

# Prisons Research Centre

Institute of Criminology

University of Cambridge

*Annual Report*

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**PRISONS RESEARCH CENTRE ANNUAL**  
**REPORT 2015**

The Cambridge Institute of Criminology Prisons Research Centre (PRC) was established under the Directorship of Alison Liebling in 2000, with a modest budget. It is now well established and attracts funding from NOMS, research councils (for example, the Economic and Social Research Council, the European Research Council, the British Academy, Leverhulme and the Nuffield Foundation) and from other organisations. Its members include Professor Alison Liebling, Dr Ben Crewe (Deputy Director), and six Research Associates: Dr Susie Hulley, Dr Ruth Armstrong, Dr Katherine Auty, Dr Richard Bramwell, Dr Ryan Williams and Dr Serena Wright. There are also currently ten PhD students conducting individual research projects, often linked to other research going on in the Centre. Giulia Conto acts as Centre Administrator. Associate Members include Helen Arnold (a past Research Associate), Dr Adrian Grounds, Dr Joel Harvey (a former PhD student and Research Associate), Dr John Rynne, and Dr Charles Elliott. The centre hosts Visiting Scholars from time to time, and is provided with intellectual support and guidance by Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms, and other colleagues in the department. Further contributions are made by members of our steering group.<sup>1</sup>

The Prisons Research Centre aims to provide a stimulating research environment in which a coherent strategy of high quality research can be pursued, and integration between funded and non-funded, and applied and theoretical projects can be facilitated. We investigate how

prisons operate, socially, morally and operationally, how they are experienced, and the relationship between these moral and social qualities, and their effects. Members of the PRC team carry out, individually and collectively, methodologically rigorous and theoretically relevant field-based studies addressing problems of human and social values, punishment practices, and the organisation and effects of aspects of prison life. We strive to forge links with other prisons researchers, scholars in the broader fields of criminology and sociology, and with practitioners. Our vision is to develop a rigorous and person-centred model of social inquiry.

This Report provides summaries of on-going projects, including PhD theses, as well as a summary of new and recently funded research. The Annual Research conference and Steering Group Meeting, at which we present selected findings from our recent research projects, takes place on October 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, and is attended by a range of academics from the UK and overseas, as well as practitioners from England and Wales, Scotland and other jurisdictions.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Anthony Bottoms, Professor Richard Sparks, Professor Shadd Maruna, Professor Fergus

McNeill, Peter Dawson, Michael Spurr , Gill Attrill, Jo Bailey, Paul Ibrahim, Ian Blakeman and Alan Scott.

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## A. RECENT AND ONGOING PROJECTS

**Locating trust in a climate of fear: religion, moral status, prisoner leadership, and risk in maximum security prisons - key findings from an innovative study<sup>2</sup>**

**Alison Liebling, Ruth Armstrong, Richard Bramwell and Ryan Williams**

New developments in England and Wales have made the sociological study of hierarchies, leadership and power in prison essential. Religious life and identity, and heritage, have come to matter in distinctive ways, especially in maximum security prisons, where the population composition is increasingly and disproportionately Black, Asian and mixed heritage.

This ESRC-funded research was intended to be methodologically and conceptually transformative. It aimed to explore the 'problem of trust' in high security prisons in an open-minded and sociologically imaginative way. Using a combination of person-centred social science, appreciative inquiry and ethnography-led measurement, we found fundamental differences in the moral climates of apparently similar high security prisons, which led to significantly different levels of anger and alienation ('political charge') among prisoners. These differences shape, or make possible, what types of faith are expressed by prisoners in each environment as well as the kind or degree of social organisation of

prisoners in each. Reconceptualising 'the presenting problem' (a problem of risk, recognition and the 'moral self') as a problem of *trust* opened the way for close and meaningful dialogue with participants, as well as more accurate understanding and measurement of prison life and quality. The project has described, and captured empirically, differences between 'disabling' environments that damage well-being and character, and 'enabling' environments that support human growth or flourishing, and the reduction of risk. One of the innovations in this study has been to include expertise in religious studies, and in hip-hop and cultural studies in the team.

### Research aims

The aim of this study was to provide accurate, authentic and *generative* description of life, experience and social organisation in two high security prisons. We explored the role of trust, risk, religion, religious and moral identities, and leadership in particular.

More specific aims were:

- To diagnose and describe the moral and cultural environments of two high security prisons, and the quality of life in each.
- To understand the approach each prison took to risk, and to identify and describe the presence of 'intelligent trust' in risk management.
- To describe processes of recognition, misrecognition, fairness, kindness, forms of discrimination and their effects, and to explore the extent to

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<sup>2</sup> This research was funded by the ESRC's Transforming Social Science Scheme, award no. ES/L003120/1.

which these experiences differed between prisons.

- To discover new and helpful ways of thinking about risk identification and management in prison.
- To investigate the utility and validity of several groundbreaking methodological approaches, which together constitute *person-centred social science*.

Because of the potentially catastrophic nature of the dangers involved, risk-related security activity is prominent in high security prisons. Questions are rarely asked about whether or not these activities are fair or proportionate or what the legitimate scope of security activities might be.

The five main working hypotheses were:

1. That high security prisons will differ empirically in their levels of trust. These differences can be measured and will have major effects.
2. Some intelligent trust will generate more constructive faith exploration/identities or 'spiritual capital', as well as personal growth, and lower the risk of violence; faith conversations will have a more open nature in prisons where some intelligent trust flows.
3. Higher levels of trust will characterise a prison, and become extended into staff groups and between departments as well as between all staff groups and prisoners.
4. Prisons will differ in the amount of 'political charge' they generate. 'Failed state prisons', paralysed by distrust, will generate more 'political charge' and (therefore) more dangerous, power-laden faith identities, as well

as stagnation and damage to wellbeing and character.

5. Different types of prisoners will be esteemed, or rise to the top of the prisoner hierarchy, carrying influence, in these different kinds of climates.

## **Methods**

The research took place in two of the five high security prisons in England: Full Sutton, in York and Frankland, in Durham, and an additional prison, Long Lartin. Appreciative Inquiry, shadowing and towards the second half of the fieldwork, long interviews, were conducted with 68 staff (37 at Full Sutton, and 31 at Frankland) and 100 prisoners (60 at Full Sutton and 40 at Frankland). Revised Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) surveys (including new dimensions of 'trust', 'intelligent trust', 'hope' and 'political charge') were conducted with 632 staff attending full staff meetings and 506 randomly selected prisoners.

Of the 100 prisoners interviewed in the two main sites, 42 per cent were Black, or mixed race, and 21 per cent were Asian. 32 per cent were White. Almost half of the sample described themselves, or were described by the prison, as Muslim. A quarter of the sample were Christian, 13 per cent were atheist, and a handful were Buddhist or Rastafarian. Most had been convicted of serious crimes of violence involving drugs, gun or gang-related violence, or murder. A disproportionate number had been convicted on 'joint enterprise' charges, and were appealing against the conviction. Their sentences were long, and several were facing tariffs of 35 years or more. Two were serving natural life sentences. Several were many years beyond their tariff and still Category A. Others were at relatively early stages in their very long

sentences. The sample included ten prisoners who had been charged with an offence against the Terrorism Act (TACT offenders), a small number of whom had carried out acts of extreme violence. Most of this number (like the general population of TACT offenders) had been charged with planning or supporting terrorist activity rather than carrying acts out. Others in the sample (3) were regarded as 'at risk' (of radicalisation) in prison and were being monitored, either at the time of the interview or in the recent past, by the prison system's monthly risk management procedure. Several acts of violence which were framed in religious terms occurred between prisoners during the research.

In addition, and as an extension of the originally planned fieldwork requested by NOMS, a third high security prison (Long Lartin) was added to the project. 'MQPL +' fieldwork was also carried out at a high security 'core local' prison (Manchester), which, in addition to its Category B local population, housed prisoners on its one Category A wing who were unable to be located in any of the five high security prisons for sentenced prisoners due to inter-prisoner conflict.

### **Key Findings**

1. The research hypotheses were broadly supported. The prisoner hierarchy had developed in new and complex ways, which required a more nuanced and contextualised analysis than that found in previous studies. Significant variations were found in most areas of the moral quality of prison life between the prisons, including in levels of intelligent trust and political charge. These differences were related to faith identities, personal development, and the handling of risk. Full Sutton was 'new penological' and tightly

controlled. Frankland was more 'old penological', with slightly more freedom of movement, a friendlier climate, and more opaque practices. Prisoners said they 'felt like a statistic' in Full Sutton but 'like a person' in (parts of) Frankland. The populations were slightly different, with longer tariffs in Full Sutton, more Black and mixed race prisoners (28-30% at FS compared with 17-20% at FL) and a higher proportion of Muslim prisoners at Full Sutton (22%) than in Frankland (which varied from 10-12% at the time of our research).

2. The prisons were most similar in their approach to the management of risk. The 'professionalisation' or 'bureaucratisation of risk' created knowledge gaps on the wings. Staff did not 'know' or 'recognise' prisoners as well as they had in previous studies. Both prisons approached internal security as an end in itself rather than as a means to social order, although there were exceptions to this at Frankland. Both prisons 'pursued security' via intelligence-gathering, restrictions on correspondence, thorough searching, control of movements, internal administrative processes (such as –'no one-to-one contact'), use of segregation, and reviews of security categorisation. All 'risks' were treated equally (that is, they brought about the same activities and practices). Neither prison downgraded prisoners more than occasionally. This was changing at Frankland towards the end of the research. Frankland's approach to counter-terrorism was, however, imaginative and person-centred.

3. Staff-prisoner relationships were somewhat distant in both establishments, but their tone and nature differed, with relational dimensions at Frankland rated significantly higher. At their best, staff practices were carefully grounded in a concept of 'emergent

personhood' (Smith 2010). Staff at both prisons were overwhelmingly (97%) white.

4. Trust existed in high security prisons, at low levels, but to very different degrees, and different forms of it materialised.<sup>3</sup> The best forms of trust were used as a way to connect with an individual or facilitate growth in prisoners. Where trust was used intelligently, it could have life-affirming consequences. Trust was built in environments where cooperation over meaningful tasks was available. Areas such as certain key workshops (Braille, woodwork, horticulture), the gym, the chaplaincy, the art room, education more generally, and the music room, allowed forms of trust to emerge relationally, and around achievements. It was built in areas where processes permitted 'whole people' to be present and common projects to emerge.

5. Each prison's wings had different forms of social organization that ranged from high prisoner solidarity to more diffuse prisoner relationships, and these distinct organizational patterns related to differences in prisoners' relationships with staff. Four models of social structure or organisation were found, based on (i) 'power-seeking', characterised by competition among prisoners (ii) the 'good' or 'harmonious society', characterised by cooperation; (iii) a 'rehabilitative culture', which was collaborative; and iv) 'the good life': which was relaxed but could stray into the somewhat collusive. Different forms of leadership (from

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<sup>3</sup> At Full Sutton the mean score on trust was 2.65 (of 5); at Frankland it was 2.85; At Full Sutton the mean score on intelligent trust was 2.57; at Frankland, it was 2.91 (an almost neutral score). These differences are statistically significant.

the violent to the cooperative) emerged in each environment. These forms of leadership were related to the expression and formation of different kinds of faith identity (from a narrow, norm-enforcing kind to a more diffuse, exploratory kind).

6. The new 10-item dimension of 'political charge' (anger and alienation) worked well in the project and scores varied significantly.<sup>4</sup> It was highest in Full Sutton (reflected by the lowest score of 2.61), lower at Long Lartin (2.72), and lowest in Frankland (at 2.94, an almost neutral score). These differences were felt by the research team as well as clearly described by prisoners – so Full Sutton had a more charged atmosphere; Long Lartin felt 'lighter', and, at Frankland, prisoners were less tense, they talked about being treated as a person, and they engaged more willingly with staff. Four MQPL dimensions (broadly reflecting the concept of legitimacy) accounted for 65 per cent of the variance in political charge: 'bureaucratic legitimacy'; 'humanity'; 'decency'; and 'fairness'. Political charge arose for a range of reasons, including feelings of being treated poorly or unfairly. Lack of access to family, frustration over complex sentence and security downgrading arrangements, and location far from home, also contributed. Feeling unrecognized or misrepresented, or portrayed as "a really dangerous person", using 'exaggerated evidence' was provocative. Political charge was directed towards the 'system', towards politicians, and the country.

<sup>4</sup> Items include, 'my time in prison has made me angry', 'I dislike this prison's treatment of people like me', and 'I have seen things happen to other prisoners in here that are simply wrong.'

Hatred towards an abstract system was sometimes framed in religious language.

7. Most of the prisoners in our research identified themselves as members of a religious group. Religion mostly facilitated personal transformation and growth and helped prisoners to cope with the pains of imprisonment. Religion could also facilitate conflict and violence under a variety of conditions. For Muslim prisoners, practicing their faith could be risky because it was sometimes misconstrued as an indicator of risk, which had negative consequences for progression and quality of life. There was confusion about what constituted 'legitimate religious practice' and what might constitute 'risk'. Most of the converts to Islam whom we interviewed were making a deliberate choice and could be accurately described as seekers.

8. Power dynamics, as well as dominant norms about Islam held by the 'powerful', or those who chose to uphold 'prison Islam', could lead to conflict and violence.

9. Making 'progress' (that is achieving a security downgrade or transfer out in order to take steps towards release) was difficult in a high security prison, particularly at the early stages of long or indeterminate sentences, but also well beyond this. Reducing risk was mainly achievable via the successful completion of a small number of accredited offending behaviour courses, but prisoners' sentence plans often required much more than this, and 'the goal posts frequently changed'. Methods of achieving access to courses that were accredited to reduce risk, and specified in sentence plans, were opaque. There were long waiting lists, or courses were not available. Many prisoners had no idea how to move

forward, and little hope that they would be able to achieve this. Few staff, and fewer prisoners, believed in the reliability or effectiveness of the systems that were in place to achieve change (that is, in the sentence planning process or in the effectiveness or relevance of offender behaviour programmes). There were no courses available in the HSE for some types of prisoners (such as international drug smugglers) to reduce their risk. Long term Category A prisoners often became 'stuck', describing a sense of hopelessness and frustration.

10. The flow of trust was structured by 'race' in both prisons, with members of different ethnic groups experiencing significantly different treatment by officers. While, in one prison, white prisoners complained about limitations on family contact, being humiliated by their treatment in the prison and the impersonality through which officers dealt with prisoners, these experiences were intensified amongst black prisoners, who on average spent more time on Category A, were given significantly fewer opportunities to work in trusted positions in comparison with white prisoners, and were more likely to be subject to local security measures limiting contact with non-uniformed staff. In the other prison, the reported differences in the experiences of black and white prisoners were much less. Black prisoners were aware of systematic unequal treatment in the second prison, but they were more likely to see this as 'discrimination' or unwitting racism and less likely to criticise the entire prison as being a 'racist jail' because of the friendlier relationships in general.

11. Managers' responses to the official measures of the unequal treatment and outcomes experienced by different ethnic



groups in both prisons, were focused around the management of 'prisoners' perceptions' and the need to maintain confidence amongst staff. Both managers and staff were sensitive to accusations of individual or institutional racism. Where officers emphasised care, the ability to approach prisoners with humanity, and a willingness to understand different perspectives, levels of trust between all prisoners and officers increased, and the differences between the experiences of members of different ethnic groups within the prison decreased. Lack of 'cultural' engagement produced higher risks and could disrupt the aim of reducing reoffending for particular groups of prisoners.

12. The flow of trust was also structured by religion. Particular ethnic identities interacted with particular faith identities in different ways in each prison. In general, those with either non-white or non-Christian identities had poorer experiences than white Christian prisoners. However, the suspicion through which Muslims, for example, were viewed was moderated by ethnicity. Being Asian generally improved the experiences of Muslim prisoners. On the other hand being black tended to intensify staff suspicions as well as prisoners' perceptions of their unequal treatment.

13. The moral identity as well as professional priorities of Governors mattered in shaping staff attitudes and practices. Almost everything Governors did (including the selection of individual managers for key roles) provided either support for, or undermined, an area or aspect of work. Senior managers could be 'enablers, leaders and catalysts', 'competent-limited', or 'blockers'. Many outstanding staff had leadership qualities, and made a difference, despite not occupying

leadership positions. The best Governors were 'moral dualists' or demonstrated 'high Integrative Complexity' (i.e. were complex thinkers).

14. Prisoners engaged with the research project meaningfully, many approaching the team on wings, or elsewhere in the prison ('are you the guys doing this study of trust?'). Apparently unreachable/'dangerous' prisoners also engaged in meaningful dialogue once convinced that they would be approached as more than their ascribed identity. Many of these prisoners told complex stories of (for example) their past or present propensity to use violence, and (in the case of prisoners regarded as extremists) were poised between confirmation of or disillusionment with their hatred or anger. Positive change was more likely in 'enabling' environments. After we left the two main prison sites, prisoners organised themselves to continue a dialogue, including with staff and managers, about trust.

15. Prisons with more legitimate climates tended to lead to fewer threats to order, and better orientations towards faith (that is, there were fewer attractions presented by faith identities linked to 'political charge'). Combining risk assessment with 'intelligent trust' based on a broad concept of 'emergent personhood', and grounded in knowledgeable relationships, would *reduce* as well as manage risk more effectively. The fieldwork and basic analysis is complete, but further analysis of the qualitative data, and the preparation of publications, is now underway. Several events have been organised with the High Security Directorate and others in NOMS to share and build on the findings.

**Relevant publications:**

**Liebling, A., Armstrong, R., Bramwell, R. and Williams, R.** (2015) 'Locating trust in a climate of fear: religion, moral status, prisoner leadership, and risk in maximum security prisons - key findings'. Final report submitted to ESRC (available from authors).

**Liebling, A.** (2015) 'Appreciative inquiry, generative theory, and the 'failed state' prison', in J. Miller and W. Palacios, (eds) *Qualitative Research in Criminology. Advances in Criminological Theory*. Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick. Vol 20, pp 251-69.

**Liebling, A., Arnold, H., and Straub, C.** (2015) 'Prisons Research Beyond the Conventional: Dialogue, 'Creating Miracles' and Staying Sane in a maximum security prison', Drake, D., Earle, R., & Sloan, J. (eds) *International Handbook of Prison Ethnography*, Palgrave MacMillan.

**Liebling, A., Arnold, H and Straub, C** (2011) *An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve Years On*, London: National Offender Management Service

**Experiencing very long-term imprisonment from young adulthood: identity, adaptation and penal legitimacy**

**Ben Crewe, Susie Hulley and Serena Wright**

At the end of 2010, there were over 2,300 prisoners in England and Wales serving indeterminate sentences of at least 15 years, and in the previous decade, the number of offenders who received a minimum tariff of 15

years or more increased by 240%. In the same period (2003-2012), the average tariff of a mandatory life sentence for murder rose from 12.5 years to 21.1 years. Moreover, these sentences are being more frequently given to prisoners who are barely adult - at the end of 2010, 326 of the 2,300 prisoners serving indeterminate sentences of at least 15 years had entered prison when aged 21 years and under. Accordingly, a growing number of prisoners are serving sentences that, a generation ago, were considered highly unusual and barely survivable.

Yet research into the lived experience of such sentences is sparse. Certainly in the UK, interest in long-term imprisonment has declined a great deal since its heyday in the prisons sociology of the 1970s and 80s. Moreover, since that era, shifts in the nature of imprisonment mean that the experience of incarceration is now deeper, heavier and tighter (more secure, more controlled, more exacting) than it was 30 years ago. This study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, focuses on the lived experience of prisoners serving very long life sentences (i.e. with a tariff of 15 years or more) received when aged 25 or under).

The three primary research questions are as follows:

First, what are the main problems that these prisoners encounter, and in what ways do they cope with them?

Second, how do they adapt socially to the demands of the environment, i.e. on what basis do they form relationships with other prisoners and with prison staff?

Third, how do such extreme sentences shape their perceptions of the prison's legitimacy, with what implications for their adaptation and compliance?

The study adopted a mixed-methods design, involving long interviews with 126 male and 21 female prisoners (around an eighth of the population of interest) and survey data from 294 male prisoners and 19 female prisoners, in 24 institutions overall, of various functions. All participants had been convicted of murder and were serving mandatory life sentences. Interviewees were deliberately sampled so as to reflect different stages of the sentence. The survey drew upon an existing set of 'problem statements', developed by Barry Richards in the 1970s to measure the 'severity' of the difficulties facing long-term prisoners, but was adapted and supplemented in order to reflect the contemporary prison experience.

The emerging findings can be summarised as follows:

1. The survey data give a clear indication of the problems of long-term imprisonment that are experienced as most and least severe by this group of prisoners. Those that are most severe relate primarily to missing others outside prison and feeling that one's life is being lost or wasted; those experienced as least severe are emotional/psychological (e.g. relating to fears about mental health and psychological integrity).

2. The survey data also show that early-phase prisoners generally experience the problems of confinement as being more severe than those further into their sentences. Few of these differences are statistically significant, but there is a clear general pattern of diminishing

severity by stage of sentence. The qualitative data suggest that this is because long-term prisoners, following an initial period of 'entry shock' and 'temporal vertigo', in which adaptive patterns generally involve forms of suppression, denial and sublimation (see Wright, Crewe and Hulley, under review), reflect on their predicament (and the offences they have committed) and seek to establish new identities and forms of existential meaning. Likewise, they establish strategies for managing time (both the 'endless present' and the distant future) and gaining localised forms of control over their lives, which enable them to psychologically survive their extreme predicament. This set of transformations can be summarised as a shift from 'reactive' to 'productive' forms of agency, in which prisoners come to 'swim with the tide' of their predicament, using its energy to their advantage, and focussing primarily on their own psychological and existential development, rather than on social relationships within the prison. Such an adaptive response is not adequately explained by existing concepts such as 'prisonization' and 'institutionalization'. Rather, it is better understood with reference to the *offence-time nexus*, that is: first, the age at which they were sentenced (with its implications for age when released and aspects of a 'life lost'); second, the sentence length itself (with its anticipated and actual psychological weight, and its communication of moral disapproval); and, third, the nature of the offence of murder (with the attendant forms of shame and the moral and existential reflection that it engenders). These factors mediate the relationship between the individual and the institution, disrupting conventional power relations between the prison and the prisoner.

3. Most prisoners feel themselves to be 'maturing' during their sentence in certain

respects (e.g. anger management; tolerance of others). However, this experience of maturation stands in contrast with the perception of time 'out there', or 'social time', which are experienced as having stopped at the point of the sentence.

4. The fact that problem severity does not seem to increase by sentence stage has been interpreted in previous studies as evidence that long-term imprisonment does not have cumulative or deleterious effects. A more plausible interpretation, however, is that long-term prisoners become 'over-adapted' to their environment, so that their core selves are fundamentally altered by the imperatives of their predicament (in ways that may be maladaptive for life after-release). To put this another way, the harms of long term imprisonment result not just from its direct or primary impact, but from the very adaptive or secondary responses that make such sentences survivable

5. The differences between the experiences of male and female prisoners serving very long sentences from an early age are considerable, with female prisoners reporting consistently and significantly higher problem severity.

6. In terms of social adaptations, late-stage prisoners are less loyal to other prisoners, less hostile to staff, and less committed to an 'inmate code' than those in earlier sentence stages. This is theoretically significant, since it would normally be expected that prisoners would become more socialised into an inmate culture as time proceeds, or would be most committed in the mid-phase of the sentence.

7. Despite very common feelings of injustice and resentment among interviewees about

their convictions or sentence lengths, most were highly compliant with their sentence. The majority were resigned to their situation, and to the 'risks of resistance', and few held the prison or its staff responsible for their general predicament. That is, they differentiated between the wider criminal justice system and the prison system specifically.

Overall, these findings represent a significant addition to our understanding of the experiences and adaptations of long-term prisoners, while raising further questions about long-term imprisonment, which have formed the basis for a further research grant application, which would allow the exploration of:

1. The relationships between prisoners serving very long life sentences from an early age and their family members/ 'significant others',
2. The experiences of prisoners serving very long life sentences from late middle age,
3. The experiences of patients serving very long life sentences from an early age who have been transferred during their sentences from prisons to secure psychiatric facilities.

The main impact of the research so far has been written evidence submitted to the Justice Committee's second inquiry on Joint Enterprise, which resulted in Dr Crewe appearing as a witness to the select committee in the Houses of Parliament in September 2014. The Committee's eventual report cited the research extensively. Findings have also been reported at the European Society of Criminology conference, at various seminars at UK universities, and in feedback presentations undertaken with prisoner participants in seven

different prison establishments, attended by around 70 male and female prisoners overall.

The findings from the study will be reported in full in a research monograph to be published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2016.

**Relevant publications:**

**Crewe, B., Hulley, S. and Wright, S.** (under review) 'Adaptations to long-term imprisonment'

**Hulley, S., Crewe, B. and Wright, S.** (2015). Re-examining the problems of long-term imprisonment. *British Journal of Criminology* (advance access published 5 August, 2015. doi:10.1093/bjc/azv077)

**Wright, S., Crewe, B. and Hulley, S.** (under review) 'Suppression, denial, sublimation: early adaptations to long-term imprisonment'

**'MQPL +': Analyses of quality, culture, and values in individual prisons**

During 2011, the PRC team refined a methodology we refer to as 'MQPL +'. This arose in response to an increasing number of requests from individual establishments for a 'cultural and quality' diagnosis, often at short notice. The methodology reflects the way in which we tend to conduct MQPL surveys if we are doing this as part of a larger research project, with added qualitative components.

MQPL+ is an in-depth, intensively-conducted, descriptive analysis of the social environment for staff and prisoners in a prison

establishment, using the conceptually validated version of the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) surveys (also in use by NOMS), alongside detailed observation, and sensitive, appreciative interviews with staff and prisoners. The research exercise is conducted by a highly experienced team of at least six members of the research centre, who spend at least 70 person days in total conducting, analysing and writing up the work. Data analysis is carried out collaboratively, with data from many other prisons in mind, so that any cultural diagnosis of the prison is well informed and fully contextual. The empirical data and the written report provide senior managers with a thorough basis for understanding and improvement, and an assessment of effectiveness and progress. Each study is treated in a cumulative way, adding to our developing expertise in understanding and assessing prison quality and culture. In the last four years, we have conducted MQPL+ exercises at HMPs Brinsford, Birmingham (three times), Aylesbury (three times), Full Sutton (twice), Long Lartin, Frankland, Oakwood, and Brixton. Forthcoming exercises are planned in HMPs Durham and Humber, at the request of NOMS. In addition, the Scottish Prison Service recently commissioned the PRC to conduct a longitudinal quality of life study in their newly opened prison, HMP YOI Grampian. Grampian is the UK's first 'community-facing' prison and holds men, women, and young offenders. Fieldwork for this MQPL+ was conducted in March 2015, and the follow-up exercise will take place in the spring of 2016. Also of note, the PRC team will conduct a first MQPL+ exercise in an Australian prison in Brisbane, Queensland, in October.

Establishment Governors/Directors often request feedback meetings, as well as return visits one year later. These intensive research

exercises are helping us to understand how prisons change over time, the relationship between staff and prisoner quality of life, the relative strengths and weakness of public, private, and benchmarked prisons, and the distinctive characteristics of (for example) high-security prisons and young offender institutions. An increasing number of requests have come to us from international jurisdictions wanting to use or adapt the MQPL survey for reform purposes (e.g. in Spain, Canada, Australia, Kosovo, Sweden, Belgium, and Northern Ireland). We try to support these requests wherever possible.

Analysis of the results is on-going (reports have been written for and distributed to each establishment) and our first MoJ Analytic Summary on the longitudinal study of Birmingham prison was published in July 2015 (see below). This study found that, after an initial decline in quality of life scores, particularly for staff, during the transition, the prison showed signs of positive progression by 2013. Seven prisoner quality of life dimensions improved significantly from 2011 to 2013. These improvements were accomplished against a low baseline. A great deal of work had been done by the Director and senior management team to reach this point. However, significant challenges in the delivery of a constructive regime remained.

We continue to explore the ways in which MQPL+ data can assist us in understanding institutional change trajectories, especially as national policy evolves, benchmarking processes settle in, new challenges arise, and local practices adapt. One area that we are currently examining is the shifting nature of prison officer work. In particular, we are interested in the 'new' ways in which prison

officers manage and distribute power on the wings and with prisoners, and the implications this development has on fairness, legitimacy, and order.

#### **Publications:**

**Liebling, A., Hulley, S. and Crewe, B.** (2011), 'Conceptualising and Measuring the Quality of Prison Life', in Gadd, D., Karstedt, S. and Messner, S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*. London: Sage. (this book chapter describes the initial and on-going development of the MQPL surveys)

**Alison Liebling, Bethany Schmidt, Ben Crewe, Katherine Auty, Ruth Armstrong, Thomas Akoensi, Deborah Kant, Amy Ludlow and Alice levins** (2015) *Birmingham prison: the transition from public to private sector and its impact on staff and prisoner quality of life - a three-year study*. MOJ.

### **The role of the governing governor**

#### **Ben Crewe and Alison Liebling**

Dr Ben Crewe and Professor Alison Liebling continue to undertake interviews with prison governors working in England and Wales, and some other jurisdictions, as part of their study of ***The role of the governor***, commissioned by NOMS. The interviews build on research that they began as part of a previous study in 2007-8, and have effectively continued since that period. The findings from the recent study cover two main areas: first, how governors are feeling about changes to their role, including

reductions in their discretion, an increased emphasis on contract management, and lower levels of staffing; second, what constitutes 'good governing', including the skills, values and orientations that are appropriate to the changing nature of the governing role. Among the key themes emerging from the study are: the complex flows of loyalty between governors and the wider organization; the importance of congruence between organizational values and actions; the perceived relevance of gender and forms of informal patronage in determining career progression; the emotional components of governing, and of supporting governors; the increasing need for relational skills in order to manage contract partners as well as staff sentiments during a time of rapid flux; the difficulties of coping with the increasingly complex demands of the job, including feelings of failure as prison performance becomes harder to maintain; and the value of a form of 'creative compliance' in order to 'get the job done'. The findings are being disseminated, including at the public sector Prison Service governing governors forum, in May 2015, and in a forthcoming article in the *Prison Service Journal*, titled 'Governing governors'.

**Learning Together: what happens when students from universities and prisons learn together?**

**Ruth Armstrong and Amy Ludlow**

Eighteen months ago, Amy Ludlow and Ruth Armstrong were successful in obtaining support from the University's Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund to pilot a new initiative called

*Learning Together* whereby 12 graduate students from the Institute of Criminology study a short course in criminology alongside 12 prisoner students at HMP Grendon. The course began in January, and culminated in the students graduating together in May (see photo below). Together, and led by colleague lecturers and supervisors at the Institute of Criminology, the students explored material ranging from legitimacy to desistance. To successfully complete the course, all students had to write an answer to a reflective essay question, drawing together their personal experience of Learning Together and their new learning about criminal justice theories.

The design and delivery of Learning Together has been research and values led. The aim was to create a space that facilitated and prioritised 'connectedness'. We understand connectedness to be important both for desistance and for learning. Taking desistance first, we know from research that the criminal sanction is stigmatising. Social stigma inhibits desistance by causing marginalisation and closing down our fullest, best potential selves. Intergroup contact theory shows us that when people come together, particularly through a common task, social stigma reduces. Secondly, from an education perspective, Paulo Freire's work, for example, argues that learning which is forged *with*, not *for*, students and which promotes connectedness through its experiential and inclusive orientation, can be experienced as especially nurturing and empowering. Just as space and connections are

important to desistance, 'communities of learning', in which new patterns of behaviour can be acquired and acted out, can help to optimise educational experiences.

Ruth and Amy have interviewed all of the Learning Together students about their experiences of education generally, and of Learning Together specifically, to gain insight about how our aims for, and ideas about the potential of, the course translated into practice. What has emerged is that through connections formed with others on the course, our students developed new perceptions of themselves, of others, and of their possible futures. They described a sense that they had a role to play in shaping these futures. Through shared intellectual endeavours and vulnerabilities, the students connected with themselves and their futures in new ways. As one of the students, Dean, expressed it, he gained 'a sort of undercover confidence, the one little bit to say, I know who I am and I know where I'm going now'. The students described the opening up of new and broader social spaces. As another student, Eugene, described, '[Learning Together] made me realise my world was small. I knew a few people on a few streets. I thought universities and places like that were spaces I couldn't go to. But now I realise I can go there. I can exist outside of my small world.'

Ruth and Amy have been invited to return to Grendon in January 2016, when they will run another Learning Together course, which will take on board lessons learned during the pilot course. The student interviews from the first course have also informed an article that they are writing for the *Prison Service Journal* about what happens when students from universities and prisons learn together. Through their experiences of Learning Together, and by

tracing the history of these sorts of experiential learning encounters between criminologists and people in prison, they are starting to articulate a vision and framework for prison learning that has connectedness at its core. During the next academic year, they will continue to explore the transformative potential of spaces of connectedness in a seminar series they are co-convening with colleagues from the Faculty of Education in Cambridge at CRASSH, called 'The Subversive Good: Disrupting Power and Transcending Inequalities' (<http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/programmes/the-subversive-good>).



## B. POST DOCTORAL and OTHER RESEARCHERS

**Dr Ruth Armstrong** was awarded her PhD in 2013, entitled '*Life After Prison in America's Bible Belt: An ethnography of release from a faith-based prison programme*'. Drawing on desistance theory, it analysed the experiences of 48 men during their first year post-release and described the social contexts and interactions that shaped their lives in four areas: parole supervision, involvement in faith communities, support from faith-based aftercare services, and interactions with volunteers. The thesis won the Nigel Walker Prize, awarded for an outstanding written contribution to the field of Criminology by a member of the University of Cambridge.



Ruth has made two short films, based on the thesis, which highlight the role of trust in the desistance process through looking at the work of volunteer mentors with ex-prisoners. They premiered at the Cambridge Festival of Ideas in October, 2014 and are now freely available on the University of Cambridge You Tube website<sup>5</sup>. They are called 'Jogging with Jody' and 'Jogging with Jody – The Expert's View'. This year Ruth has been awarded further funding through the ESRC Accelerated Impact funding stream to make three more short films about the role of multi-faith chaplaincy teams and faith communities in supporting people through the gate. The films will form part of a short course called 'The Welcome Directory' being piloted by NOMS. The course is designed to capacitate faith communities to work alongside chaplaincy teams to support people leaving prison.

During 2015 Ruth worked on the Transforming Social Sciences 'Trust Project' (see earlier), focussing in particular on the work and experiences of the Offender Management process. This year she has been analysing the data from this project.

Ruth has recently been awarded a British Academy Post-Doctoral Fellowship to expand the implementation and evaluation of the Learning Together course (see earlier), and will be working on this over the next five years.

#### **Publications:**

**Armstrong, R.** and Durnescu, I. (eds) (forthcoming, 2016) *Curtailed freedom: International perspectives of life on parole*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Armstrong, R.** and Maruna, S. (forthcoming, 2016) 'Examining imprisonment through a social justice lens' in *What is justice: reimagining penal policy*, Eds. Steven Farrall, Barry Goldson, Ian Loader and Anita Dockley, London: Routledge.

**Armstrong, R.** (2014) 'Transforming rehabilitation: Can faith-communities help to reduce reoffending?' in *Prison Service Journal*, no. 216: 3-12.

**Armstrong, R.,** Crewe, B. and Gelsthorpe, L. (2014). 'From paper ethics to real world research: supervising risk in research with the 'risky'', in *Reflexivity in criminological research: Experiences with the powerful and the powerless*, Eds. Karen Lumsden and Aaron Winter, London: Palgrave, pp. 207-219.

**Armstrong, R.** (2014). 'Trusting imperfection: The theology, practice and implications of faith-based volunteers' work with ex-prisoners', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 27(3): 258-69.

**Dr Katherine Auty** joined the Prisons Research Centre as Research Associate in 2012, having been a PhD student in Forensic Psychiatry at Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary, University of London. For her PhD research, using data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, she examined the intergenerational transmission of psychopathy, personality disorders and criminal offending.

During her time at the PRC, Katherine has been producing quantitative analysis of the MQPL

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UXpT8Za1g>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_RiP\\_KI77Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_RiP_KI77Q)

and SQL data, and leading the centre's extended MQPL and SQL exercises. Her analytical work has included examining the psychometric properties of the MQPL by looking at its factor structure in different samples of prisoners. It has also involved looking at measurement invariance across male and female prisoner groups, to see if the MQPL captures the same quality of life dimensions in male and female prisoners. Katherine has also been examining the relationships between the MQPL dimension mean scores and proven reoffending rates for every prison in which the MQPL survey is conducted.

Katherine has also been conducting the first systematic review and meta-analysis of the positive effects of yoga and mindfulness mediation in prisons on psychological well-being and behavioural functioning. The findings suggest that there are positive effects of yoga and meditation on both psychological and behavioural functioning of prisoners. The review also recommends that future studies need to employ larger samples, treatment as usual or control groups, and follow-up study participants over longer time periods. This work was recently published in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*.

This year, Katherine has also worked with the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) as the Principal Investigator of a study of rehabilitative culture in eight prisons, which is supported by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The project findings are currently being written up.

#### **Publications:**

**Auty, K.,** Cope, A., Liebling, A. (2015) A Systematic review and meta-analysis of yoga and mindfulness meditation in prison. Effects

on psychological well-being and behavioural functioning. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*.

**Auty, K. M.,** Farrington, D. P., & Coid, J. W. (2015). The validity of self-reported convictions in a community sample: Findings from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development. *European Journal of Criminology*.

**Auty, K. M.,** Farrington, D. P., & Coid, J. W. (2015). Intergenerational transmission of psychopathy and mediation via psychosocial risk factors. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 206(1), 26-31

**Dr Richard Bramwell** was a Research Associate and is now a visiting scholar in the PRC. He is a Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Criminology and Sociology at Kingston University. Richard is a specialist in the sociology of culture and has taught courses on race, ethnicity and postcolonial studies at Birkbeck College, University of London. Richard was awarded his PhD (Sociology) by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in 2012. Richard's book, *UK Hip-Hop, Grime and the City*, examines the aesthetic, cultural and commercial practices of black and white, working-class youths in London. Through a combination of interviews, ethnography and close textual analysis, this interdisciplinary study considers how young men and women use rap to accommodate themselves to their position in the city and investigates how they contest their marginalisation through their collaborative work.

Richard worked as a Research Associate on the 'Trust project' and is now the principal investigator on the AHRC funded project,

*Performing hip-hop Englishness: The performance of alternative British identities through rap.*

This research project focuses on the circulation of rap culture within and beyond social and penal institutions and the impact of rap performances on British identities.

**Publications:**

**Bramwell, R. (2015)** *UK Hip-Hop, Grime and the City: The Aesthetics and Ethics of London's Rap Scenes*. New York and London: Routledge.

**Bramwell, R.** (under review) 'Freedom within bars: Maximum security prisoners' negotiations of identity through rap' *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*.

**Bramwell, R.** (2015) 'Council Estate of Mind: The British Rap Tradition and London's UK Hip-Hop Scene' in Williams, J. A. (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 256-262.

'Behind the Brixton riots' *Guardian/Society* (6th September 2011)  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/06/behind-the-riots-injustice-brixton>

**Dr Amy Ludlow** is a College Lecturer and Fellow at Gonville and Caius College and an Affiliated Lecturer at the Faculty of Law. In these capacities, she teaches EU, labour and criminal law. Amy has continued to develop her interest in prison competition/privatisation, and its staffing and industrial relations impacts, alongside a broader interest in how the ways in which public services are procured can increase social value.

In January 2015, Amy published her thesis as *Privatising Public Prisons: Labour Law and the Public Procurement Process*. The book explores the use of contestability in prisons and its impacts upon social rights, values and identities. It is a case study of HMP Birmingham, the first operational public sector prison in the UK to be transferred into private management. In drawing upon the experiences of Birmingham prison staff, Amy questions whether the law provides an adequate and effective framework within which employment rights can be safeguarded and the promises of competition (such as value for money and innovation) can be fulfilled. The book has been nominated for the Peter Birks Prize for Outstanding Legal Scholarship 2015.

In May 2015, Amy hosted a conference at Trinity College with Catherine Barnard ('Procurement and Precarity', funded by the Cambridge Humanities Research Grant Scheme) to build upon her work on procurement in criminal justice and beyond. She has co-authored an article with Alison Lieblich ('Privatising Public Prisons: Theory, Law and Practice', currently under review for the A&NZJC) to consolidate her work at Birmingham and elsewhere (especially HMPs Oakwood and Grampian, with colleagues) as part of the Prisons Research Centre's 'MQPL+' exercises. As part of a British Academy Rising Stars project at the University of Oxford, Amy is currently examining the ways in which the new public procurement rules have been implemented across EU Member States, with a view to better understanding the scope for added (or protected) social value.

Amy published an edited collection in June this year, *New Frontiers in Empirical Labour Law Research*. The collection is the product of a

conference Amy organised and hosted in April last year, which examined the use of empirical methods to explore labour law issues. She has continued work on her Cambridge Humanities Research Grant Scheme funded empirical labour law project (with Catherine Barnard and Sarah Fraser-Butlin), examining how European migrant workers understand, engage with, and enforce, their labour rights.

Together with RAND and colleagues Bethany Schmidt, Thomas Akoensi and Alison Liebling, Amy successfully bid for the research contract to explore prison staff knowledge, experiences and views of deaths in custody among young prisoners, with a view to better understanding how more deaths could be prevented. In eleven days of fieldwork spanning four weeks, the research team conducted 47 interviews, six focus groups, and intensive participant observation in five prisons in England and Wales. The study is expected to be published shortly by the Ministry of Justice and Amy hosted a roundtable with her PRC and RAND colleagues in September to further explore the issues raised by it.

Finally, together with Ruth Armstrong, Amy has created and delivered a new educational initiative, called Learning Together, details of which are provided above.

#### **Publications:**

**Ludlow, A.** (2015) *Privatising public prisons: Labour law and the public procurement process* Oxford: Hart.

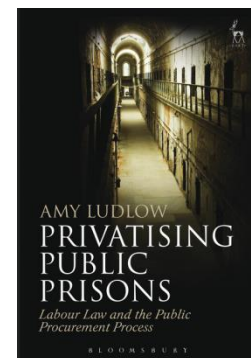
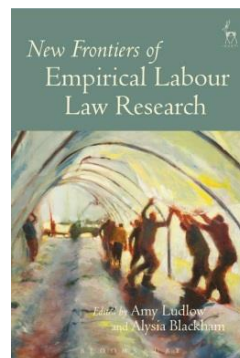
**Ludlow, A.** and Blackham, A. (2015) *New frontiers in empirical labour law research* Oxford: Hart.

**Ludlow, A.**, Schmidt, B., Akoensi, T., Liebling, A., Giacomantonio, C. and Sutherland, A. (forthcoming) 'Self-inflicted deaths in NOMS' custody amongst 18-24 year olds: Staff experience, knowledge and views' London: Ministry of Justice.

Liebling, A. and **Ludlow, A.** (forthcoming, 2015) 'Suicide, distress and the quality of prison life' in Jewkes, Y., Crewe, B. and Bennett, J. (eds) *Handbook on Prisons* Routledge.

Liebling, A. and **Ludlow, A.** (under review) 'Privatising public prisons: Theory, law and practice'

Barnard, C. and **Ludlow, A.** (under review) 'Enforcement of employment rights by EU-8 migrant workers in employment tribunals'.



**Dr Ryan J. Williams** has a PhD in Divinity from the University of Cambridge (2012) and joined the Prisons Research Centre in 2013 as Co-Investigator with Professor Alison Liebling for an ESRC project on 'Trust, prisoner leadership and risk in maximum security prisons'. Trained in religious studies and the sociology of religion, Ryan's current interests lie in the intersection of Islamic identities and the negotiations of the moral self and belonging within post-Christian contexts and secular security practices.

In January 2015 he was awarded a Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada Post-Doctoral Fellowship based at the University of Calgary, where he is now collaborating on a book based on his UK field research with Alison Liebling, Ruth Armstrong and Richard Bramwell, whilst teaching in the areas of the sociology of religion, including courses on religion, conflict and peacebuilding.

Ryan is a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, and he has informed policy and research internationally, including advising the UK Home Office and NATO on issues related to the religious identity and security.

**Publications:**

**Williams, Ryan J.** and Ruparell T. (2014) On being in the middle: Interreligious dialogue and network centrality. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. 29(3). 1-19.

**Williams, Ryan J.** and Watts, F. N. (2014) Attributions in a spiritual healing context: An archival analysis of a 1920s healing movement. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 53(1): 90-108.

**Williams, Ryan J.** (2013) Network hubs and opportunity for complex thinking among young British Muslims. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 52(3): 573-595.

**Dr Serena Wright** joined the PRC in October 2012 and is a Research Associate on the project 'Experiencing very long term imprisonment from young adulthood: identity, adaptation and penal legitimacy' (see above), with a particular interest in the early years and patterns of adaptation adopted by young men and women facing extraordinarily long sentences. She also contributes to the MSt in Applied Criminology, Penology and Management as a supervisor and occasional lecturer, and has given a number of invited presentations and guest lectures. These include: a session on 'doing research in prison' for Masters students at the University of Surrey; a lecture on life imprisonment for undergraduate students at the University of Portsmouth; a joint session with Dr Isla Masson on women in prison at Coventry University's *Prisons Week*; and a lecture on women's offending across the life course and 'frustrated desistance' for a one-day conference at Liverpool Hope University. Serena is also involved with the work of the *Centre for Community, Gender and Social Justice*, based within the Institute. Her interest in the gendered sociology of imprisonment is underpinned by her doctoral research, entitled 'Women's 'persistent' and 'prolific' offending across the life-course: Chronic recidivism and frustrated desistance'. Along with Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe, Dr Caroline Lanskey, and

Jane Dominey, she is organising a one-day conference, scheduled for March 2016, focused on 'Delivering community and social justice in an age of austerity'.

**Publications:**

**Wright, S.**, Crewe, B. and Hulley, S. (under review). Suppression, denial, sublimation: Adapting to the early phase of very long life sentences.

Sloan, J. and **Wright, S.** (2015). 'Going in green': Reflections on the challenges of 'getting in, getting on, and getting out' for doctoral prisons researchers. In D. Drake, R. Earle and J. Sloan [Eds.] *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography*, (pp.143-163). Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.

Gelsthorpe, L. and **Wright, S.** (2015). The context: Women as law-breakers. In J. Annison, J. Brayford and J. Deering [Eds]. *Women and the criminal justice: From the Corston Report to Transforming Rehabilitation*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Jewkes, Y. and **Wright, S.** (in press) 'Researching the prison'. In Y. Jewkes, B. Crewe and J. Bennett [Eds]. *Handbook on Prisons* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed]. New York: Routledge.

**Julie Laursen** was a Visiting Scholar in the PRC from January 2015 to June 2015. She is a third year PhD fellow in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Aalborg, Denmark. Her PhD project is a critical examination of prison-based cognitive-behavioural (Cognitive Skills & Anger Management) programs in Danish prisons. Her research methods consist of ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews and

participant observation in four different cognitive-behavioural programmes. Her aim is to explore the normative content of the programs and how this is played out in relation to gender, class and ethnicity.

During her time as a visitor, Julie published an article in Danish on perceptions of violence in Anger Management and is currently co-authoring an article with Ben Laws which considers how prisoners' subcultural capital shapes their responses to demands for 'cognitive self-change'. The article examines how the open expressions of moral values by prisoners (such as displays of honour, dignity and respect) are considered to be *cognitive distortions* which are dismissed by instructors, while alternative and 'correct' thinking styles are prescribed. Julie also participated in meetings, conferences and lectures, including the 'Learning Together' pilot project in HMP Grendon, a visit to the PIPE unit in HMP Wayland, and the MQPL+ exercise in April 2015.

**C.PHD STUDENTS**

*The social experiences of sex offenders in prison*  
**Alice Ievins**

Alice is a third year PhD student, exploring the social experiences of prisoners convicted of sexual offences. This qualitative study is based on in-depth qualitative research at HMP Stafford, a Category-C prison which exclusively holds adult men convicted of sex offences. Alice has spent six months conducting fieldwork in Stafford, where she has explored the social dynamics on two residential wings. She has conducted fifty long qualitative interviews with prisoners, interviewed ten staff members, and

spent long period of time in all areas of the prison, observing life, talking to and shadowing staff and prisoners, and sitting in on meetings of the Prisoner Council.

This project builds on Alice's MPhil dissertation at HMP Whatton, which found that there are significant differences in how sex offenders and mainstream prisoners experience imprisonment. This project takes these findings further, exploring how prisoners manage their identities against the pressure of their stigmatisation and shame. It also considers forms of social relationships among prisoners, in particular focusing on the extent to which they judge each other as sex offenders, and how this interacts with their personal processes of identity management. Finally, it explores prisoners' attitudes towards and interactions with the institution, including their perceptions of legitimacy, their relationships with staff, and the extent to which they comply and engage with the regime. This study explores the experiences of a significant and growing population within the prison system, one which has hitherto been neglected by sociological studies of imprisonment. It will also suggest potential connections between prisoners' prison experiences, their engagement in treatment and the desistance process.

**Publications:**

**levins, A.** (2014) 'Living among sex offenders: Identity, safety and relationships at HMP Whatton', *The Howard League for Penal Reform*.

**levins, A.** and Crewe, B. (in press) "'Nobody's better than you, nobody's worse than you": Moral community among prisoners convicted of sexual offences', *Punishment and Society*.

Crewe, B. and **levins, A.** (2015) 'Closeness, distance and honesty in prison ethnography', in D.H. Drake, R. Earle and J. Sloan (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 124-142).

***Under threat? A social and occupational history of prison officers***  
**Deborah Kant**

Deborah is in the final year of her PhD, supervised by Professor Alison Liebling. Her research explores the personal and professional narratives of prison officers recruited between the 1970s and the present, in order to explore the relationship between officers' identities and their experiences of organisational change within the Prison Service.

Previous research (for example Liebling 2008; Crawley 2004) has shown that prison officers share certain occupational traits such as a sense of camaraderie and social cohesion, an appreciation of humour and 'straight talk', as well as a cynical outlook, sense of nostalgia for a shared past, and mistrust of people outside their group. However, research has also shown that there are distinct 'schools' of officers, whose philosophies affect their approaches to care, punishment, management, etc. (see, for example, Tait 2008). Deborah's research explores this distinction in order to answer the question of whether there is an 'essential prison officer', or whether the professional role and self-definition of uniformed staff can be shown to have developed within the context of changing ideologies of punishment, and the cultural norms of individual establishments.

Adopting a mixture of semi-ethnographic and biographical research methods, with uniformed

staff, managers, and prisoners, Deborah has conducted seven months of fieldwork at two large and busy men's Category B local prisons, one located in the North of England and one in the South. Preliminary analysis suggests that while different generations of prison officers hold distinctive attitudes and approaches toward their work, the geography and culture of their establishment may be more powerful in influencing their professional identities and how they behave in practice.

**Publications:**

Liebling, A. and **Kant, D.** (in press) 'The Two Cultures: Correctional Officers and Key Differences in Institutional Climate', in J. Wooldredge and P. Smith (eds) *The Oxford Handbook on Prisons and Imprisonment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

***Emotions in prison: an exploration of space, emotion regulation and expression***

**Ben Laws**

Ben is a first year PhD student, being supervised by Dr. Ben Crewe. This year he has been developing a research framework for his ESRC-funded study, which aims to investigate the ways in which prisoners regulate their emotions under conditions of confinement, using a combination of research methods (principally, semi-structured interviews and prisoner shadowing). The aim of the research is, in part, to find out more about the emotional 'survivability' of different prisons and to help ensure that prisons are positive, secure and safe environments for managing offenders. Ben plans to undertake fieldwork in HMP Send (a

closed category women's prison in Surrey) and HMP Ranby (a Category C men's prison in Nottinghamshire) in the coming academic year. His PhD research builds on his MPhil dissertation, which has been short-listed for the Howard League for Penal Reform's Jon Sunley prize, which celebrates 'excellence and impact of post graduate research into penal issues'.

**Publications:**

Crewe, B. and **Laws, B.** (forthcoming) 'Subcultural adaptations to incarceration', in J. Wooldredge and P. Smith (eds) *The Oxford Handbook on Prisons and Imprisonment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Laws, B.** and Crewe, B. (under review) 'Emotion regulation among male prisoners'.

Laursen, J. and **Laws, B.** (in preparation) 'Honour and respect in Danish prisons: contesting 'cognitive distortions' in offender behaviour programs'.

***Faith, race and gangs behind bars***

**Dev Maitra**

Dev is a third year ESRC-funded PhD student, being supervised by Professor Alison Liebling. His research examines the interaction between street gangs and prison gangs in the North-West of England. Dev's fieldwork into this study of gangs (primarily in Manchester and Salford) is in progress, based in HMPs Manchester, Forest Bank and various voluntary organisations in the community. His PhD is an ethnographic study which includes: observations of daily life in gang affected areas; interviews with prisoners (gang-affiliated, non-gang affiliated and members of organised crime groups); interviews with prison officers and members of prison management; interviews with police; and



interviews with other key informants, including youth workers, volunteers and street-criminals. His particular interests are in analysing gangs and organised crime groups in the North-West, their effects on daily prison life, and the strategies that are employed by prisons to lessen their influence. Dev also intends to explore the links between the changing cultural composition of Britain and the prison environment. In addition to his PhD research, Dev has delivered lectures at Anglia Ruskin University and seminars at Cambridge University (Trinity Hall), both in relation to gangs and criminology more generally.

***The experiences of former military service personnel in prison in England and Wales***  
**Daniel Packham**

Daniel has continued to work on his PhD part-time at the institute, studying the experience of imprisonment amongst UK ex-military personnel, while working full-time as a researcher for the Ministry of Justice. In particular, he is interested in military identity and culture and how these might impact on later criminal behaviour and broader conceptions of power, authority and the state. He has obtained approval from the NOMS National Research Council (NRC) to access prison establishments in order to undertake fieldwork, and will be starting his fieldwork in coming months.

In his work at the Ministry of Justice, outside his role as a student but related to his doctoral research, Daniel has provided analytical support to an independent review of ex-military personnel in the criminal justice system launched by the Secretary of State for Justice and led by the MP Stephen Phillips QC. This

involved conducting a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of the available evidence of what works in rehabilitating ex-military offenders, and was published in December 2014.

Lyne, C. and **Packham, D.** (2014). *The Needs of Ex-Service Personnel in the Criminal Justice System: A Rapid Evidence Assessment*, London: Ministry of Justice

***Democratizing democracy: Re-imagining prisoners as citizens through participatory governance***  
**Bethany Schmidt**

Bethany is soon to complete her PhD, supervised by Professor Alison Liebling. She studies the work of the non-profit organization *User Voice* and its ex-offender-led prison deliberative democratic council model. Her research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine and understand the processes at work when a prison-based council, which aims to give a voice to prisoners in order to facilitate collaborative problem-solving with staff, is established in the prison environment. Three English prisons with *User Voice* councils were selected for observation and Bethany has continued her fieldwork within them, including the collection and analysis of MQPL and SQL data (Measuring the Quality of Prison Life for prisoners and staff). Her focus is on the impact of democratic participation on institutional life, staff and prisoners' perceptions of procedural justice, legitimacy, and how these intersect with humane care, decency, and order.

This research is producing important evidence in support of a prison-based cooperative and co-producing council model that assists prisoners in developing civil dispositions through democratic engagement. The data suggest that fostering democratic principles in the prison setting has the potential to ‘civilize’ individuals and institutional practices, and more closely align them with democratic virtues that endorse community, trust, and dialogical work towards collectivist objectives. This study illustrates how the de-civilizing process of incarceration can, in some ways, be diminished or mitigated, through the establishment of a normative pattern of civic reciprocity through responsibility and inclusion. For prisoners, council participation promotes civic skills, positive identity transformation, and encourages responsibility within their ‘community’. This in turn strengthens penal legitimacy through fair proceedings and justifiable decision-making. Re-enfranchising prisoners through forms of participatory governance and agential engagement could therefore lessen exclusion and marginalization and in turn, strengthen civic culture and democratic character.

In addition to her PhD, along with colleagues from the University of Strathclyde and Queen’s University Belfast, Bethany has been awarded a £70,000 contract to evaluate *User Voice’s* Through-the-Prison-Gate Custody to Community Council project. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the implementation, operation, and short-term outcomes of a pilot study of six prison-based and three probation-based user councils across England, adopting the *User Voice* through-the-gate council model of prisoner/service user participation and

integration. In partnership with colleagues at DIGNITY (the Danish Institute Against Torture), Bethany will also shortly be undertaking a pilot study of the quality of life in Tunisian prisons. This research will focus on developing ways to conceptualise and assess the social and moral climate within prisons in this transitioning nation. The study will explore several aspects of prison life in Tunisia, pre- and post-revolution, with the aim of developing a narrative portrait of prison life from the perspective of prisoners and staff, which will inform planned reform activities and further research.

#### **Publications:**

**Schmidt, B.E.** (2013) ‘User Voice and the Prison Council Model: A summary of key findings from an ethnographic exploration of participatory governance in three English prisons’, *Prison Service Journal* 209: 12-17.

Ludlow, A., **Schmidt, B.E.**, Akoensi, T., Liebling, A., Giacomantonio, C. and Sutherland, A. (2015) ‘Self-inflicted deaths in NOMS’ custody amongst 18-24 year olds: Staff experience, knowledge and views’. Study commissioned by Harris Review.

**Schmidt, B.E.** (in press, *British Journal of Community Justice*) ‘Revisiting “Whose side are we on?”: Values, allegiances, and politics in prisons research’.

**Schmidt, B.E.** (under review, *Punishment & Society*) ‘Imprisonment and civility: Developing democratic character despite disenfranchisement’.

***Philosophy in Prisons: A grounded theory in personal development***  
**Kirstine Szifris**

Kirstine is a final year PhD student, being supervised by Professor Alison Liebling. She recently completed her data collection for her PhD research, which involved delivering two 12-week courses in Philosophy in HMP Grendon and HMP Full Sutton respectively – establishments with very different cultures, which have required her to use a range of skills to negotiate relationships with prisoners and develop a Community of Philosophical Inquiry, particularly in a high security environment. The courses are based on the principles of Socratic Dialogue and involve asking participants to engage in collaborative conversation around a variety of topics. The course covers Kantian and utilitarian moral philosophies, and ideas around identity (grounded in the work of Hume, Descartes and Arendt), questions of how one *ought* to live (taking in the ideas of the Stoics and Socrates), as well as looking at broader questions such as *What is art?* (based on the work of Hegel, Plato and Iris Murdoch).

In addition to her PhD work, Kirstine has been awarded £5000 from the Royal Institute of Philosophy to pilot philosophy sessions in the North-West working with Dr Nigel Hems, from Manchester Metropolitan University. She is also assisting Professor Bill Brewer and Mike Coxhead at Kings College, London in their project to deliver Philosophy in prisons in the London area. Such collaborative activity is indicative of a growing enthusiasm for this sort of work in prisons and an appetite for a different type of educational model in the participating prisons.

In the coming year, Kirstine will be concentrating on writing up her PhD thesis and feeding back findings to participants and the wider prison community.

#### **Publications:**

**Szifris, K (2014).** *'Philosophy in Low Moss prison: Evaluating the impact and relevance of teaching philosophy in prisons'*, Report for the Scottish Prison Service

***The role of self-empowerment in the process of human flourishing in prison***  
**Fabio Tartarini**

Fabio is a final year PhD student, supervised by Dr Ben Crewe, looking at the process of human flourishing within prison and the specific role of self-empowerment in determining human flourishing. In the research literature, human flourishing is defined as the experience of life going well, and is seen as the combination of feeling emotionally positive and functioning effectively, in psychological and social terms. Self-empowerment is the result of positive thinking, hopefulness, internal locus of control (i.e. the perception of being in control of one's own life), and self-efficacy (i.e. the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments). The importance of researching human flourishing lies in its potential to positively affect the process of rehabilitation: where offenders are able to lead satisfactory and fulfilling life, they are less likely to reoffend (Laws and Ward 2011).

This research represents the first 'short longitudinal' and systematic exploration of the process of human flourishing in prison. The first part of the fieldwork began in May 2015, in a local men's prison in England. Through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, its aim is to further understand the process of human flourishing in prison, including what prisoners define as human flourishing, how the

prison experience affects this definition (compared to prisoners' definitions both before coming to prison and as projected into the future, once released), and what types of social, psychological, and structural factors can support or hinder this process.

The second part of the fieldwork seeks to discover what changes in prisoners' lives can affect the process of human flourishing in prison. The aim of this stage is to compare prisoners' current experiences of prison with those described in the first stage of research. This comparison will lead to the identification of those factors that have supported or hindered the process of human flourishing, and will provide a further opportunity to investigate prisoners' understanding and conception of the process and its effects on their life choices within prison (e.g. in relation to the rehabilitation process and the engagement with courses, programmes, work, etc.). The research will inform theory and practice relating to rehabilitation, as well as helping to identify the kinds of prison environments which are conducive to personal growth. Further theoretical interest lies in specifying the connections between human flourishing and desistance.

Fabio has also been working as a research assistant for a series of scoping studies on Restorative Justice by Restorative Solutions CIC. These projects aim to identify the current levels of provision across different Criminal Justice agencies, assess future demand for restorative practices, identify current gaps in provision and develop good practice guidelines. This work has involved research design, conducting interviews and focus groups with CJS practitioners, and

writing guidance documents for practitioners adopting ad-hoc models of Restorative Justice. This research stream follows from the increased support of the Ministry of Justice of the development and delivery of restorative justice services in England and Wales.

#### **D. OTHER ACTIVITIES**

In February, members of the Prisons Research Centre participated in a 'Cross Channel Prison Research' event in Brussels, a knowledge exchange between the PRC and the Penalty and Society research group at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Over two days, members of the two research centres presented papers based on their research and participated in open discussions about the nature, conduct and ethos of prison research, and how to support it.

Professor Alison Liebling has been appointed, alongside Professors Shadd Maruna and Lesley McAra, as one of the new editors of the Oxford Handbook of Criminology, the 6th edition of which is due to be published in Spring 2017.

Alison Liebling was honoured to be invited to give the Roger Hood Annual Lecture at Oxford University's Centre for Criminology in June 2015<sup>6</sup>. Together with Ryan Williams, she presented findings from the Trust project to the Metropolitan police at a specially convened research seminar in June 2015, and at the British Academy in March 2015. She very happily became a Trustee of the Butler Trust in 2014, precipitating a day long educational event for over 200 Governors and others between the Prisons Research Centre, the Institute's MSt programme and the Butler Trust in September 2015 to mark the relationship between Home

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.crim.ox.ac.uk/event=13439>

Secretary Rab Butler, and the formation of the Institute<sup>7</sup>.

### E. OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS

From September 2015, Dr Ben Crewe will be starting a five-year, €2million European Research Council project, titled ***Penal policymaking and the prisoner experience: a comparative analysis***. The aim of the research is to compare penal politics and experiences in England and Wales, and one of the Nordic countries, in light of prevailing assumptions about the relative mildness of punishment practices in the latter compared to those in more ‘neo-liberal’ political economies, such as the UK. The primary research questions are:

- What do ‘inclusionary’ (or ‘social-democratic’) and ‘exclusionary’ (or ‘neo-liberal’) punishment systems look like in practice?
- How are they experienced?
- Can such terms withstand empirical scrutiny?

A key aim of the project is to develop and employ a framework which will enable a more nuanced analysis of the texture and experience of imprisonment than has been employed in existing attempts to compare penal systems. The framework will draw on ideas of ‘depth’, ‘weight’, ‘tightness’ and ‘breadth’ which have been developed in ongoing work within the Prisons Research Centre. The overall project comprises four sub-studies of: (a) Penal policymaking & the penal field (b) the experiences of female prisoners and imprisoned sex offenders (c) processes and experiences of entry into and release from prison (d) ‘Deep-

end custody’. Each sub-study will be undertaken in the two jurisdictions within the study, by a team of four researchers overall.

### F. APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

Jason Warr has been appointed to a Lectureship in Criminology at the University of Lincoln

Thomas Akoensi has been appointed to a Lectureship in Criminology at the University of Kent

Dr Richard Bramwell has been appointed to a Lecturer in Sociology at Kingston University

Dr Ben Crewe has been promoted to a University Readership in Penology, from October 2015

Bethany Schmidt has been appointed to the post of Research Associate in the Prisons Research Centre, from January 2016. Her role will involve project management responsibilities for the conduct and development of ‘outreach’ MQPL+ activities, including international projects, and other projects which form part of the overall research activities of the Prisons Research Centre. The aim of the post is to maximise the Centre’s efforts to diagnose and describe prison cultures, and to conceptualise, understand and measure changing aspects of the quality of prison life.

### G. MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

**Crewe, B.** and **Ievins, A.** (2015) ‘Closeness, distance and honesty in prison ethnography’, in D.H. Drake, R. Earle and J. Sloan (eds.) *The*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.butlertrust.org.uk/putting-research-into-practice/>

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Jewkes, Y., Bennett, J. and **Crewe, B.** (eds.)  
(forthcoming) *The Handbook on Prisons* (second  
edition) London: Routledge.

**Crewe, B.** and **Liebling, A.** (in press) 'Staff  
culture, authority and prison violence', *Prison  
Service Journal*.

**Crewe, B.** and **Liebling, A.** (in press) 'Governing,  
Governing Governors, and governing Governing  
Governors', *Prison Service Journal*

**Crewe, B.** (2015) 'Inside the belly of the beast:  
understanding and conceptualising the  
experience of imprisonment', in Tubex, H. and  
Eriksson, A. (eds) *The International Journal for  
Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 4(1), 50-65

**Crewe, B., Liebling, A.,** Padfield, N. and Virgo, G.  
(2015) 'Joint Enterprise: the implications of an  
unfair and unclear law', *Criminal Law Review*  
Issue 4, 252-269

**Crewe, B., Liebling, A.,** and **Hulley, S.** (2014)  
'Staff-prisoner relationships, staff  
professionalism and the use of authority in  
public and private sector prisons', *Law and  
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**Crewe, B., Liebling, A.** and **Hulley, S.** (2014)  
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'weight' of imprisonment', *British Journal of  
Sociology* 65 (3), p387-410.

**Crewe, B.** and **Laws, B.** (in press) 'Subcultural  
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and P. Smith (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of  
Prisons and Imprisonment*. Oxford: Oxford  
University Press.

**Liebling, A.** (2015) 'A new 'ecology of cruelty'?  
The changing shape of maximum security  
custody in England and Wales' in Keramet, R.  
and Koenig, A. *Extraordinary Punishment: An  
Empirical Look at Administrative Black Holes in  
the United States, the United Kingdom, and  
Canada*. Palgrave MacMillan. (pp. 91-113)

**Liebling, A.** (2015) 'Description at the edge? I-It  
/ I-Thou Relations and Action in Prisons  
Research', *International Journal for Crime,  
Justice and Social Democracy* 4 (1) 18:32.

**Liebling, A.** and Costa, J. (in press) 'Being  
human as a method and research finding in  
social science' in Coffman, D. (eds) *Festschrift  
for Jonathan Steinberg*, Palgrave Macmillan

**Liebling, A.** (in press) 'High Security prisons in  
England and Wales: Principles and practice', in  
Jewkes, Y., Bennett, J. and Crewe, B. (eds.)  
(forthcoming) *The Handbook on Prisons* (second  
edition) London: Routledge.

**Liebling, A.** and **Ludlow, A.** (in press) 'Suicide,  
Distress and the Quality of Prison Life' in  
Jewkes, Y., Crewe, B. and Bennett, J. (eds)  
*Handbook on Prisons* Routledge.

**Liebling, A.** and **Ludlow, A.** (under review)  
'Privatising public prisons: Theory, law and  
practice'