

Prisons Research Centre

INSTITUTE of CRIMINOLOGY

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Prisons Research Centre Annual report 2011

The Cambridge Institute of Criminology Prisons Research Centre (PRC) was established under the Directorship of Alison Liebling in 2000, with a modest budget, one research assistant and a part-time administrator. It is now well established and attracts funding from NOMS, research councils (for example, the ESRC, Leverhulme and the Nuffield Foundation) and from other organisations. Its members include Professor Alison Liebling, Dr Ben Crewe (recently promoted to Deputy Director), Dr Susie Hulley (Senior Research Associate), Helen Arnold (Research Associate), Christina Straub (Research Assistant) and around eight PhD students at any one time, all doing individual research projects, sometimes linked to or developed from other research going on in the Centre. We have a high number of CASE Studentship awards, which are collaborative partnerships with external bodies (like NOMS) who have an interest in the research and so provide access, background information and support. Ann Spicer acts as Centre Administrator (part-time). Associate Members include Dr Adrian Grounds, Dr Joel Harvey (a past PhD student) and Dr Charles Elliott. The centre hosts Visiting Scholars from time to time: for example, Gaëtan Cliquennois from Belgium, studying new public management in prisons in France, Belgium and the UK. Professor Anthony Bottoms, and many other members of the department, provides the Centre with intellectual companionship and guidance 'behind the scenes' (as he is technically retired!), but this companionship, as well as the contributions made by members of our Steering Group, matter a great deal and have enhanced the life of the Centre.

The Centre aims to provide a stimulating research environment in which a coherent strategy of high quality research can be pursued. Our vision is of methodologically rigorous and theoretically relevant field-based studies addressing problems of human and social values, punishment practices and the organisation and effects of prison life. Our research approach seeks to represent, explain and theorise the experiences of prisoners, prison staff and the prison organisation more generally. Conducting a mixture of applied and theoretical research, and using both qualitative and quantitative methods, we strive to consolidate and enhance the Cambridge Institute of Criminology's

strengths in penological research, by forging links with research in the broader fields of criminology and sociology, and through collaboration with others, including practitioners, policymakers and other scholars, both in the UK and internationally. Part of our aim is to grow a new generation of experienced and skilled prison scholars, as the need for research outstrips supply. Outstanding PhD students from a wide range of backgrounds and jurisdictions are attracted to the Prisons Research Centre because of the critical mass and expertise built up over time.

The long-term and integrated nature of the work being conducted provides 'adds value' to the prisons research community and allows us to work away at difficult questions in a developmental or cumulative way. The overarching theme of the research programme being undertaken is 'What Shapes Prison Life?'

2011 has seen the coming to fruition of several long-term projects, including an ESRC-funded study of public and private sector prisons, and a repeat study of staff-prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor. Our work has changed gear in the last year as a result, enabling us to think about the links and bridges between individual research projects and between scholarship in penology and the broader fields of criminology and sociology. Much of what we have done in the last year is to advance our understanding of issues such as prisoner wellbeing and development, staff professionalism, and the use of authority, which we have written about previously but are now exploring with a greater level of sophistication. This will be reflected in the proceedings of the annual steering group meeting 2001, and in some new memberships in our steering group. We would like to welcome Shadd Maruna and Fergus McNeill to this group.

Dr Ben Crewe has been promoted to Director of the Master of Studies Course in Applied Criminology, Penology and Management (60% time). This will help renew the strong ties between the Centre and the MSt Course, and strengthens our collective links with senior managers in several jurisdictions. We continue to try to disseminate our findings widely, not only through teaching practices including the MSt course, but also through feedback seminars both at very senior levels and in individual prison establishments, invited talks

at academic and practitioner conferences, and occasional dealings with newspapers and other media, such as podcasts.

Much of the research carried out to date within the PRC has been about the central dynamic of the prison: staff-prisoner relationships. Following her early accounts of the hidden work of prison officers, Alison Liebling has continued to explore the role of staff in determining the 'moral quality' and survivability of prisons, and, with Helen Arnold and Christina Straub, has recently completed a twelve-year follow-up study of staff-prisoner relationships in HMP Whitemoor. In developing both the prisoner and staff quality of life surveys, and in refining them continuously, we have learnt more about those aspects of staff-prisoner relationships that shape prisoner safety, distress, wellbeing, and – increasingly – personal development i.e. prisoners' feeling that they might be able to change their lives. Sarah Tait's completed PhD on custody and care in one men's and one women's prison, and Helen Arnold's ongoing research on high-performing prison officers, have built on the foundations of earlier work, while a major study of public and private sector prisons continues to inform our understanding of what professional prison work entails. Among our current PhD students, Claire Lea is currently writing a historical account of the Prison Officers' Association, while Amy Ludlow is researching the impact of contestability and privatisation on prison staff. The development of this body of work - alongside research conducted by scholars elsewhere - means that it is no longer possible to argue that prison officers are the 'invisible ghosts of penality' (Liebling 2000). We have now begun to shed light on some of the other important staff groups working in prisons. Vicky Gadd has conducted one of the first systematic studies of senior management teams in prisons, while Jason Warr is currently interviewing prison-based forensic psychologists about their working practices and motivations.

Increasingly, members of the PRC are also conducting research in international jurisdictions. For their PhDs, Abigail Wild and Ruth Armstrong have both conducted in-depth research in US prisons, on faith-based prison units, and on the re-entry experiences of ex-prisoners released from faith-based units respectively. Anton Symkovych has studied power relations in a Ukrainian prison; Thomas

Akoensi is researching stress among prison officers in Ghana; and Rachele Larocque is pursuing an analysis of Canadian penology and penalty.

Other studies focus primarily on the experiences of prisoners in England and Wales – those recalled to prison (Nicola Padfield), the quality of prison visits (Marie Hutton), and prisoner education (Caroline Lanskey). Ben Crewe continues to write about power, adaptation and social life in prison, including a forthcoming edited collection (with Jamie Bennett) called *The Prisoner* (Routledge, 2011) and a special issue of *Punishment and Society* on 'The pains of imprisonment', edited with Yvonne Jewkes, including submissions from Alison Liebling and Alexandra Cox, a PhD student in the department, who is conducting research on juveniles within the American prison system.

Our work is informed by high-quality empirical and theoretical work elsewhere in the department, including ongoing writings by Justice Tankebe and Tony Bottoms on legitimacy in criminal justice, Loraine Gelsthorpe's research on community punishments and penalties, and Friedrich Loesel's studies of prison-based interventions. We are developing strong partnerships with external scholars, such as Shadd Maruna and Fergus McNeill, whose research on desistance and offender engagement resonates with many of our findings within the context of the prison. Internationally, we continue to forge links with scholars and practitioners interested in employing and adapting the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life surveys and in general dialogue about the impact, experience and use of imprisonment.

Research Summaries

Prisons and prisoners

Values, practices and outcomes in public and private sector corrections

Ben Crewe, Alison Liebling, Susie Hulley and Clare McLean

Prison privatisation was initially conceived as an 'experiment' – a test of different models of the provision of custodial 'services'. It is

important to assess some of the claims that have been made for (and against) private sector involvement in prison management, rather than allow debates to rest on rhetoric and ideology alone. The need for a scrupulous empirical research base in this area is all the more important in the current political context. The recent Green Paper on Criminal Justice proposes to 'open up the market to new providers from the private, voluntary and community sectors' (2010: 10) and to pay this more diverse range of providers according to reoffending outcomes. It promises to transform a vital area of public policy, but is able to draw on little existing evidence about the relative performance of public and private punishment provision, despite the fact that the modern era of prison competition started in 1992, with the opening of HMP Wolds.

Part of the problem is that there is little consensus about the best way to conceptualise and measure prison quality. Should we judge prisons only by 'external' measures, such as their impact on reoffending, or by 'internal' measures such as suicide rates, or the quality of life experienced by the imprisoned? What are the criteria by which we should measure the prisoner experience? What is the relationship between a prison's 'moral performance' (Liebling and Arnold 2004) and future behaviour? Might it be the case that the public and private sectors have different strengths and weaknesses, which lead to different kinds of outcomes, and which might be combined in the institutions of the future?

In 2006, with many of these questions in mind, the authors embarked on a detailed study of values, practices and outcomes in public and private corrections. Taking advice from practitioners in both sectors, we sought to 'match' two public and two private sector prisons (that is, ensure that they were comparable in terms of age, function, security level), and compare their cultures, relationships and the experiences of prisoners and staff within them. Our ethnographic research in these prisons – two of which were training prisons for adult males, and two of which were local prisons, also for adult males – involved observations of and interviews with prisoners and staff, plus the administration of quality of life surveys to both groups. In all four establishments we were given keys and allowed free access to all areas of the prison, enabling us to talk openly with prisoners, uniformed staff

and managers about their experiences. This 'deep' fieldwork was supplemented by shorter research visits to three further private sector prisons (Rye Hill, Lowdham Grange and Altcourse), in which we distributed our surveys and conducted a small number of interviews.

In our evaluation of the two pairs of matched prisons, the two public sector prisons (Bullington and Garth) generally outperformed their private sector comparators (Forest Bank and Dovegate). The public sector training prison scored significantly higher than its private sector comparator on seventeen of our twenty-one prisoner 'quality of life' measures and below it on none, while the public sector local prison scored significantly higher than its private sector comparator on eight of the measures and below it on none. These measures included prisoner assessments of the respectfulness of their treatment, their safety, their psychological wellbeing, and the professionalism of prison staff.

Data from the three supplementary private prisons complicated this picture. One of the private sector training prisons (Lowdham Grange) scored significantly above the public sector training prison on nine of the twenty-one dimensions (and below it on none), while the additional private sector local prison (Altcourse) scored significantly higher than the public sector local prison on fifteen of the twenty-one dimensions (and significantly below it on none). The public sector prisons in our study were considered to be fairly high-quality. This made the prisoner evaluations of the two high-performing private sector prisons all the more striking.

On the other hand, the *least* impressive prisons in our study were also in the private sector. Both of the private prisons in the main ethnographic study exhibited weaknesses in the areas of policing and control, organisation and consistency, and the 'personal development' of prisoners (e.g. their feeling that the prison regime was constructive and was helping them to lead a law-abiding life on release). Senior managers in both of these prisons acknowledged that their staff were less good at following procedures than those in the public sector, that the quality of uniformed staff and middle managers was highly variable, and that the high turnover of staff was a major problem. The emphasis in staff training on interpersonal skills – and the effort made to inculcate staff

cultures that were positive and respectful – did not lead to our two main private sector prisons outperforming their public sector comparators in the expected areas. In these private prisons, relationships between prisoners and staff were courteous, and prisoners generally recognised that staff were benign and committed. However, the lack of experience and expertise among uniformed staff (and their low numbers) meant that prisoners' legitimate expectations were often unmet. The relatively low levels of staff professionalism in these prisons was also manifested in both the over-use and under-use of authority.

In the public sector prisons, officers were confident and knowledgeable, delivering regimes that were safer and more reliable than in the matched private sector prisons. Relationships with prisoners were fairly informal, and, in general, power was exercised fairly and confidently. However, prisoners sometimes described an experience of imprisonment that felt 'heavier' and more 'edgy' than in the private sector comparators. Uniformed staff could sometimes be indifferent towards prisoners, and their dispositions of staff towards prisoners were more negative than those of most private sector staff.

The two high-performing private sector prisons that were added into the study seemed to combine many of the strengths of both sectors. They were unencumbered by some of the cultural 'weight' of the public sector – in particular, a powerful trade union culture that has often promoted an ethos of cynicism – allowing relationships between staff and prisoners to be respectful, supportive and caring. Uniformed staff seemed confident and knowledgeable, having built up more experience than staff in the poorer-performing private prisons. Interestingly though, there were indications that, in the domain of security and policing, even the high-performing private prisons were less strong than in other areas of quality. Staffing levels were tight and power was slightly under-used.

Not all of the most important issues about prison privatisation can be addressed through these kinds of evaluations. Questions remain about the ethics and longer term effects of private sector involvement in incarceration, and we do not wish to diminish the significance of these matters. Yet our data suggest that some lessons can be drawn from the

privatisation 'experiment'. First, since there are huge variations in the quality of private prisons, we should not assume that the private sector is in itself any better at running prisons than the public sector; second, there are some risks in doing privatisation 'on the cheap'; third, there are some hidden strengths in the public sector, particularly in relation to staff professionalism and the use of authority; and, finally, the quality of management really matters, and might account for the differences between the performance of otherwise similar establishments.

Publications

Crewe, B, Liebling, A. and Hulley, S. (2011) 'Staff culture, the use of authority, and prisoner outcomes in public and private prisons' *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*.

Liebling, A., Hulley, S. and Crewe, B. (forthcoming, 2011) 'Conceptualising and measuring prison quality', in Gadd, D., Karstedt, S. and Messner, S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Hulley, S. , Liebling, A. and Crewe, B. (forthcoming) 'Re-thinking respect in prison: results from a study of public and private sector prisons', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*

Crewe, B., Liebling, A., Hulley, S. and McLean, C. (under review) 'Prisoner quality of life in public and private prisons'

Liebling, A., Crewe, B. and Hulley, S. (forthcoming, 2011) 'Values and Practices in Public and Private Sector Prisons: A Summary of Key Findings from an Evaluation', *Prison Service Journal*.

An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve Years On

Alison Liebling, Helen Arnold and Chrsitina Straub

This study repeats a research project conducted in the same maximum security prison in 1998. It was requested by the Home Office following an HMCIP report describing apparently distant relationships between staff and prisoners. Since the original study had found positive relationships at the establishment, this was a

matter of concern. The study draws on four sources of data: sustained observation; a weekly thematic dialogue group with a regular group of prisoners; long interviews with 52 prisoners and 36 staff; and quality of life surveys with 159 randomly selected prisoners and 194 staff.

Whilst the authors did not set out to explore in-prison conversions to Islam or the risks of radicalisation directly, both became important themes in the research. The prison showed many of the symptoms of late modern society and culture in a concentrated form. Relatively young prisoners serving long indeterminate sentences faced major difficulties. Prisoners brought more oppositional 'street culture' and frustration with them into prison. They were looking for hope and meaning at a difficult stage in their sentences. The process of identity change was a core aspiration for many. The new population mix, including more Black and minority ethnic and Muslim prisoners, was disrupting established hierarchies. There were high levels of fear and tension relating to 'extremism' and 'radicalisation' in the prison. Rates of conversion to Islam were high. 12 of 23 Muslim prisoners interviewed were in-prison conversions. Faith identities were being adopted and used in many ways, including for meaning and protection. The main motivations for turning to faith included dealing with the pains of long-term imprisonment; seeking 'anchored relations' and protection; searching for meaning and identity development; rebellion; and coercion. A lower level of professional confidence among staff than in the past meant they kept a distance from some prisoners. The atmosphere of distrust resulted in a reduced information flow. Lack of knowledge in a new multicultural context led to a risk of faith becoming the new 'no-go area'.

Publications

Liebling, A., Arnold, H and Straub, C (2011, in press) *An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve Years On* London: Home Office.

Mrs Nicola Padfield is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, who has published a number of books and articles on the parole and recall process. She is currently undertaking a small project (supported by a grant from the Newton Trust) which seeks to understand the experience of recall, and to propose solutions to some of the problems raised. In England and

Wales, most prisoners are released from prison conditionally at the halfway point in their sentence (or sooner), but a large and increasing number are being recalled to prison during this second part of the sentence. In 2009-10, a total of 13,900 determinate sentenced offenders were recalled to custody, up 18 per cent from 2008-09 (11,800). The number of people on life licence who were recalled to custody in 2009 increased from 108 in 2008 to 124 in 2009.

Fieldwork is currently being carried out in two local prisons. More than a hundred prisoners' files are being used to gather data on (for example) sentences, and reasons for recall. More than 40 prisoners have been interviewed, with a view to capturing their perceptions of the recall process. The research has so far found that offenders face enormous challenges as they struggle to lead a law-abiding life-style. The analysis is just beginning, but it is clear that there are significant issues:

- The confused and confusing role of today's probation officer, or offender manager: their role as strict license enforcer is perceived as a significant limitation on their ability to assist and advise.
- This confusion often leads to a break down in trust between offender and the probation service: many recalled offenders believe that they were doing relatively well on license, but that their achievements are ignored once the decision has been taken to recall them. Their probation manager does not maintain contact once they are recalled, and the written reasons for recall inadequately recognise their positive achievements.
- The invisibility of those empowered to make the decision to release them, and the uncertainty which surrounds the release process. Parole Board panels are perceived as a distant bureaucracy which takes unreasonable and uncertain time to reach decisions. Prisoners feel that they are not given reliable information on future release. Prison staff are seen as uninformed, or at worst, deliberately unhelpful.

- Widespread misunderstanding of the process: for example, the criteria for the somewhat rare 'fixed term' recall; or whether a 'standard' recall is for a fixed or indefinite term.
- Some license conditions can appear to make it particularly difficult for prisoners to lead law-abiding lives, rather than facilitating rehabilitation. For example, a two hourly reporting condition within approved premises can force offenders to spend time entirely with criminal peers, giving them little opportunity to avoid boredom or to seek lawful employment.

The project is supported by a research advisory panel which includes Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe, Professor Alison Lieblich and Dr Ben Crewe.

Publications

Padfield, N. (2009) Parole and early release: the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 changes in context, *Criminal Law Review* 166

Padfield, N. and S. Maruna (2006) 'The Revolving Door at the Prison Gate: Exploring the Dramatic Increase in Recalls to Prison', 6 *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 329-352

Padfield, N., van Zyl Smit, D., Dünkel, D. (eds) (2010) *Release from prison – European policy and practice* (Willan)

Anton Symkovych is writing up his PhD on **Power Relations in a Ukrainian Prison**, one of the first studies to involve an in-depth examination of the inner world of a Ukrainian prison. Following a convoluted quest for access spanning two years, Anton spent several initial months conducting observations and informal conversations in a medium-security men's prison in the Kyiv region. He then carried out semi-structured interviews with prisoners from all informal groups and staff of all grades, including senior managers. His analysis is supplemented by a review of prison-related policies, reports of Ukrainian and international human rights bodies, and case law, and is informed by data collected in HMP Wandsworth (London) in 2007.

The most striking finding relates to the fine balance of power between staff and prisoners: the historical powerlessness of ordinary citizens in Ukraine, amplified by their prisoner status, was counterbalanced by severe understaffing. Like in many other prison systems, order was a result of a tacit social contract between the authorities and prisoners. Force was always available but was only used sporadically. Staff control was achieved primarily through coercion and inducement. Prisoners overall recognised staff authority, but normative commitment was low. The use of power by staff was mediated by considerations of internal and external legitimacy. A legitimacy deficit emanated from: a huge gap between legally required provisions and the actual ability to deliver these provisions; social injustice and corruption in Ukrainian society-at-large; over-restrictive and sometimes anachronistic prison rules; as well as the quality of staff (and their poor remuneration) – all of which explained substantive concessions and rule under-enforcement. Under-staffing further institutionalised these compromises.

Order was underpinned by the rigid hierarchical structure of the prisoner society itself and its informal normative system. Informal norms, deemed by most prisoners to be more legitimate than official rules, commanded normative commitment, despite institutionalised discrimination against some prisoner groups. Inter-prisoner relations were mediated by these norms, ensuring that violence was kept in check. However, this delicate balance is threatened by increasing numbers of drug users and other 'underclass' prisoners, as the legitimacy of criminal leaders (and, by proxy, of informal norms) withers. As the 'humanisation' of prison policies and practices also contributes to the erosion of a self-regulated prisoner society, the Ukrainian authorities have to consider new mechanisms of social control to sustain order in prison.

Ruth Armstrong's PhD – '**Searching for Mercy Street**' – examines the re-entry of ex-prisoners released from a faith-based prison programme in the USA. Faith-based community groups have been touted as part of the answer to USA's reentry crisis. Research has suggested that involvement in faith communities post release can reduce recidivism (Sumter, 2000), but has also found that ex-

prisoners who join faith communities immediately after release but do not continue involvement reoffend more than those who never join faith communities (La Vigne et al., 2009). Ruth's study was designed to develop a picture of the messy realities of life post-release for ex-prisoners intending to join faith communities in order to better understand existing research findings.

This ethnographic study had 48 participants who were released from a faith-based program over a six-month period. It involved two months of observations in prison pre-release, and up to 12 months of post-release contact. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted on three occasions, immediately prior to release, within two weeks of release and an average of 7.5 months post release. Volunteer mentors were also interviewed.

Preliminary findings evidence the difficulties and barriers that ex-prisoners face in re-entry and the added restrictions of coping with life on parole. The escalation of these difficulties resulted in increased shame and stigma and posed barriers to involvement in faith communities. Addressing this stigma, participants emphasised the important role of prison and parole volunteers in providing a link with pro-social society and imparting a sense of common humanity through sharing their own vulnerabilities and thus encouraging participants to do the same.

Re-entry is a time of conflicting messages for ex-prisoners concerning their responsibility for their own transformation and success. Parole risk management strategies leave little scope for positive interventions and interactions with parolees. In contrast, some faith communities provided respite from continuing experiences of exclusion, control and punishment. Faith communities have the chance to positively engage with ex-prisoners leaving faith-based prison programs. In the first interview pre-release, all participants said they intended to join a faith community post release, and 93% did so. However, nearly a third of those participants no longer attended by the time of the third interview. Participants cited practical barriers to involvement including work schedules and parole restrictions, but also focused on the shame associated with perceived criminality. To engage ex-prisoners in continued involvement, and potentially impact recidivism rates, faith communities must

consider both the practical and theological implications of accommodating the marginalized.

Abigail Wild's research is an ethnographic study focusing on the flows of power and efforts at shaping identity in faith-based prison units in the US. There has been a proliferation of faith-based residential prison programs in the last decade. The "Horizon Communities in Prison" were among the first of such programs and remain among the fastest growing. Horizon communities are voluntary residential programs contracted by states' Departments of Corrections and delivered, in large part, by volunteers drawn from faith communities near the prisons. Abigail conducted ethnographic fieldwork in three Horizon communities in medium-maximum security men's facilities in the U.S.: a Christian unit (which is open to people of all faiths), a multi-faith unit, and a character-based unit (designed as a secular alternative to the faith-based community). The dissertation draws upon liberal political theory, prison sociology and the sociology of religion to analyze the aims and strategies of power in these prison units, with particular interest in the involvement of the state in shaping how prisoners develop their identities. To this end, the dissertation explores two questions: firstly, how are faith- and character-based units governed? Secondly, how are these daily practices of governance related to Horizon's primary aim to "effect an inner transformation of the incarcerated"?

These questions are explored through considering the dual functions of power: 'negative' functions of power which seek to restrain and control, and 'productive' functions of power, which seek to cultivate and enhance. These twin aims of governance are recognizable as two of the most enduring strains of penal discourse: firstly, the imperative of order and the necessity of using coercive resources to ensure it; secondly, the attempt at rehabilitation and reform. When discussing the purpose of imprisonment, the aims of control and of treatment are often presented as being in conflict, ignoring the long history of ways that penal power has been directed simultaneously toward creating order and encouraging reform. Some of the first and most influential prison reform agendas in the U.S. – the separate and silent systems which inspired Alexis de Toqueville's visit to America

– sought to combine the disciplinary capacity of the prison with spiritual instruction to create a population of godly, clean-living men. Similarly, Abigail’s research found that Horizon units – both faith-based and character-based – were stricter and more orderly than elsewhere in the prison and infused with moral directives. The organizational relationship and on-the-ground collaboration between Horizon units and host prisons indicated deep correspondences between their ideas of punishment. Reformed prisoners were characterized, both by the Horizon program and the ‘neoliberal’ prison system, as responsible, self-disciplined and compliant. But this imposition of discipline was welcomed by many participants as opening up more meaningful opportunities for self-development and restricting avenues of self-destruction. The accounts of participants in Horizon units challenge a view of prisoners as the recipients of an externally imposed religious vision, and instead urge consideration of points of intersection between the state’s efforts to shape prisoners and prisoners’ efforts to shape themselves.

Marie Hutton is in the first-year of a PhD entitled **A Case for Change? A Critical Analysis of the Visiting System in Prisons in England and Wales**. A major component of Marie’s final year LLB degree was an independent research project entitled ‘A Critical Analysis of the arguments for and against the introduction of Extended Family Visits in English and Welsh Prisons’. Her PhD is a continuation of this work, expanding on and locating previous research in a theoretical and human rights context. Marie hopes to elicit knowledge as to the ‘effectiveness’ of the current visiting system, particularly with regards to the maintenance of family ties between prisoners and their families. She will also examine alternatives to the current visiting system within Europe and explore the potential legal and policy implications of the current system within the context of human rights legislation.

Prison Staff

Vicky Gadd is soon to complete her PhD on **Exploring Excellence: Effective Senior**

Management Teams in Public Sector Prisons. In his exploratory study of correctional institutions in three US states, Dilulio concluded that ‘prison management may be the single most important determinant in the quality of prison life’ (1987:255). Yet, to date, no equivalent volume to Dilulio’s (1987) ‘Governing Prisons’ exists in the UK and an empirical study is yet to investigate management teams as a unit. Dilulio (1991) suggests that the “management variable” has been neglected by scholars in part because other variables are easier to study’ (270). Prison management is indeed complex. Modern senior management teams in prisons are operating under ever increasing pressures, including challenging populations, overcrowding and stringent standards for performance, set against a backdrop of increasing budgetary constraint. In this context, it is important to understand how the ‘best’ teams are not only surviving but thriving: How do they achieve this success? What are the mechanisms which underlie effectiveness? Could they be replicated in other establishments and at other points in time? What does effectiveness mean to the modern senior manager?

Using innovative ‘appreciative’ methods to investigate two high-performing prison management teams, Vicky’s study aims to elucidate some of these ‘unknowns’. Extended periods of time were spent conducting fieldwork at two establishments, involving the shadowing of key managers, lengthy appreciative interviews, the administration of psychometric and personality tests to all members of the management teams, focus groups with staff, and the use of a staff quality of life survey. Managers’ accounts of their work were assessed alongside observational analyses and psychometric assessments, with the aim of comparing what managers said they did with the actions that they took.

Two themes emerged strongly in the analysis: *optimism*, which encompassed positivity, hope, faith, trust and confidence, and *resilience*, which encompassed buoyancy, adjustability, flexibility, tenacity and determination. These concepts (alongside evidence from managers personality and work profiles) were used to create a typology of senior management styles. Six ‘ideal types’ were identified, based on managers’ positions along two intersecting continuums: optimism-pessimism and

resilience-vulnerability. In this research, the group classified as 'flexible-realists' emerged as the most effective and successful senior managers. They possessed the most valuable combination of personal and professional characteristics to succeed in their operating context. They were optimistic and resilient but not to an extreme degree. Such a finding could have important implications for the training and management of senior Prison Service managers. Other interesting themes in the research are the relative importance of the number one governor and the significance of 'authenticity' in relation to legitimate leadership. Several publications are planned once the PhD is submitted, in summer 2011.

Jason Warr's PhD research is on **The Prison Based Forensic Psychologist: in Person and Practice**. The last twenty years have seen a significant increase in the demand for and expansion of psychological services within the prison system. Overwhelmingly, these services have been provided by specialist forensic practitioners. The study is an exploration of the role, practices, motivations, values and experiences of the prison-based forensic psychologist. Set against a background of contemporary penal power and forensic psychological literature, the research provides a sociological account of the complexities involved with being a forensic practitioner in the modern penal environment. Based on a number of in-depth interviews, some of the emerging findings are as follows:

- Many of the psychologists interviewed had not been interested in working with forensic populations prior to going on placement as a psych-assistant in the final year of their undergraduate degree.
- The motivation for doing psychological work is based upon the idea of working with people with problems and aiding those who need help in order that they can live successful lives. All interviewees have reported that the aspects of their role that they most enjoy involve helping prisoners to realise that they can see the world differently from their current viewpoint, or the viewpoint they had when their offending took place. Job satisfaction is often derived from

facilitating this change and from professional role performance.

- The major frustrations are related to high case loads, paperwork, pay and the problems in becoming qualified (Chartered) due to the limited functions that they are able to perform.
- For many prison-based psychologists, who tend to be middle class women in their mid twenties, working in prisons can be difficult. This is often the result of working with other members of staff, particularly uniformed staff. Many interviewees have given accounts of disrespectful and exclusionary behaviour by other staff, unwanted sexualised 'banter', and forms of bullying and intimidation.
- Although interviewees recognise the power that they hold, this is often experienced in the abstract and only as part of the larger authority of the establishment. This is partly because prison-based psychologists only have limited dealings with individual prisoners, sometimes seeing them only a matter of hours before writing up reports and not seeing the consequences of the reports that they write.

Publications

Warr, J. (forthcoming), book review of 'Psychological therapy in prisons and other secure settings', *The British Journal of Community Justice*.

Warr, J. (forthcoming), 'Afterword', B. Crewe, and J. Bennett (eds.), *The Prisoner*, London. Routledge Publishing.

Claire Lea's ESRC funded PhD - **An Exploration of the Contemporary History and Current Role of the POA since 1963** - adopts the approach used by David Garland in *The Culture of Control* (2001) with the aim of producing a 'history of the present' and understanding how the POA's historical antecedents determine how it behaves and is perceived today. The study's starting point is a time which was pivotal for the POA in becoming the trade union it is today. In 1963, Harley Cronin, its first general secretary, retired. Cronin was instrumental in the POA's

establishment in 1939 and he has been described as the 'father' and 'primary architect' of the POA. His retirement marked the end of the POA's first era and coincided with its attempts to determine and articulate what the role of the prison officer, and by extension the POA, should be in the changing Prison Service. The Prison Commission had been abolished in April 1963 and its functions had been absorbed into the Home Department. This was part of the Conservative Government's attempts to address the perceived failure of the prison system to tackle the increase in crime and to streamline the Civil Service. As the Prison Service shifted its focus from deterrence to rehabilitation it adopted a more therapeutic approach towards prisoners and brought social workers and other caring professionals into the prison service to deliver these objectives. Prison officers were unclear as to what their role should be and in November 1963 submitted a memorandum to the Home Secretary entitled *The Role of the Modern Prison Officer (1963)*. This memorandum formed the basis of a Joint Working Party of the POA and senior prison service management. So far, the research has sought to understand the historical and political context of the changes which took place in 1963 and to start to identify themes which might explain why and how the POA operates as it does today.

Amy Ludlow is in the second year of her PhD in law at the University of Cambridge. Her research, **Procuring, Competing and Privatising Prisons: A Case Study of People, Law and Process** is jointly supervised by academics in the Institute of Criminology and the Faculty of Law.

Contestability, through market testing and competitive tendering with private sector involvement is a major experiment in penal organisation and management. It may result in prison closure or the transfer of management to a private company (privatisation). This business restructuring necessarily has enormous, and perhaps not entirely undesired, potential to effect employment and industrial relation change. It also demands new types of commercial understanding and engagement from the public sector.

Amy's research concerns the most recent wave of market testing in prisons, announced by Jack Straw in April 2009. It combines public source data collection with a case study at HMP Birmingham. The announcement in April of this year that the management of HMP Birmingham is to be transferred from the public sector to G4S (the first such transfer in the UK although there is a precedent in Australia at the Parklea Correctional Centre) presents a unique and fascinating research opportunity. Amy therefore intends to follow the competition through the current transition period to its conclusion in October 2011, the planned date for contractual vesting.

One of the aims of the research is to describe and evaluate market testing and procurement processes in prisons against labour law and human resources values. The research aims to explore the role of procurement and employment law in shaping the staffing and industrial relations impacts of contestability and privatisation. In practice, procurement and the workforce restructuring it tends to bring, appear to come into tension with some aspects of employment law as well as with good employment and industrial practice, particularly in the currently challenging economic climate. How has this tension been managed? What of the managers, bid teams and NOMS staff who have been charged with steering the competition? Does the law provide an adequate and effective framework within which competing interests can be balanced? What is the experience of prison staff in local establishments who are going through this process and facing an uncertain future? At heart, the research seeks to explore and articulate any tensions between contestability/privatisation and good employment law and practice, reflecting upon what these new practices might mean for the occupational identity, role and future of prison staff. Its purpose is to connect law and the criminological literature on prisons and prison staff to the story of the people in and behind the current process.

This study will have many implications for policy and practice. How will our current understandings about what the private sector can offer be challenged by the import of public sector prison infrastructure and staffing, industrial and cultural heritage? How and with what success or effects will employment law and human resources practice be used to

manage staff transitions and workplace change? At its best, contestability and privatisation might be able to stimulate innovation and professionalise prison staff and management. But there are risks that where badly managed, market testing could undermine staff commitment, loyalty and trust in their employer and jeopardise long-term regime quality and industrial stability. It is to the Prison Service's credit that they are supporting research on the effects of these transformations on staff and managers at this critical moment.

Publications

Ludlow, A. (2011) 'Exploring Contestability and Privatisation - what it means for Prison Staff Academy for Justice Commissioning, Issue No. 13, (2011), 8-9.

Ludlow, A. (under review) 'Competition & Contestability in Action: Restructuring the prison sector to achieve workforce and industrial change'.

Ludlow, A. (under review) 'Regulating Prison Strikes and Industrial Conflict'.

Thomas Akoensi, a first-year PhD student, is conducting research on **Prison Officer Stress-The Case of the Ghana Prison Service**. In order to ascertain who the Ghanaian prison officer is, how he or she accomplishes daily work routines, and the challenges and stresses of the job, he has adopted a mixed methods design, combining both qualitative and quantitative strategies. The study seeks to reveal some of the stressors that are unique to Ghana's prisons system and those that are shared with western counterparts.

Thomas has recently conducted in-depth interviews with officers in Nsawam Medium Security prison, the largest prison in Ghana and the West African sub region. This prison holds over three thousand prisoners and it is manned by just over three hundred officers. In addition, he made extensive observations of prison officers as they went about their normal duties. He has also conducted interviews and has piloted a questionnaire (n = 121) in a number of other Ghanaian prisons, holding both male and female prisoners.

Emerging findings from the interviews reveal that the major sources of stress for officers

include the following: escorting inmates for external duties or labour, inmate overcrowding, the risk of contracting infectious diseases, staff accommodation, the dangerousness of the job, poor job conditions, promotion, career management issues, the poor public image of prison work, salaries and low staffing levels. Many of these stressors are inter-connected. For example, escorting prisoners, especially for labour outside the prison yard, is particularly stressful for staff because of the ratios involved and the risk of losing one's job should a prisoner escape. Furthermore, some of the main pains of imprisonment experienced by prisoners - relating to food, clothing and shelter - are, in turn, a significant source of stress to officers.

Other studies

Rachelle Larocque's PhD, **A Critical Analysis of Canadian Penology and Scholarship**, research seeks to reflect on and consider the extent to which Canadian penal practices, values, and habits are liberal-humanitarian and/or punitive in nature.

Despite pressure to adopt 'tough on crime' measures found in the United States, Canada has retained a balanced and disciplined approach to the use of imprisonment (Meyer and O'Malley, 2005) and has been able to maintain its liberal-humanitarian stance towards some aspects of criminal justice policy and practice. The Canadian penal system has a reputation for being the 'liberal' neighbour of a very different American system with more in common with its European partners. Its imprisonment rates have remained relatively stable since the 1960s with only small fluctuations during the 1990s, and no consistent uptrend. Nevertheless, the legislative tide is beginning to turn, and it is significant that Canadian prisoners' experiences of punishment are hidden from view except in narrow studies of rehabilitative efforts.

Canada is neglected in all international comparative studies on imprisonment and, to date, there is no robust empirical study of Canadian penology. Canada repeatedly 'policies' criminological knowledge by denying

entry to the penal system for research purposes. Research on 'special' populations such as Aboriginal offenders, women, and young offenders is more widespread but still fairly restricted. Rachelle's research focuses on a variety of inter-related factors that contribute to characterizing the penal climate in Canada: the evolution of prison sociology and penal policy in Canada, a comprehensive understanding of 'liberal-humanitarianism' and 'punitiveness', a digest of available research on prison quality and prison life, and conceptual understanding of how punitiveness may be conceived in the Canadian context. It also aims to provide an empirical account of the experiences of imprisonment in Canada. So far, her research has involved a two-week secondment at the Office of the Correctional Investigator in Ottawa, Canada, and a short research visit to Kingston Penitentiary in Kingston, Canada. Access is being sought to administer the MQPL questionnaire to 200 prisoners and conduct in-depth interviews with 40 prisoners and 20 prison staff at one provincial prison. The aim will be to explore the nature of the prison experience and prison quality in Canada, for comparative purposes .

Justice Tankebe, a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute of Criminology, conducts empirical and theoretical research on issues of legitimacy (or the 'right to exercise power') in criminal justice. A substantial body of empirical research has now been conducted in this increasingly important area, based on surveys in the community, and on interviews and ethnographic studies in prisons. This work has demonstrated the importance of legitimacy for the promotion of law-abiding behaviour, and is also beginning to show that legitimacy can, in a prison context, generate prisoner wellbeing through a staff commitment to justice. Adequate theorisation has lagged behind empirical evidence. Justice's work over the previous year has therefore been devoted to (a) advancing a conceptual understanding of legitimacy in the contexts of policing and criminal justice, and (b) developing a better understanding of the implications of analyses of legitimacy for the practical contexts of policing and prisons.

Application of the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) surveys in the Caribbean: In May 2011, a representative of the Cayman Islands Government visited the Prisons Research Centre to discuss the application of MQPL and SQL in their prisons. The Government was keen to use grounded research evidence to inform a broad 'rehabilitation assessment' it was undertaking. Arrangements were made for Susie Hulley to visit Grand Cayman in June to observe the administration of the surveys (by the National Drug Council in Cayman, who had recently administered a drug survey in the prisons) and to engage staff and prisoners in discussions that would strengthen their interpretation of the quantitative data. During this visit to all three prisons in Cayman, currently holding 228 prisoners (including eight females), Dr Hulley identified a number of operational challenges, including the accommodation of all categories of prisoners in one establishment, difficult conditions (related to the climate and poorly designed buildings), overcrowding (the male prisons were built to accommodate 165 prisoners) and high levels of illiteracy amongst the prison population. Although awaiting the results of the MQPL and SQL surveys, observation and discussions with staff and prisoners suggested that, despite these challenges, the prisons showed a number of strengths including relatively liberal-humanitarian views of prisoners amongst some staff and senior managers, extensive 'out of cell' time for most prisoners (although with limited activities available) and fairly generous staffing levels. However, there appeared to be problems related to the flow of power on the wings, with weak enforcement of low-level rule-breaking behaviour and intimidation of staff by powerful prisoners. Whilst contextually very different from prisons in the UK, the visit highlighted the common challenge for prison staff to negotiate power carefully with prisoners and maintain control. Indications that staff felt overwhelmed by the number of hours prisoners spent out of their cells (particularly with little to occupy them) was reminiscent of observations in some private prisons in the UK. The forthcoming survey data collected from around 57% of the prison population and 61% of staff will offer an interesting insight into the prison experience in the Cayman Islands.

‘Dads Inside and Out’:

Principal Investigator: Professor Friedrich Lösel
Project Co-ordinator: Gill Pugh (Ormiston Children and Families Trust)
Research Team: Dr Caroline Lanskey, Lucy Markson, Karen Souza.

This project is run in partnership with Ormiston Children and Families Trust and is funded by the Big Lottery. It is investigating risk and protective factors related to the resettlement of fathers who have been in prison and the well-being of their children and (ex)partners. Prisoners’ families can be an important resource in helping prisoners to resettle and desist from crime. They are also often a vulnerable and ‘invisible’ group with complex needs. This research offers a rare multi-perspective analysis of the experiences of fathers and their families during the father’s imprisonment and after his return to the community. It aims to inform policy on resettlement and support services for prisoners and their families.

It is a longitudinal study comprising one-to-one interviews, including standardized measures with fathers, partners and children aged 4 – 18 years at two key stages in the resettlement process: within three months before the father’s release (Time 1) and within six months after his return to the community (Time 2). Over 250 interviews have been conducted to date with 53 ‘families’ who are taking part in the study: 53 fathers, 53 (ex)partners and 89 children (44 interviewed aged 4 – 18 years).

Initial analysis of data from the first interviews has highlighted the emotional and practical difficulties families face during a father’s imprisonment:

- 72% of fathers reported emotional difficulties (e.g., stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression). 57% said their families were facing practical difficulties and 32% financial problems.
- Partners reported a 28% decline in average weekly income. 83% commented on feeling lonely and having little support. 38% partners reported mental health conditions and 28% physical health problems. 72% were receiving no help outside agencies or organisations.

- Children expressed feelings of sadness, anger, shame and anxiety. 51% of partners and 66% of fathers reported their children had experienced behavioural or emotional difficulties.

To cope in these adverse circumstances families commented on the importance of:

- High quality and regular contact between fathers, (ex) partners and children. 98% of partners talked on the phone, 87% wrote and 76% visited. Of the 44 children interviewed 89% talked on the phone and 74% visited their Dad (although only 54% of children aged 11 years and over). Daily contact by phone and family/children’s visits where ‘normal’ family interaction could take place were especially valued.
- Support from family and friends (92% fathers, 45% children, 38% partners).
- Personal attitude/ resilience (47% of partners reported feeling stronger and greater sense of independence, 72% of fathers commented on the value of personal reflection).
- Religious faith (43% fathers, 28% partners).
- Maintaining a routine / keeping busy (45% fathers, 23% of partners).

A large majority of children, partners and fathers interviewed had positive expectations about the future although there were a few reservations. Fathers’ views about their lives after release were generally more optimistic than their partners’ views, particularly in relation to alcohol problems and crime.

Analysis of Time 2 data is about to begin. The project runs until November 2011. For further details of research publications and the concluding project conference, please contact Caroline Lanskey - cml29@cam.ac.uk.