minimally safe, survivable and rehabilitative prison environments look like, and their rarity. This kind of understanding could drive public policy decisions and operational practice in a more constructive direction. Prison climate research may also have relevance to broader investigations about what causes or prevents violence more generally.

Publications

Joliffe, D., & **Auty, K. M.** (2023). Developmental and Life-course Criminology. In A. Liebling, S. Maruna, & L. McAra (Eds.), **The Oxford Handbook of Criminology**.

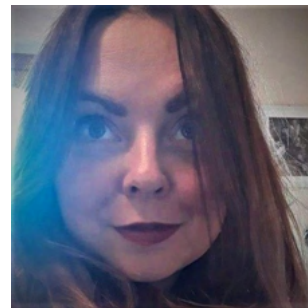
Auty, K. M., Liebling, A., Schliehe, A., & Crewe, B. (2022). What is Trauma-informed Practice? Towards Operationalisation of the Concept in Two Prisons for Women. **Criminology & Criminal Justice**, 0(0). [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1177/17488958221094980](https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958221094980)

Liebling, A., **Auty, K. M.**, Gardom, J., & Lieber, E. (2022). An evaluation of the meaning and impact of Shared Reading in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments in prisons. **Ministry of Justice Analytical Series**. Ministry of Justice: London.

Auty, K. M., Farrington, D. P., & Coid, J. W. (2022). Intergenerational transmission of

personality disorder severity and the role of psychosocial risk factors. **Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health**, 32 (1), 5-20. DOI:10.1002/CBM.2225

KATE HERRITY



I work at the edges of criminology, with a particular interest in music, sound and the sensory in places of punishment

and social control. My current project seeks to extend my doctoral research, to explore what foregrounding experiences of the soundscape amongst different prison populations tells us about the regulations of, and disruptions to, social emotion in these groups, and the social worlds of prison in different parts of the estate.

In recent months, I have been writing a book, based on my PhD research, which will be published in January 2024, titled: *Sound, Order and Survival in Prison: The Rhythms and Routines of HMP Midtown*. This represents work conducted over a number of years and explores the prison soundscape as a means of theorising anew about prison order.

Publications

Herrity, K., & Warr, J. J. (2023). "This is My Home": The Prison as a Site of Domicide-through-displacement. In P. Davies & M. Rowe (Eds.), **Criminology of the Domestic**. Routledge Studies in Crime, Justice and the Family.

Herrity, K., Schmidt, B., & Warr, J. J. (2022). Sensory "Heteroglossia" and Social Control: Sensory Methodology and Method. In M. Dodge & R. Faria (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Criminology: Cutting Edge Methods*. Springer.

SUSIE HULLEY



I am currently working on a longitudinal research project exploring the experiences of men and women convicted of long

life sentences from a young age. The project, undertaken with Professor Ben Crewe and Dr Serena Wright (previously of Royal Holloway University, London, now at Scope disability charity), explores the experiences of men and women sentenced to life imprisonment when aged 25 years old or younger, who were given tariffs (minimum terms) of 15 years or more. In 2013-2014 we surveyed over 300 men and women, and interviewed 147 men and women, who fit these criteria. In 2022-2023, we re-interviewed 120 of our original sample, and collected follow-up surveys from 79 of these participants. We are currently writing up the research, including a paper in which I explore the 'moral weight' of murder: the extent to which the moral burden associated with the offence presses down on the individual. The paper discusses how this moral weight varies for our participants on a continuum from light to heavy. For example, it weighs the most heavily on those who: feel that they are fully morally blameworthy for the offence; believe that the victim bears no moral

blameworthiness for the outcome; and are unable to comprehend why the offence took place in the context in which it occurred. We have also started to write a monograph that reports on the findings from the second study (a follow up to *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: Adaptation, identity and time*).

I have also just started an 18 month, UKRI funded, Policy Fellowship with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). For the purpose of the fellowship I will be seconded to the MoJ to conduct research that is relevant to their Areas of Research Interest and will be offering research expertise and advice to their research and policy teams.

In 2022, I co-edited (with Dr Serena Wright) a special issue of the *Prison Service Journal*

[HTTPS://WWW.CRIMEANDJUSTICE.ORG.UK/SITES/CRIMEANDJUSTICE.ORG.UK/FILES/PSJ%20261%20JULY%202022.PDF](https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/psj%20261%20july%202022.pdf), which compiles recent work on life imprisonment for a readership of practitioners and academics. The special issue brings together a series of articles, including: a number that report on recent research exploring the experiences of people sentenced to life imprisonment (including children); a review of the research on families of life sentence prisoners; a description of a therapeutic group intervention with children sentenced to life imprisonment; and an exploration of the use of life without parole sentences.

Publications

Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2022). Editorial Comment. **Prison Service Journal: Special Issue on Life Imprisonment .**

Hulley, S., & Young, T. (2022). Body Map Storytelling: Exploring Identity with Lifers

Convicted of Murder Using the Doctrine of 'Joint Enterprise'. **Prison Service Journal: Special Issue on Life Imprisonment**.

Zahid & **Hulley, S.** (2022). Approaching the End: Interview with Zahid on the Process of Being Released from Custody on a Life Sentence. **Prison Service Journal: Special Issue on Life Imprisonment**.

Wright, S., **Hulley, S.**, & Crewe, B. (2022). The Challenges of Long Life Imprisonment from a Young Age. **Prison Service Journal: Special Issue on Life Imprisonment**.

Wright, S., **Hulley, S.**, & Crewe, B. (2022). Trajectories of Hope/Lessness Among Men and Women in the Late Stage of a Life Sentence. **Theoretical Criminology**. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1177/13624806211067770](https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806211067770)

PHD STUDENTS

SOPHIE ELLIS



I am a PhD researcher who studies the social and moral world of prison psychologists. In doing so, I have interviewed 104 psychologists with experience of prison work in England & Wales, including a number who have substantively shaped current prison psychological practice. My thesis explores the social structures and cultures of prison psychologists, and how these factors shape their moral navigation of prisons. It also documents the history of the profession of

prison psychology in England and Wales over the last century.

I am also active in the campaign against the IPP sentence, and loosely co-ordinate a network of academics and practitioners who are concerned about the IPP sentence. I occasionally engage in joint action (usually in the form of briefings, consultation submissions and letters), and, in the last year, have lead-authored several research briefings, evidence submissions and policy analyses for parliamentary consultations and debates, detailed below.

Publications

Ellis, S. [+49 others] (2022). Justice Select Committee Inquiry into the IPP Sentence: Joint Submission from Psychologists. [HTTPS://COMMITTEES.PARLIAMENT.UK/WRITTENEVIDENCE/41683/DEFAULT/](https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/41683/default/)

Ellis, S. (2023). IPP Research Briefing. Unpublished briefing produced for House of Lords.

Ellis, S. (2023). IPP Statistical Bulletin 2022-23. UNGRIPP.

Ellis, S. (2023). Justice Select Committee Inquiry: Guide for People Serving IPP. UNGRIPP.

ARIADNE FISCHER



I am a third year PhD student using mixed-methods research to explore what being incarcerated at the same time as a family member feels like, how it works, and how it impacts

familial relationships and the prison environment. As part of my fieldwork, I have completed 20 semi-structured interviews in two men's closed prisons, and am expecting to commence fieldwork in a closed women's prison in Autumn 2023. I have also completed a survey in a Category C prison, which has generated 202 responses.

I am currently in the process of writing a positioning paper based on the data I have collected so far. In the paper, I discuss the main themes and implications arising from qualitative findings, in particular selfhood and social identity, the pains (and referred pains) of imprisonment, and the delicate balance between receiving and providing love, care, and security in prison. I hope to use the quantitative findings to estimate the potential scope of family incarceration, but also its potential reach and impact within certain families and communities, with the aspiration of encouraging further research on the topic.

JUDITH GARDOM



My PhD research is an exploratory study of everyday book reading as a situated activity in prison. In it I aim to develop a detailed and conceptually coherent

understanding of the reading habits, practices and preferences of prisoner readers, and their modes of engagement with books as texts, in prison lifeworlds. Access to books in prison, and reading as a way of spending time, are widely held to be

beneficial for wellbeing, education, and improving prisoners' life chances. However, knowledge of the forms that everyday, informal reading takes and of the reading experiences of prisoners in England and Wales remains limited and fragmentary.

I conducted my fieldwork in two men's prisons, based in prison libraries, and interviewed 50 prisoner readers and several staff and volunteers. Reader narratives – which I analysed in part through a technique of 'poetic distillation' – revealed changes in the practice and importance of reading for almost all participants while in prison. 'Self-other encounters' emerged as the basis for a conceptual framework. Interpersonal influences, relationships and conversations, among prisoners and with family, played important roles in the development of reading practices, as did the intersubjective experiences of recognition and identification in reading itself. Readers experienced books themselves as agents and personal presences, and intersubjective qualities were central to the role of reading in coping and psychological survival. Books were experienced as authoritative 'others', offering knowledge that met readers' needs for control in prison environments, and for making a life through pursuing meaningful projects. For some participants, dialogic reading of both fiction and non-fiction led to an enlarged sense of self, others and the world, and of future possibility and hope. I argue that a relational understanding of reading in prison reveals the importance of reading itself, and shows how the reflexive possibilities of reading are shaped by contexts and by processes of adaptation.

I am currently preparing an article entitled "I'm a grown man now": reflexive reading

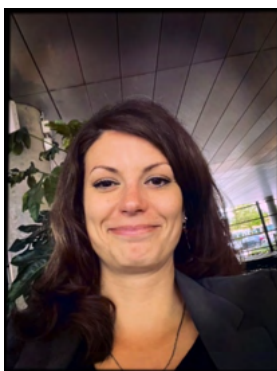
and the struggle for maturity in prison’, for publication in a special issue of *Incarceration*, in which I examine the role of reading in prisoners’ narratives of becoming mature adults, through the concept of ‘wisdom’. I have also co-authored a report which uses ethnography-led measurement to show how Shared Reading groups (reading imaginative literature aloud) can contribute to the work of supportive relational environments, through helping prisoners with complex, long term psychological needs develop a sense of self and insight into their own experience.

Publications

Liebling, A., Auty, K., **Gardom, J.**, & Lieber, E. (2022). An Evaluation of the Experience and Meaning of Shared Reading in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments in Prisons. **Ministry of Justice Analytical Series 2022** .

[HTTPS://WWW.GOV.UK/GOVERNMENT/PUBLICATIONS/AN-EVALUATION-OF-SHARED-READING-IN-PIPES](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-evaluation-of-shared-reading-in-pipes)

DEBORAH KANT



I am a finishing PhD student whose research explores the impact of economic restructuring on the cultures and experiences of prison officers in two very different prisons in the North and South of England.

I am also in year two of a post-doctoral research post at Universität Köln on a project ‘*Worauf es im Gefängnis wirklich ankommt: Anstaltsklima und*

Resozialisierung im internationalen Vergleich’ (with colleagues from the Freie Universität Berlin and Universität Köln in Germany, and Universität Bern in Switzerland) adapting the MQPL+ method and ethos to the German and Swiss context. This phase of the project explores two prisons in Germany and one in Switzerland. We have completed fieldwork in the first German prison and are about to embark on the next exercise. Based on preliminary results, I hope, with colleagues, to write a paper that explores the impact of the right to resocialisation enshrined in the German Constitution on how German prison officers understand and perform their professional roles. I have a long-standing interest in the cultures of prison staff, and want to explore what difference, if any, hardcoded legal rights and obligations have to the way officers ‘at the coal face’ understand and perform their work. To this end, colleagues from the Universität Köln and I are about to publish a short article in the *Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Straffälligenhilfe* magazine that introduces the aims and methods explored by the project to practitioners across German prisons.

TANIA MEJIA-O’DONNELL



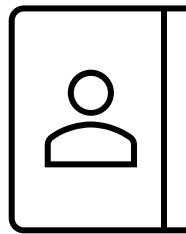
Incarcerated individuals often face a profound sense of isolation, detached not only from their families and communities but also from the broader world. My research explores the intricate dynamics and significant role of pen-pals in bridging this gap and mitigating

feelings of loneliness and alienation. Through a qualitative examination encompassing correspondence methods with 48 incarcerated individuals in California and Illinois, and in-depth interviews with 14 external penfriends, my research explores how written exchanges offer prisoners a lifeline, providing emotional support, a connection to the outside world, and a platform for personal growth, augmenting prisoner well-being and reintegration prospects. It highlights mutual benefits for both prisoners and their pen-pals, including enhanced empathy, broadened perspectives, and the development of genuine friendships. It also underscores the importance of pen-pal interactions in offering a form of support distinct from familial ties or associations linked to the criminal legal system and volunteer groups. Moreover, the research emphasizes the irreplaceable value of traditional written communication within prison settings and the impact of shifts toward digital mail in forging and maintaining pen-pal relationships. Pen-pal relationships are therefore a pivotal tool in alleviating prison isolation, fostering mutual growth and understanding, and emphasizing the enduring significance of written communication in this digital age.

In a forthcoming publication, I will be examining the intricacies of utilizing letters and emails for data collection with incarcerated participants. The article will detail the procedures and challenges of gaining access in two US states, and will consider the ethical considerations inherent in this research method. It will also reflect on the various methodological implications of letters as a medium of communication, including the importance of reflexivity in

the inherently reciprocal nature of written correspondence and the conscious and unconscious role of the researcher in the co-construction of data. This publication aims to contribute to a niche sector of literature that examines the use of letters and emails for data collection within prison research.

SOPHIE PHILIP



My PhD research is with men in England and Wales who have been imprisoned for intimate partner violence and are now under

intensive, post-release supervision in the community, having been assessed as having a high risk of reoffending. I conceptualise these men as being subject to a 'system' of supervision, comprising interactions with their probation officer, licence conditions, compulsory treatment programmes, and the threat and/or experience of breach and recall. My focus is on how moral communication occurs through this system, from the supervisee's perspective. Through semi-structured interviews with 30-40 men in this position, I aim to explore the messages about their offences and themselves that they receive through the supervision system, how they respond to them, and why.

DARIA PRZYBYLSKA

I am a second-year PhD student, whose work explores women's open imprisonment in England & Wales, centring the perspectives of criminalised women held in two English open prisons. More specifically,

through ethnographic observation and in-



depth interviews, my research sets out to address the following questions: first, how do discourses of rehabilitation,

risk, and punishment shape the experiences of women in open prisons? Second, how does penal power – as expressed in these discourses – shape the experiences of women in open prisons? Third, how does proximity to ‘freedom’ shape the dynamics and experiences of women’s open imprisonment? My research also aims to gauge how women’s views on and experiences of open imprisonment are shaped by their life histories and individual characteristics. Collecting data across two prisons will add a comparative dimension to the analysis that will help distinguish the qualities of open imprisonment from the idiosyncrasies of individual regimes. Thus, this study seeks to tease out the current function of women’s open prisons in England & Wales, how this shapes women’s daily lives in this institutional context, and how criminalised women perceive and negotiate open imprisonment.

In a recent article, my colleagues and I bring together a rather sparse and siloed literature on staff-prisoner relationships in women’s prisons. By centring women’s perspectives in our analysis, this article develops previous accounts, and contributes an explanation of some of the complexity and nuance behind these relational dynamics. It also links the findings to key penological themes, arguing that the distinct dynamics in women’s

prisons do not always fit neatly within existing theoretical frameworks.

Publications

Crewe, B., Schliehe, A., & Przybylska, D. (2023). "It Causes a Lot of Problems": Relational Ambiguities and Dynamics Between Prisoners and Staff in a Women's Prison. *European Journal of Criminology*, 20 (3), 925-946.

BRADLEY READ



I am a part-time PhD student, whose dissertation will comprise four connected articles exploring various aspects of the

parole system: a systematic review of the empirical literature on the study of parole; the parole dossier and its impacts on prisoner identity; the role of expert criminologists on the parole board from the 1960’s to today; and an observational study of the oral hearing process. This body of research attempts to answer the question as to whether human ‘vibrations’, in various aspects of the parole system, help decisionmakers get closer to the ‘right’ choices. It aims to enrich our understanding of the impact of current processes and ultimately explores the costs of the system in relation to any chance of rehabilitation.

My most recent article submission explores the experiences of the parole dossier by those subject to parole. Using the findings from a study of serving prisoners’ perceptions of the parole experience, it suggests that the parole dossier can erode

self-identity, by the creation of a carceral script which describes a person whom they do not recognise as themselves. As identity, and its repair, is instrumental to desistance, elements of the current process could be putting hopes of rehabilitation at risk by the development of a distorted carceral biography which prisoners do not acknowledge or recognise. This dissonance suggests the need for a more collaborative parole process, where prisoners get more say in their dossier or can include their own narrative of change within it.

AILIE RENNIE



My PhD examines the impact of release (and reintegration) on mandatory life-sentenced prisoners' identities in England and Wales. This study utilises a short-longitudinal methodology, employing a set of two semi-structured interviews, focusing on the process of release through-the-gate. As such, I interviewed male lifers before their release from prison (when they had received a positive Parole Board decision) and again five months later post-release in the community. To do so, I worked with seven prisons in England and Wales, six of which were open prisons and one of which was a category C (medium-security) prison. In doing so, I sought to explore variation in processes preparing prisoners for release.

More generally, my PhD focuses on how lifers' expectations of release compared to, or interacted with, their lived experience in the community. In particular, I examine

perceived and experienced change(s) in identity (i.e. the extent to which lifers' sense of self remained stable or changed upon returning to the outside world) and how changes were related to their experiences on temporary release (ROTL) and on licence, interactions with others in the community, and the role of shame and stigma related to their offence.

In an article titled 'Tightness', autonomy and release', co-authored with Ben Crewe, I have articulated how a specific type of penal power (life licencing) had a material effect on how lifers' approached release, altering their aspirations to be within the confines of the licence or retreating from release altogether. Doing so drew attention to how lifers perceived release on licence not as freedom but rather as a form of bounded autonomy that, to some participants, was less preferable than staying in prison.

Publications

Rennie, A., & Crewe, B. (2022). 'Tightness', Autonomy and Release: The Anticipated Pains of Release and Life Licensing. **The British Journal of Criminology**, 63 (1), 1-17. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1093/BJC/AZAC008](https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azac008)

Rennie, A. (2023). Book Review: **Portable Prisons: Electronic Monitoring and the Creation of Carceral Territory** by James Gacek. **Theoretical Criminology**. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1177/13624806231196709](https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806231196709)

FABIO TARTARINI

My doctoral research represents the first longitudinal and systematic exploration of the process of human flourishing within a



local English prison. Focusing on male prisoners' evolving definitions and changes in human flourishing levels over time, it identifies the social, psychological, and structural factors that affect these variations. My findings indicate that, for the men in my study, a key factor in this process was a shift from dealing with the pains and limitations of imprisonment to more future-oriented and self-centred definitions of human flourishing. Establishing proactive coping strategies was a necessary condition to promote more stable levels of well-being and, consequently, an understanding of human flourishing that was increasingly oriented towards self-improvement and successful reintegration into society.

This research aims to inform prisoner rehabilitation theory and support the identification of prison practices that can promote environments conducive to well-being and rehabilitation (see Mann et al., 2018). It also aims to explore the potential ways in which the process of human flourishing can support the onset of desistance within prison. I am currently preparing an article for the *Prison Service Journal* which discusses these implications.