

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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Special Edition
Reducing Prison Violence

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Editorial Comment

Dr Ruth Mann is Head of Evidence and Jeannine Hendrick is Head of Violence Reduction, National Offender Management Service.

Reducing prison violence is a priority issue for the National Offender Management Service. Although violence in prisons has increased recently, we are determined that violence is not going to be the new norm. This Special Issue of the Prison Service Journal represents our commitment to using evaluation and research in order to understand what causes prison violence, what works in reducing prison violence, and equally importantly, what doesn't work. It also represents our commitment to sharing and spreading best practice, working collaboratively, and talking openly about the challenges we face.

It is clear from the contributions to this Special Issue that there is no single cause of prison violence. It is too simplistic to say that prison violence is 'caused by' drugs or bullying or debt or imported vulnerabilities or poor relationships with staff. As the articles in this Special Issue show, all of these things are part of the complex interplay of people, places, cultural norms and relationships that can result in prison violence.

When there are multiple causes to a problem, it is unlikely that a single solution will solve the problem, and we believe this is true of prison violence. However, running through many of the articles is a strong theme of staff prisoner relationships and prison culture. As Ben Crewe and Alison Liebling explain, safe and decent prisons are characterised by staff who blend two important qualities: they treat others with respect and they have legitimate authority. Respect without authority leaves prisoners feeling unsafe; authority without respect leaves prisoners feeling aggrieved. The recent escalation in prison violence that Philip Dent and colleagues describe has accelerated existing plans to develop more rehabilitative cultures in prison; the article by Jenny Tew and colleagues explains what this term means, and how culture change is being implemented within the High Security Estate in England and Wales. Making our prisons more rehabilitative involves recognising the positive power potential of all those working in prisons, especially in terms of modelling appropriate behaviour, such as encouragement, understanding, empathy, honesty, and integrity. Through these behaviours, and by making every contact matter, staff can create transformational relationships. To quote from the article by Gooch, Trent and Treadwell, while it is necessary to have the right

quantity of staff for a prison to be safe, 'it is the quality of the relationships and the willingness of staff to be active, present, caring and engaged that makes the difference'.

Staff can also play a transformative role by helping prisoners better manage the inevitable volatility that arises when large numbers of people live together in enforced proximity. As Kimmett Edgar explains, based on a large-scale study of prisoner conflict and violence, respect is a precious commodity in prison. When respect is felt to be missing, the escalation of conflict follows a fairly predictable script, which tends to end in violence. The number of violent incidents linked to 'recreation' in Philip Dent's article is testament to this pattern of poor conflict management between peers in prison. However, this kind of violence is not usually instant, and so there are opportunities to change the script and find a different method for settling the conflict and restoring mutual respect. This has led us to decide, within the violence reduction project, to pilot and evaluate some approaches to training prisoners and staff in conflict resolution skills.

Some of the apparent causes of violence that most tax prison staff and managers are drugs (especially the new synthetic drugs), gangs, debt and bullying. While these issues are closely linked, we wanted to address them in different articles in order to bring out some important points. For instance, Michael Wheatley explains the psychopharmacology of New Psychoactive Substances and how, for some people who take NPS, agitation can easily escalate into aggression, making it vital that we respond quickly and calmly to those in need of urgent medical help. Alan Hammill and Rebecca Newby point out the relevance of research into debt in society more generally. People who get into debt share certain psychological characteristics and helping them overcome these tendencies is as important in targeting prison debt as closing down on the lenders. Similarly, Kate Gooch and colleagues suggest that we can reduce bullying not just by targeting the bullies (although this is unarguably important) but also by enabling those who are victimised by others to discover confidence and resilience. For gang members too, gaining confidence and pleasure in a new pro-social identity, such as the identity of a husband, father or successful employee, is a prerequisite to being able to separate oneself from

the protection of a gang, as explained by Chris Dean and colleagues in their article on gang membership and violence in prisons. High levels of drug use, bullying, extortion and gang membership are as much symptoms as causes of an unsafe prison. It seems that the solutions to all of these problems may lie in providing opportunities for prisoners to try out new identities, have a voice, help others, work collaboratively with the staff, and develop self-respect and hope based on achievements other than the physical domination of others.

This *PSJ* Issue also contains a group of articles describing individual tools that can be part of a holistic violence reduction strategy. A healthy self-assessment of each prison's patterns of violence, and its strategies for violence management, should be the starting point for a systematic approach to tackling violence. We have a long tradition of providing high-quality cognitive skills programmes in England and Wales, and Fiona Williams' article reports the good news that these programmes should impact on prison violence as much as they do on reoffending. Mindfulness is another component in the suite of psychological interventions to improve emotional regulation, and Steven Gillespie's interesting article explains the neuropsychological benefits of mindfulness training for people with a propensity to violence.

In the last article, David Scott, a criminologist and prison abolitionist, sets out the abolitionist view that imprisonment is inherently dehumanising and damaging. We included this article, even though it does not present solutions to prison violence in the same way that the other articles do, because we found it a thought-provoking read that led to valuable discussion between the two of us. We believe it is important not to shy away from the inherent problems of imprisonment but to understand them and work to

mitigate their effects as much as we possibly can. David's graphic descriptions of the indignities that can occur during imprisonment are an important reminder that prisons are places of pain.

Prisons are places of pain. They contain large numbers of troubled individuals, living together in close proximity, who lack autonomy over the smallest things in their lives, like replacing a toilet roll. All the people who live and work in prisons are concerned about violence. Indeed, this fact is one of our greatest opportunities: everyone who has a stake in prisons wants them to be places that are calm and safe. Not places of luxury but places of decency, where prisoners have the opportunity and the headspace to learn new skills, reflect on their futures, and develop new identities, without having to live in fear or feeling they have to resort to physical attack to gain respect or get themselves heard. So we don't believe that prisons must always and only be places of pain. We believe that prisons can also be places of reflection, hope and opportunity, even transformation.

We are extremely grateful to all the contributors to this special issue for their willingness to share their knowledge, reflect on the evidence, and suggest actions that should reduce prison violence. If there is one over-arching message, it is how essential it is to treat everyone who lives and works in prisons as individuals, in the whole, always believing in their potential to change, not writing people off, even if they are prolific offenders continually circling in and out through the revolving door. And we must finish by emphasising that prison violence is not a prison-centric issue. What happens in prison doesn't stay in prison, but is an issue for society.

We hope you find this Special Issue useful and thought-provoking.

Understanding Prison Violence Trends and Correlates

Philip Dent, David Dorrell and Philip Howard are based in Planning and Analysis Group, NOMS.

Introduction

Violent incidents in prisons have increased. In 2014 there were 16,196 assault incidents in prisons in England and Wales, representing an increase of 10 per cent compared to 2013. Similarly there were 2,145 serious assaults, representing an increase of 35 per cent on 2013.

The headline statistics are stark but they cover up a complex picture of interacting drivers that are impacting on the prison system. These numbers cover both public and private prisons, male and female, adult and juvenile. They also cover a broad range of different types of incident; prisoner-on-prisoner, prisoner-on-staff and fights involving multiple perpetrators. Simple breakdowns of the figures reveal intriguing patterns.

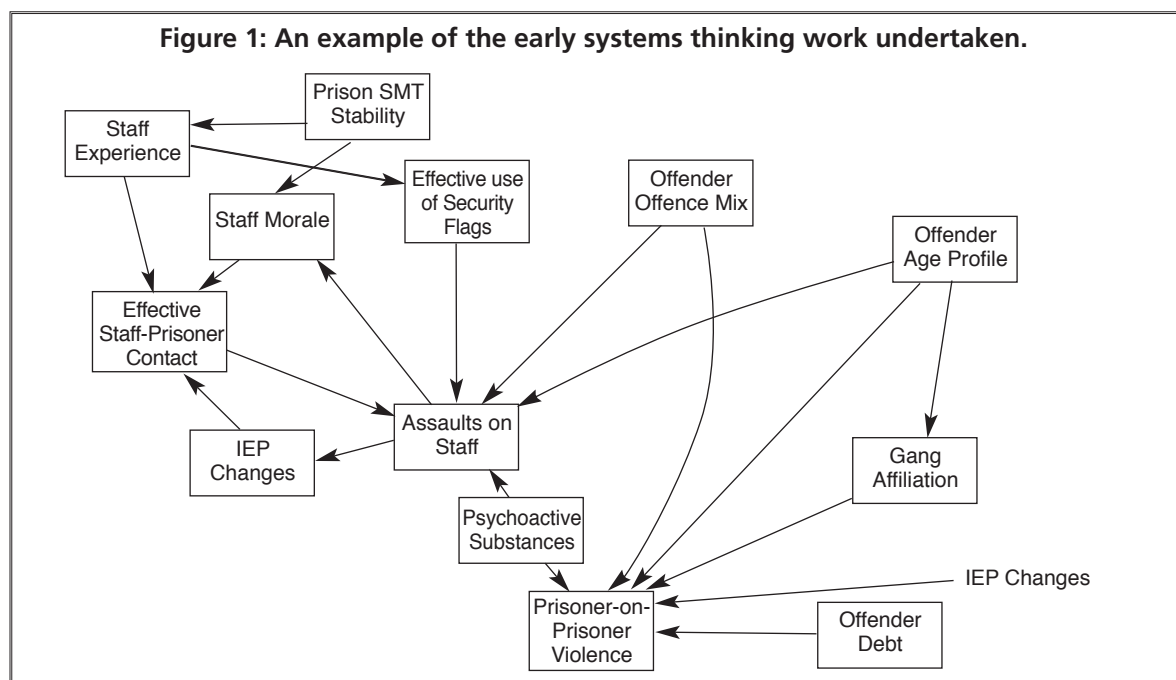
For example, if we breakdown the trend in the number of assaults by the age of youngest prisoner involved in the incident, we see that the level of assaults where the youngest person involved was aged between 18 and 20 years old has remained broadly unchanged at around 3,000 incidents a year over the last 10 years. The number of assaults involving 15 to 17 year olds has fallen by over 50 per cent from its peak in 2009 to 1,479 assault incidents in 2014. This fall in the 15 to 17

year old age group has been driven by the fall in the number of 15 to 17 year olds held in prison custody, and does not present any evidence in itself of this age group becoming less violent.

This exemplifies the challenge of understanding what is driving the increase in assaults in prison — there are multiple drivers, many of which interact with each other. We therefore decided to take a more nuanced approach to our analysis of this problem.

Modelling and Analysis

The first stage of our analysis involved collecting and collating the ideas and hypotheses of what might be driving the increase in violence in prisons. We spoke to senior managers in headquarters and operational staff from prisons. There was no shortage of ideas and we consolidated these into a map using systems thinking. This kind of approach is used widely in both the public and private sectors to gain a shared view on how a complex system fits together.¹ Its particular strength is its ability to clearly set out the interactions between system drivers and also identify reinforcing loops. The figure below represents a simplified section of our systems thinking work.



1. For example, please see the Munro Review of Child Protection.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175407/TheMunroReview-Part_one.pdf

The next step for us was to systematically analyse the available data to test the relationships set out. We decided to structure our analysis across three tiers:

- ❑ Incident level — When and where are incidents happening? Why do they occur?
- ❑ Perpetrator level — Who are committing the assaults? Are there common characteristics?
- ❑ Prison level — What factors influence the differing levels of assaults we see across prisons?

Incident analysis

The most significant source of data on violent incidents is the Incident Reporting Module in Prison NOMIS. Along with numerous fields of categorical data such as the date, time and location of the assault, for each incident prison staff record answers to questions which give more detail to the incidents. For example, ‘Where was the assault?’ and ‘Was there an apparent reason for the assault?’. To investigate this data further, we took an extract from Prison NOMIS of all assaults recorded on the Incident Reporting Module between 1st April 2012 and 30th September 2014.

By crossreferencing the time and location of the violent incidents, we were able to produce a ‘heat map’ analysis of where and when assaults are most likely to take place. Analysis such as this is not insightful at a national level due to the variation in regimes and prison layouts across the estate. As set out in the section below on the Violence Diagnostic Tool, this kind of analysis is much more useful at an operational level.

Answers to these questions are where the detail lies and are where the real value in the data is, however, unstructured data such as this brings with it major analytical challenges. The data fields are not always mandatory so the questions may not be completed. For example, the question ‘Was there an apparent reason for the assault?’ was only

answered 28 per cent of the time. The quality of the answers in free text fields is also variable with different prisons using unique styles and terminology.

To start to understand the reasons for the assaults, we applied a textual analysis approach to the data. An extract of all the answers was taken and we manually reviewed the data to identify broad categories of assaults such as prisoner debt or changes to the prisoner’s level on the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme. We then iteratively processed the data and the categorisation was refined as far as possible to end up with exhaustive, homogenous groups. The categorisation used in this analysis is as follows:

- ❑ Retaliation (Previous assault, theft, outside issues)
- ❑ Issues with Staff (IEP, resistance to search, dislike for orders/requests)
- ❑ Bullying (Sex offenders, racism, informants)
- ❑ Recreation (Pool, table tennis, TV, radio, games, sports, gym)
- ❑ Debt (Tobacco/nicotine-based products, drugs, money)
- ❑ Unauthorised Item (Drugs, alcohol, mobile phone)
- ❑ Food and Queuing (Canteen issues, certain food not available)
- ❑ Gang Related (Reason explicitly states gang or gang-related issues)
- ❑ Tobacco (Issues relating to tobacco, other than debt, such as access / restrictions)
- ❑ Medication (Access / restrictions to medication such as methadone)

We then designed and implemented an algorithm to categorise the reason of an assault from the free text in the data. The algorithm used sophisticated methods to find key words and phrases in the text and categorised the assault accordingly. The output, shown in Table 1 below, offers novel insights into why assaults happen,

Table 1: An analysis of the apparent reasons given for assaults where recorded.			
Prison Function	Assault Rate per 1000 Prisoners Apr 12-Sep 14 ²	% of Assaults with a recorded reason on NOMIS	Most Common Reason Category
Juvenile	153	18%	Retaliation
YOI Juvenile	94	14%	Gang Related
YOI	47	17%	Retaliation
YOI Cat C	21	19%	Retaliation
Local Adult Prisons	16	21%	Issues With Staff
Female	12	24%	Issues With Staff
Cat C	10	29%	Debt
Cat B	9	26%	Issues With Staff
IRC	9	49%	Recreation
Cat C Sex Offender	7	22%	Recreation
Cat B Sex Offender	6	34%	Bullying
Open	1	45%	Unauthorised Item

2. These figures are taken from NOMS internal management information and may not be consistent with published statistics due to differences in time periods and prison classifications.

although the number of assaults with a reason given is small, so these insights must be taken with caution.

This table shows that retaliation and gangs are the most prevalent reason for assaults in YOI and Juvenile institutions. We also see prisons which have the most assaults have the lowest level of reason recording. IRC and Open prisons have very few assaults whereas YOI juvenile and locals see the most.

As recording of assaults improves this analysis will become stronger and the insights can be used to tackle violence with more confidence. This analysis demonstrates the amount of value that is stored in the free text fields on the Incident Reporting Module, and if we are able to extract that data meaningfully it can assist greatly in forming the violence reduction strategies at both a national and local level.

Perpetrator analysis

We required a different analytical approach to understand who was committing the violent incidents and their common characteristics. First we matched a dataset consisting of all sentenced prisoners on 30 June 2012, bringing in their criminal histories from the Police National Computer and their most recent assessment from OASys. We then matched in incidents data from the Incident Reporting Module to see which prisoners had been actively involved in violent incidents in the following month.

Using this data set of c. 70,000 prisoners, we were able to build a statistically valid logistic regression model that predicted the outcome that the prisoner was actively involved in a violent incident in the following month. In this case the factors that were predictive of a heightened propensity for prison violence were:

The statistical relationship between an offender's propensity reoffend violently outside of prison with their propensity to commit violence inside prison is exemplified in Chart 1. NOMS has already developed two strong predictors of violent reoffending; the OASys Violence Predictor Version 2 (OVP2) and the violence score of the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS4V). Where OVP2 could not be scored, OGRS4V was substituted. The two scores are produced using similar statistical approaches, and the OVP2 is preferred, where available, as it includes a wider range of risk factors and therefore has greater predictive validity. This relationship has the potential to be used operationally — the OVP score (transition from version 1 to 2 is imminent) is available for any offender who receives a full OASys assessment and this could be used to inform the risk management of prisoners in relation to prison violence.

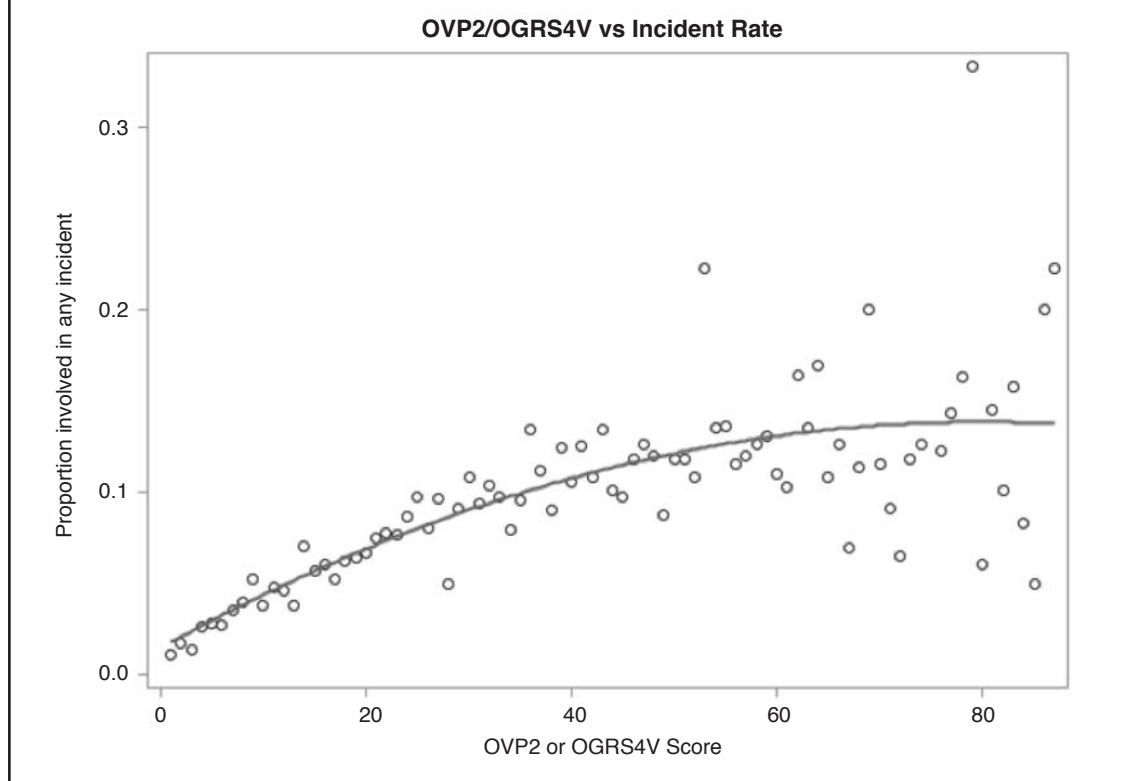
The remaining predictive factors listed above are consistent with the evidence that we were provided by operational colleagues and support the existing guidance. For example, our analysis shows that prisoners are far more likely to be involved in violent incidents if they are either newly received into the establishment or if they have recently been involved in a violent incident, highlighting the need to closely manage these prisoners.

Prison analysis

Understanding the nature of the problem at an establishment level required a different analytical approach again. We undertook significant work to collate and cleanse a dataset to support this work. We matched data from the Incident Reporting Module with monthly population extracts containing extensive

Factor	Explanatory Notes
The prisoner's risk of committing a violent offence outside prison	It is logical that the likelihood of violence outside prison indicates the likelihood of a person being violent inside prison
Number of previous involvements in incidents as a violent party in their current sentence	Prisoners who are repeat offenders of violence are more likely to continue this pattern of behaviour and be involved in further assaults in prison
The prisoner's current age	Younger offenders have been known to be more violent
The number of days since the prisoner's previous involvement in an incident or since arrival at the prison	Prisoners can be involved in several incidents in quick succession, this could be due to retaliation for previous assaults.
Whether the prisoner had ever been involved in an incident as the violent party	The fact that a prisoner has never been a perpetrator of an assault is an indicator that they are less likely to in the future

Chart 1: The statistical relationship between a prisoner's propensity to be violent in the community and their propensity to be involved in a violent incident in prison.



details on the characteristics of the population (age, sentence length, ethnicity etc.). This gave us a dataset which detailed the number of assaults, serious assaults and staff assaults which occurred in each prison in each month. It also detailed the population characteristics of that prison in that month. This meant we were able to conduct multiple sets of bivariate analyses to test whether there were statistical correlations.

Through this work we identified numerous statistically valid relationships but we were not clear if it was valid to interpret these relationships as causal. Some variables may be correlated statistically but this does not imply that if the value of one variable increases this causes the value of the second variable to increase. There could be a third variable which is causing both the first and second variables to increase which has not been considered. For example the number of assaults is strongly correlated with the number of serious assaults, however, one does not cause the other to increase but several other variables might impact on the number of assaults and serious assaults.

We therefore decided to test how these variables interact by building a regression model. Our first attempts at this did not work. After some investigation, it became clear that it would not be possible to build a robust predictive model of the levels of violence for all

prisons at the same time, as the relationships between some risk factors and assaults appeared to vary between types of establishment. Therefore, cluster analysis was used to identify groups of prisons that are more homogeneous than the usual prison functions described by NOMS. For example, some Category C prisons held substantial numbers of young offenders, while others mostly held prisoners convicted of sexual offences.

The next phase of this analysis is still in progress. It involves several stages within an iterative cycle.

First, we have identified a valid statistical modelling approach. At present, it appears most valid to predict the expected number of assaults in each establishment in each month, based on a number of risk factors/markers, using the Negative Binomial model form. While this type of model predicts the number of events (e.g., assaults) in a given period (e.g., a calendar month), it allows adjustment for the level of exposure to the event, through an offset. The offset in these models was the product of each establishment's population³ and the number of days in the month: this is, essentially, the number of discrete opportunities for an assault to occur in the establishment during that month. Establishments of different sizes, and months of different lengths, could therefore be compared on an equal basis.

3. Population was calculated as an estimate of the average population during the month based on two end-of-month totals. For example, an establishment's May 2013 population estimate was the mean of its populations on 30 April 2013 and 31 May 2013.

The second stage is for us to customize the analytical approach. In developmental work on local prisons looking at the relationship between the level of assaults and the population profile in terms of age and index offence, we recognised that the subtle gradations of offender age, and large number of offence classes, found in established recidivism predictors such as OGRS3⁴, are not appropriate for this topic. The most recent preliminary models achieve more interpretable results using simpler age and offence classifications.

Third, an iterative element requires preliminary results to be considered, and additional predictive factors to be introduced, which may require further data processing and in depth analysis. For example, after an early round of local prison modelling, we introduced a factor to deal with variation in the months' ratios of weekdays to weekends and public holidays, as the latter offer prisoners less time out of cell and therefore are associated with lower overall assault rates. At the time of writing, we are working to code and structure data that will adequately summarise variations in staffing profiles, experience and management structure, to ensure that any association between staffing and assault is properly described.

We are continuing this analytical work and will feed the results into the Violence Reduction project when it is completed and they have been independently quality assured.

Violence Diagnostic Tool

Using the understanding gathered from all three strands of our analysis we were able to develop a new management information report in the form of a dashboard which visually presents an analysis of the assaults in each prison. The tool is for use in both prisons and headquarters to help staff understand and manage prison violence. The tool is intended to be visually engaging and easy to interpret.

We brigade the analysis under six categories. Each category encourages the user to ask their own questions of the data and should allow them to focus their energy on the key areas, times or people in their prison where the violence is most prevalent.

- ❑ What — We present the total number of assaults on prisoners, assaults on staff, serious assaults on prisoners and serious assaults on staff as well as a rate per 1000 prisoners.
- ❑ Why — We use the analysis from the text mining process to display the reasons for assaults. These include, debt, alcohol, drugs, bullying, retaliation, issues with staff, unauthorised item. We also include the number of unexplained injuries here as this has long been an indicator of levels of violence as unexplained injuries are often assaults

where the prisoner doesn't want to report the perpetrator.

- ❑ When — We use data on the time of assaults to portray 3 charts
 - By hour — Shows the number of assaults that occur in each hour of the day
 - By day — Shows the number of assaults that occur each day of the week
 - By month — Shows the number of assaults that occur in each month of the year

This shows interesting national trends as well as trends specific to individual prisons

- ❑ Where — Here we use the text mining work to portray the number of assaults in each area of the prison. We have also combined this analysis with the time of the assaults to produce a heat map which indicates which areas and at what time are the peak times for assaults.
- ❑ Who — Using prison population data we show the percentage of the population on a basic regime and the percentage of the population with a violent or robbery offence. We also use data on the perpetrators of assaults to show the percentage of perpetrators who were in their first 30 days of sentence and the number of repeat offenders.
- ❑ Recording — We present the number of assaults recorded on IRS within 3 days, the number of assaults which have an apparent reason and the number of assaults where the location is given. We will also show the prisons data quality audit score when it is introduced.

During the process of putting together this product we consulted widely with operational colleagues to ensure that we were presenting the data as coherently and as helpfully as possible. We are still in the process of updating the tool and are incorporating several additional pieces of functionality into the tool after feedback from staff. This includes;

- ❑ Extracting wing level data using text analysis to improve the Where section of the tool
- ❑ Splitting the data by prison function
- ❑ Looking at additional population characteristics such as age.

The objective of the tool is to get prison staff asking the right questions rather than giving all the answers. We are clear that central analysis is limited in its capacity to explain the levels of violence in individual prisons. The onus is therefore on prison managers and their staff to bring together centrally produced management information, such as the Violence Diagnostic Tool, with their own local analysis and operational experience to give a full picture of the violence in their prison.

4. Howard, P., Francis, B., Soothill, K. and Humphreys, L. (2009) *OGRS 3: the revised offender group reconviction scale*. Ministry of Justice Research Summary, 7/09.

Staff culture, authority and prison violence

Dr Ben Crewe and Professor Alison Liebling Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

At a time when the Prison Service is concerned about levels of violence, it is worth reflecting on whether different kinds of staff cultures, and different modes of authority, might generate different forms of violence. Based on research initially undertaken as part of a study of public and private sector prisons, this article sets out a framework for thinking about how both the over-use and under-use of power can, for different reasons, produce or enable violent responses from, or among, prisoners.

A starting point for an analysis of this kind is Sparks, Bottoms and Hey's *Prisons and the Problem of Order*,¹ which contrasted the means by which two high-security establishments in the late 1980s sought to accomplish order. Albany ran a more restricted regime, and seemed somewhat punitive and antagonistic. Long Lartin allowed prisoners greater autonomy and promoted closer relationships between prisoners and staff. Albany was characterised by friction *between prisoners and staff*, and a greater level of frustration among prisoners about daily forms of constraint. In Long Lartin, while there was less hostility *between prisoners and staff*, problems between prisoners were more complex and serious. There was considerable 'back-stage violence', often linked to an elaborate informal economy and the existence of developed hierarchies between prisoners. Such patterns were linked to the prison's more relaxed mode of policing.

The first point to draw from Sparks et al's comparison is that there are some 'trade-offs' in prisons that are difficult to avoid. 'Safety', of a certain kind, can be secured in prison by minimising contact between prisoners, but this comes at the expense of feelings of autonomy and wellbeing, and creates sentiments of hostility towards the institution. Granting prisoners greater levels of freedom brings about risks in relation to exploitation, bullying, security and control. To put this another way, quoting Gresham Sykes,² 'increases in

freedom of movement, inmate responsibility, and material possessions ... set the stage for more bitter struggles with higher stakes'. While we do not think that 'security' and 'harmony' goals are, in fact, incompatible, the difficulties of getting their balance right in prisons is evidenced in the history of the Prison Service. In the high-security estate, the philosophy of a 'liberal regime within a secure perimeter' proved hazardous in the 1980s and early 1990s. Riots, high-profile escapes, and violence between prisoners, testified to the risks of ceding power to prisoners and under-enforcing rules. Meanwhile, the prison disturbances of 1990, most of which occurred in local prisons with restricted regimes and traditional staff cultures, demonstrated the dangers of impoverished and more oppressive environments. As described in the Woolf Report that followed the riots,³ the disturbances reflected deep grievances among prisoners about the poverty of their conditions and the unjust manner of their treatment. The second implication, then, is that the over-use and under-use of power give rise to different kinds of frustration, and different forms of violent expression.

The 1990 riots are relevant to our argument in part because they form the backdrop to the development of rather different kinds of staff cultures, especially in the privately managed establishments that emerged in England and Wales from the early 1990s. Research undertaken from the 1990s onwards suggested that prisoners experienced more respectful treatment in private prisons — which had been tasked with modelling more progressive staff cultures — than in public sector establishments, while raising concerns about the inexperience of staff, levels of staff supervision, and resulting issues of safety and control.⁴

Intrigued by these findings, from 2008-2010, we undertook a major, independently-funded study of values, practices and outcomes in public and private sector prisons. The research sites included five private

1. Sparks, R., Bottoms, A. and Hey, W. (1996) *Prisons and the Problem of Order*. Oxford: OUP.

2. Sykes, G. (1956) 'Men, merchants and toughs: A study of reactions to imprisonment', *Social Problems*, 130-138.

3. Home Office (1991) *Prison Disturbances April 1990; Report of an Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Woolf and his Honour Judge Stephen Tummim*. London: HMSO.

4. James, A.K., Bottomley, A.K., Liebling, A., and Clare, E. (1997) *Privatizing Prisons: Rhetoric and Reality*. London: Sage; Liebling, A., assisted by Arnold, H. (2004) *Prisons and their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

sector and two public sector establishments, with a considerable (unexpected) range in quality among the private prisons. The specific methods and results of our comparison have been described elsewhere.⁵ What is relevant for current purposes is the framework which we developed in order to illustrate characteristic differences between the sectors in relation to staff cultures and — in particular — the way that staff authority was used and experienced.

Heavy-light, absent-present

Private sector imprisonment was consistently described by prisoners as 'lighter' than public sector imprisonment. By 'light', we are partly referring to aspects of the regime, such as the amount of time spent unlocked, greater freedom with regard to wearing personal clothing, and a set of conditions — including in-cell telephones, in one of the establishments — which 'normalised' the environment to some degree. Primarily, though, prisoners emphasised a form of staff treatment that felt less oppressive than in the public sector:

In here, you're treated as an individual ... you're a person. In [the public sector], you're not, you're a number, you're just a piece of meat with a number on it. (Prisoner, private prison)

You're treated like humans ... you're given chances. Staff are a lot more approachable, things seem to be a lot more relaxed. (Prisoner, private prison)

Lightness also referred to the way in which staff used their authority:

[Staff] are a little bit more laid back, they are not on your back all the time ... as long as you're not doing nothing, they just leave you ... instead of being on your back for every little thing, 'don't do this, don't do that' ... like a boot camp. (Prisoner, private prison)

In contrast, prisoners in public sector prisons more often described staff cultures that were 'heavy', a term that conveys a sense of their conditions 'bearing down' upon them, or feeling like a weight on their shoulders. Compared to custody officers in the private prisons, public sector officers were more likely to express views that prisoners were undeserving of respect:

I would never call [prisoners] Mr ... like you're supposed to do, I won't [...] They don't deserve to be called Mr at all, they are prisoners [...] They are on a punishment, why call them Mr? (Officer, public prison)

Prisoners in these 'heavier' cultures felt that staff regarded them as morally inferior, and as deserving of punishment beyond the sentence itself. This was also reflected in comments about how public sector prison staff used their authority. Public sector officers were more likely than private sector custody officers to be described as overbearing and antagonistic:

Some of them are quite reasonable to be honest with you, but others ... their attitude towards you is ... it's like bullish and threatening ... you know, real evil stuff because they've got a key, you know

(Prisoner, public prison).

While prisoners expressed a preference for 'lighter' staff cultures in general, results from measuring the quality of prison life (MQPL) surveys, undertaken in the five private and two public sector prisons, did not reveal an overall preference for private sector establishments. Indeed, in three of the private sector establishments in particular, some aspects of 'lightness', linked to weaknesses in the use of staff authority, were precisely what they disliked. In these establishments, prisoners felt that staff were unwilling to deploy their power or unable to do so appropriately. Often, they complained that staff did not project confident authority, were intimidated by powerful prisoners, and could not control incidents on the wings:

5. See Crewe, B., Liebling, A., and Hulley, S. (2015) 'Staff-Prisoner Relationships, Staff Professionalism, and the Use of Authority in Public- and Private-Sector Prisons', *Law and Social Inquiry*, 40(2), 309-344; Crewe, B., Liebling, A., and Hulley, S. (2014) Heavy-light, absent-present: rethinking the 'weight' of imprisonment, *British Journal of Sociology*, 387-410; 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.

Because they are young officers, they don't use their authority. They tell you to get behind your door and you say no ... and you can get away with it (Prisoner, private prison)

Since I've been here [I've seen] officers being totally intimidated, the bell going off and officers running off the wings and leaving [prisoners] to get on with it. (Prisoner, private prison)

In such comments, prisoners both expressed anxiety about the degree to which staff were 'in charge' and complained about a tendency for them to under-enforce the rules. The result of both of these issues was that prisoners in these establishments either pushed boundaries, or simply did not know where the boundaries lay. The wings were sometimes described as 'like a council estate', communicating the sense that there was little authority, and that life was unpredictable and under-regulated:

It is mayhem sometimes [...] They have not got a lot of control. Certain wings, the officers are not running the wings, the lads are. [...] It's not good is it? There is no authority really (Prisoner, private prison)

As suggested here, most prisoners did not want the wings to be run by their peers: they wanted staff to occupy their position as power-holders. Likewise, they often complained that staff did not 'want to upset anybody', recognising that 'they're supposed to be the ones in power', and that a culture of permissiveness led to confusion about personal and professional boundaries. Relaxed forms of policing were therefore double-edged. They created a 'lighter' experience, in terms of the imposition of staff authority, so that prisoners generally did not feel aggravated or provoked by a heavy staff presence. At the same time, however, they allowed greater scope for prisoners to aggravate and exploit each other:

Well it's just a more relaxed atmosphere here I think, but with that comes all the bullying and things like that, you know. [Staff are] not as vigilant as they would be in an HMP. (Prisoner, private prison)

In contrast, one of the aspects of public sector imprisonment that prisoners appreciated was a kind of reliability or predictability, both in relation to regime organisation and the use of staff power. Such traits provided prisoners with a greater degree of psychological certainty about the ambient environment, about rules and boundaries, and about the capacity of staff to handle incidents on the wings.

I've always found the officers in an HMP compared to the officers here more in control. Control of the situation, control of the jail, control of they know what they are doing. (Prisoner, private prison).

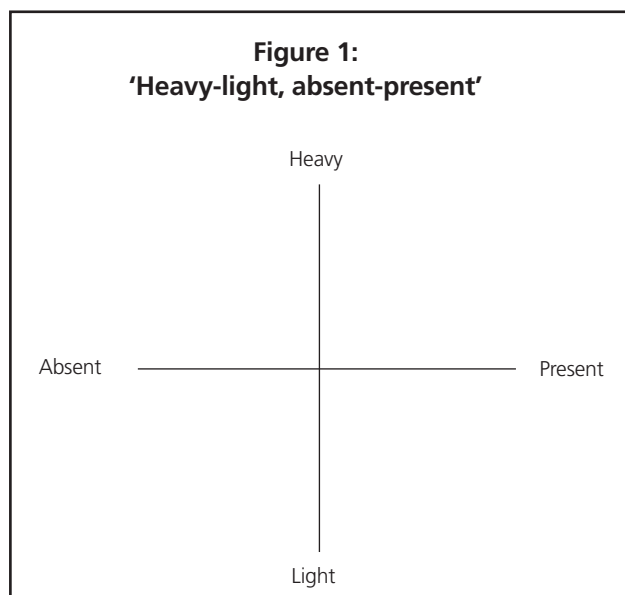
... the fact that prisoners trusted public sector officers to use their authority effectively, and were willing to 'draw the line', made it less likely that prisoners pushed boundaries or sought to assault or exploit their peers.

Indeed, the fact that prisoners trusted public sector officers to use their authority effectively, and were willing to 'draw the line', made it less likely that prisoners pushed boundaries or sought to assault or exploit their peers. Staff were more 'present' in the environment, not just through their physical being but also the imprint of authority that was embedded in daily culture and practices. As with 'visible policing' on the streets, prisoners felt more psychologically secure in knowing that staff were watchful and willing to intervene. To quote one prisoner, 'If [officers] can demonstrate to the prisoner that they are in

control of any given situation [...] then it calms down large number of prisoners (Prisoner, public prison). For such reasons, the slightly heavier culture of public sector prisons could, in certain respects, create a *less* oppressive environment:

[Public sector imprisonment] is a lot more relaxed than private. It's horrible in private: you never know what is going to happen. Always fighting. Always bullying. (Prisoner, public prison)

Our way of conceptualising these findings is through the figure presented below. In it, we differentiate between staff cultures not just in terms of their relative 'weight' (that is, through the vertical axis, labelled 'heavy' and 'light'), but also the 'absence' or 'presence' of staff power. The benefit of this figure is, in part, that it helps us to think through



why some private sector prisons were rated more positively than others. While we characterised all of the private establishments in the original study as 'light', the less good private establishments were considerably more 'absent' than those that scored well on the MQPL surveys. The two public sector prisons in our study were located within the top-right quadrant, that is as 'heavy' but 'present'. We will return to this figure, and to the other quadrants, shortly.

Thinking through prison violence

The figure also allows us to think about the different kinds of prison violence that different regimes might generate or enable. We have suggested already that, in some of the private prisons in our study, what prisoners feared was the power of their peers to assault or victimise them. Inadequate policing of the wings made it easier for a drugs economy to develop, and for attendant forms of violence to be carried out. Tentative staff, or a sheer lack of staff numbers, allowed incidents to go on for longer, to involve a greater number of prisoners, or to have more serious consequences ('There was a fight last week. The screws didn't have a clue what was going on. I hear [him] say 'please stop' — they was throwing blows, you know, the guy was on the floor').

There is good reason to believe that under-policing, and the under-use of authority, may exacerbate the tendency among prisoners to engage in forms of violence, as a result of a dynamic of provocation and defensiveness. As many studies highlight,⁶ in order to avoid victimisation, prisoners seek to avoid giving the impression that they are naïve or unable to defend

themselves. Many are also acutely sensitive to what they perceive to be personal slights ('disrespect'), due to childhood experiences of abandonment and residual feelings of shame.⁷ To quote Robert Johnson:⁸

Failure in social encounters, even the slightest hint of defeat, at once exposes their weaknesses to themselves and others. To guard against this, they must avenge even the slightest insult that might cast doubt on their manliness, brook any authority that would curtail their sense of self.

Great importance is therefore attached to incidents which are ostensibly trivial, but might represent tests of psychological strength or challenges to self-esteem. These tests take many forms — requests for tobacco, for example — and are built into the prison's everyday social architecture, in particular, around the servery, phones and pool tables, where scarce resources and queuing systems offer opportunities to probe and display social dominance:

People try and jump on the pool table. If you say, 'next', and some guy comes along and says, 'hold on, I'm next', and you say, 'hold on, you weren't here', then that's it: the chest comes out, the neck gets put forward, and one of you has got to back down. (Kyle)

In the kinds of situations described here, the presence of staff can be preventative, and tends to be welcomed. Few prisoners want to fight, or want their fights to endure. Most prefer that staff are available to prevent conflicts from arising, to curtail them quickly, and to dissipate their anger. But, as suggested here, neither do prisoners want to be exploited or humiliated. The absence of staff makes it more likely that they will engage in forms of instrumental violence, in order to demonstrate that they will not be 'mugged off' or to position themselves 'above the line' that helps secure personal safety.

Furthermore, where prisoners lack confidence that staff are in control of the wings, they may feel the need to self-organise. In one such prison in our study (but we have seen it in others), interviewees talked of a time in the recent past when a large proportion of prisoners had begun to carry improvised weapons as a defensive measure. That is, the absence of staff power created an environment in which prisoners were 'on edge' and liable to over-react to perceived threats from others. In others,

6. Edgar, K., O'Donnell, I. and Martin, C. (2003) *Prison Violence: The Dynamics of Conflict, Fear and Power*. Cullompton: Willan; Crewe, B. (2009) *Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford: OUP.
7. Gilligan, J. (1996) *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and its Sources*. New York: Grosset/Putnam Books; Butler, M. (2006) 'What are you looking at?: Prisoner Confrontations and the Search for Respect', *British Journal of Criminology*. 48, 6, p. 856-873.
8. Johnson, R. (1987) *Hard Time: Understanding and Reforming the Prison*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

they may appoint prisoner 'leaders' to resolve conflicts on the wing.⁹ One outcome of the absence of confident staff authority was that individual prisoners were able to accumulate greater power on the wings. While we only saw a small number of examples of evidence of staff deliberately or self-consciously delegating power to prisoners, it was clear, in some establishments, that some individuals had considerable coercive potential as a result of their criminal networks and reputations.

Second, prisoners in light-absent institutions were also aware that, where boundaries were deficient, it was harder for them to 'be good'. As well as seeking protection from other prisoners, they welcomed a certain amount of protection from temptation. Frequent references were made to the difficulties of personal change in the face of peer pressure. Positive behaviour required both 'headspace' — a feeling of safety and respect — and the absence of the kinds of attractions and distractions that could disrupt attempts to be a different kind of person. An absence of authority made it more likely that prisoners could be drawn into the drug culture and interpersonal conflict, and drawn in to forms of behaviour and identity that were exploitative and aggressive.

Third, prisons in which authority was somewhat absent generated specific kinds of frustrations. Prisoners often expressed exasperation about the ease with which they could find themselves in trouble for having breached invisible rules or ambiguous boundaries. They complained that staff were unpredictable in their adoption of the rule-book, overlooking infractions one day only to act on them the next, or turning a blind eye to serious breaches while sanctioning prisoners for incidents that seemed far more trivial. According to one prisoner in a privately managed establishment, 'if you wanted to sell drugs you'd get away with it in here, but if you have a towel at the end of your bed you're gonna get a nicking'. Meanwhile, a more laissez-faire mode of managing the wings meant that prisoners sometimes felt unsupported in material terms by staff. Some characterised light-absent prisons as 'a good place to kill time, but a bad place to progress'. We would not want to make strong claims that such irritations lead to

violence, but they certainly breed feelings of extreme frustration.

Finally, where staff are insecure in using their authority, or lack jailcraft, they may over-use as well as under-use their power. One way in which this is manifested is a 'stand-back, jump forwards' approach, in which staff under-enforce rules for some time and then over-react to a particular incident. Alternatively, where they lack confidence or self-legitimacy, prison staff may resort to aggression or formal modes of power in situations where more experienced officers would be able to resolve the situation through talk or tact. Prisoners in the 'light-absent' establishments in our study

reported that some staff used needlessly aggressive language — 'they're in your face and that, [acting like] you're all outside or in a boozer or something' — attributing this not to staff being too comfortable with or enjoying their power, but compensating for discomfort and insecurity about their ability to wield it.

In prisons that are culturally 'heavier', we would expect to find different forms of frustration and violence. Problems between prisoners result from an excess of institutional power, either its provocations or its punitive nature. Oppressive regimes — long hours in cells, restrictions, and a culture of disrespect or dehumanisation — breed tensions that may spill over into violent outbursts between prisoners and/or against officers. Meanwhile, staff are more dismissive and

confrontational, precipitating conflict directly by goading prisoners, treating them with disdain, or being deliberately heavy-handed when restraining them. Where authority is over-used, or is used carelessly or casually, it produces violence through processes of humiliation. Here, a prisoner describes the fury that he felt when an officer declined to open his cell door:

I'm having a shower and I'm thinking 'how the fuck does she think she can talk to me like that? I've been nothing but courteous and nice to her'. And I thought 'no, I'm not having it'. If I didn't get it off my chest it would wind me up all night. So I've come out of the shower and I said ... 'next time, when I speak to you nicely

9. See Liebling, A., Armstrong, R., Bramwell, R., and Williams, R. 'Locating and building trust in high security prisons', summary to the ESRC (available from authors).

and ask you politely, don't think you can talk to me like I'm a prick, because I'm not a prick'. And I did go back afterwards and apologise to her, but it worked. Because it got my frustrations out. I went back and I said 'listen miss. I did go a bit ballistic at you but I just wanted to know that you did really offend me. I talked to you with nothing but courtesy. And talking to me like that, especially when there's another inmate in earshot round you, I'm not having that. I'm not having you treating me like a cunt. Because I'm not a cunt and you can't treat me that way'.

The language here is significant, not only because it is so emotional, but also because of the prisoner's defensive assertions that he is a person of worth. Robert Johnson argues that reactions of this kind are typical of 'men reared on rejection and abuse in orphanages, detention centres, training schools and youth prisons'.¹⁰ They are brittle, easily provoked into violence because of deeply embedded anxieties about their personal worth and masculine status. As Johnson notes, they 'know in their guts what it means to be locked up — to be 'helpless and vulnerable' (p86), and in prison they find themselves in the same state of dependency, impotence and shame that they have sought to keep at bay throughout their lives. Being spoken to disrespectfully or made to feel powerless therefore has a disproportionate impact on these men, awakening their feelings of inadequacy and igniting their feelings of impotent rage against a world that they feel has rejected them.

Conclusion

Our research on public and private sector prisons tells us as much about penal power generally as it does about the specific practices or advantages and disadvantages of state and non-state provision. For

current purposes, its most significant revelations relate to the dangers of a low-cost, low-staff model of prison management, in which 'absence' becomes a common feature of public as well as private sector prisoners. When combined with the characteristic 'weight' of public sector imprisonment, the risk is that we find more prisons that we would locate in the 'heavy-absent' quadrant of our diagram. In such establishments, staff are standoffish or overbearing. In either case they are relationally withdrawn: their model of order is not based on the formation of deep relationships with prisoners. In at least one prison that has been subjected to cuts in staffing, as a result of the departure of experienced officers, reduced morale, and a more defensive attitude among prisons staff, we have seen this combination of characteristics: the retreat of uniformed staff to wing offices; more distant and less trusting relationships between prisoners and prison officers; and the delegation of power by staff to certain prisoners. Such developments create a fertile environment for violence.

The holy grail of prison management is the bottom right quadrant in our diagram. In such prisons, power is distinctly present, but feels neither intrusive nor oppressive. It functions through what we would call 'dynamic authority', whereby staff wield their discretion carefully, based on knowing the needs, moods and motivators of their prisoners. Staff-prisoner relationships are close and enmeshed, without being collusive.¹¹ Boundaries and expectations are clear. Prisoners are given high levels of autonomy, but they are held responsible by their peers and by prison staff for their behaviour. Such cultures are found in very few prisons, but are most likely to exist in small, well-staffed units, with a clear sense of purpose or community, such as PIPE units, therapeutic communities, and small drug detoxification units. There are lessons to be drawn from these establishments for all prisons seeking to develop the kinds of cultures and staff behaviours that minimise violence.

10. Irwin, J. (1970) *The Felon*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

11. Liebling, A. (2011) 'Distinctions and distinctiveness in the work of prison officers: Legitimacy and authority revisited'. *European Journal of Criminology*, 2011, 8: 484-499.

Prison Culture and Prison Violence

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Introduction

Culture is described differently by different people. It is generally seen as being made up of the shared values, attitudes, goals, practices, stories, symbols, thoughts and behaviours of a group. These things can have different levels of importance for different group members, can be learned and are changeable over time. Culture is often spoken about in positive and creative terms, being developed through our interactions with each other and the environment and encompassing the ways that we adapt, survive and grow together. The more agricultural definitions of culture talk specifically about creating environments suitable for growth and 'cultivation'. It is therefore striking that when we think about the culture of our prisons, our image is likely to be far less positive or hopeful.

The importance of culture for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is clear through the focus of its first commissioning intention.¹ Not only relevant to desistance, prison culture has also been found to be an important contributing factor to violence in prisons.² There are focused efforts across NOMS to understand and reduce the levels of prison violence and so it makes sense for this work to consider our culture. This article will briefly consider the literature about prison culture and violence. It will then outline some ideas for how this can inform practice, with specific reference to some of the current initiatives across the high secure estate aimed at developing a more rehabilitative culture.

Prison culture and violence

To consider the cultural impact on violence we need to look at how violence is viewed, produced and used by

a society.³ Prisons have been described as distinct societies with their own cultures; cultures that have been defined and operationalised in different ways.⁴ A cyclical relationship has been described; with violence being part of the prison culture and prison culture impacting on levels of violence.⁵ When values and norms encouraging violence are widespread in a group, members may be violent as a result of adopting these values themselves and / or as a result of implicit or explicit pressure from others.

There are two different views in the literature about how the culture of a prison develops. One view is that it is a result of the criminal culture that individuals bring into prison with them from outside.⁶ Prisons admit people with violent histories, troubled backgrounds and complex needs, making it likely that a culture including violence will develop. The other view is that prison culture develops as a response to the experience of imprisonment.^{7,8} Powerlessness, deprivation, stigmatisation, a loss of material goods, disrespect and a fear of violence lead to a need to establish status and increase self esteem and control. Violence can be seen as a legitimate or necessary way to achieve these things. Sparks and colleagues took a holistic view, believing that prison culture was determined by both the pain of imprisonment and the influences of the outside world, but also, the ideology and management of the institution.⁹

This paper will focus more on culture development as a result of the experiences of being in prison. This is the area that, if we can understand it, may offer us the most scope to impact on our prisons culture. The roles of staff and prisoners can create a clear sense of 'us and them' and consequently separate staff and prisoner subcultures. There are a range of reasons why violence may result from aspects of the prisoner subculture.

1. National Offender Management Service (2014). *NOMS commissioning intentions from 2014*. London: NOMS.
2. Byrne, J. M., & Stowell, J. (2007). Examining the link between institutional and community violence: Towards a new cultural paradigm. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12, 552-563.
3. Noguera, P. (1996). *Reducing and preventing youth violence: An analysis of causes and an assessment of successful programmes*. Retrieved from www.inmotionmagazine.com/pedro3.html on the 8th April 2015.
4. Byrne, J. M., & Stowell, J. (2007). Examining the link between institutional and community violence: Towards a new cultural paradigm. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12, 552-563.
5. Cooke, D. J., & Wozniak, E. (2007). *Violence in Barbados prisons: Past, present and future*. Ontario: International Corrections and Prisons Association.
6. Irwin, J., & Cressey, D. (1962). Thieves, convicts and the inmate culture. *Social Problems*, 10, 142-155.
7. Sykes, G., & Messinger, S. (1960). The inmate social system. In R. A. Cloward, D. R. Cressey, G. H. Grosser, R. McCleery, L. E. Ohlin, G. M. Sykes, & S. L. Messinger (Eds.), *Theoretical studies in the social organisation of prison* (pp. 5-19). New York: Social Science Research Council.
8. Sekol, I. (2013). Peer violence in adolescent residential care: A qualitative examination of contextual and peer factors. *Children and youth services review*, 35, 1901-1912.
9. Sparks, R., Bottoms, A., & Hay, W. (1996). *Prisons and the problem of order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Relationships with staff, drugs, illicit economy, bullying, links to gangs within and outside of prison, and gambling can all be part of a prisoner culture and impact on violence in prisons. These are the focus of other articles within this edition and so will not be focused on here.

Violence can sometimes be the result of an outburst of anger or frustration in response to the experience of imprisonment. Factors such as feeling a loss of control or anticipation of being a victim of violence can generate fear and frustration which may result in emotionally driven or uncontrolled violence. Frustrations over long term imprisonment and complex routes for progression can impact on prisoner violence.¹⁰ However, it is also the case that individuals who act out violently can become a liability for other prisoners, bringing unwanted attention and restrictions. *unpredictable* or uncontrollably violent individuals may actually fall down the pecking order and be managed, sometimes violently, by other prisoners.¹¹

Violence is therefore also used strategically to manage life in prison. Whether resulting from the prison experience or life before prison the idea of the prisoner code is seen as highly influential in governing everyday prison life.¹² This includes ideas such as 'no grassing', no engaging with staff, and no showing any weakness. It can also include hierarchies relating to factors such as offence type or religion.¹³ While a prisoner code permits violence, for example when the code is broken, prisoners can feel that these rules actually make for a safer rather than more violent prison.¹⁴ The prisoner code can help generate solidarity and allows prisoners to regain some of the autonomy and control that they lose in prison; allowing them to actively engage in managing their own life. Prisoners have described violence being chosen as a way to teach people lessons about manners, control others, relieve the pressure, show they are in charge, and deal with daily problems.¹⁵ Violence between prisoners can also been fuelled by conflicts over material gains and values; values such as loyalty, honour, fairness and power.¹⁶ Prisoners manage a difficult balance of not appearing too passive, for fear of

being victimised by other prisoners, and not being too aggressive for fear of being more tightly managed by staff.¹⁷ This can require careful, controlled and conscious use of violence.

It is not only the subculture of prisoners that is important in shaping an establishment but also that of staff. Considering relationships with colleagues, occupational norms can bring pressures on people, sometimes profound sometimes subtle, to act in particular ways. Just as prisoners may feel they need to 'stick together', so can staff. The unwritten rules of 'not grassing' and always backing up colleagues can help to create solidarity and a sense of safety between staff as well as prisoners. Our attitudes and beliefs about why prisoners offend and the purpose of prison can also shape our behaviours towards colleagues and prisoners. There can be stigmatisation attached to getting involved in rehabilitative work with prisoners, with staff being dissuaded by colleagues or receiving criticism if they take on these roles.

There are longstanding cultural expectations that officers will be fearless, resilient authoritative figures. Prison work is complex and demanding, generating a range of emotions in response to its unpredictability, including anxiety, fear, stress and depression. While the service acknowledges this, it is a place where disclosure of personal distress is uncommon. Possibly in

response to this discrepancy, staff have identified being hardened by prison work; easily becoming blasé and insensitive when dealing with prisoners. Combined with a belief that the public and some managers have a negative perception of them and their work this hardening can contribute to feelings of demoralisation, resentment, a sense of 'us and them' and an increased likelihood of confrontational responses.

In addition to the culture of prisoner and staff groups, prison culture is also shaped by the interactions between staff and prisoners. A sense of respect, control and safety is important to all. When faced with aggression, staff can start to use restraint and punishment more. While this may be absolutely

It is not only the
subculture of
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also that of staff.

10. Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2012). Social relationships between prisoners in a maximum security prison: Violence, faith and the declining nature of trust. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40, 413-424.
11. Trammell, R. (2012). *Enforcing the convict code: Violence and prison culture*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
12. Trammell, R. (2012). *Enforcing the convict code: Violence and prison culture*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
13. Wills, F. (2014). The myth of redemptive violence in prison. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 22, 5-20.
14. Trammell, R. (2012). *Enforcing the convict code: Violence and prison culture*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
15. Trammell, R. (2012). *Enforcing the convict code: Violence and prison culture*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
16. Edgar, K. (2006). Assaults among young people in prison. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 66, 12-13.
17. Crew, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P., & Smith, A. (2013). The emotional geography of prison life. *Theoretical Criminology*, DOI: 10.1177/1362480613497778.

necessary at times, it impacts upon the culture; potentially contributing to further aggression. Some of the restrictive measures we use to manage violence, such as segregation, may actually contribute to an increased sense of a loss of control and autonomy; two factors that contribute to prisoner violence.¹⁸ Aggressive incidents also impact on staff absenteeism, productivity, relationships, sensitivity and responsiveness to prisoners and can create fear in all. Indeed, it can be the possibility of violence as much as the level of actual violence that contributes to an establishments atmosphere and therefore its culture.¹⁹ This anticipation can lead to non-violent prisoners being violent to protect themselves and send a message to others. It can also lead to staff wanting protect themselves and send a message about who is in charge.

While prison culture can clearly cultivate violence increased levels of support, respectful contact and opportunities for growth and learning have been found to reduce the number of aggressive incidents in secure units.^{20,21} Having hope and motivation, being believed in and having a place in a social group are factors that contribute to desistance from offending, including violence.²² As Byrne and Hummer point out: 'Rehabilitation loses meaning in a culture that teaches violence to nonviolent offenders and aggravates violent behaviour in those already violent themselves.'²³

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Translating theory into practice

If culture is created and learnt then it is within our power to change the culture of our prisons, if we want to. Cultural change may help to reduce prison violence^{24,25} but there are no simple solutions. As we have seen,

both culture and violence are complex and inter-related phenomena. While prison culture influences our behaviour what we say and do influences our culture. Culture is changeable and can vary between, and even within, establishments so it is not the case that 'one size fits all' in terms of ways to create and maintain a culture that discourages violence. Given the constituents of culture it also does not lend itself well to being influenced and maintained through structured systems of targets and audits. The prison service culturally recognises and rewards concrete tasks and outcomes, but our culture is also made up of our underlying processes, attitudes and beliefs; the ethos behind what we do.

In response to NOMS first commissioning intention the High Security Prisons Group has started work to develop a more rehabilitative culture across its establishments, something that is beneficial for all.²⁶ A rehabilitative culture involves the elements of culture, such as relationships, attitudes and beliefs, regimes, rules and processes all contributing to a culture that is hopeful and supportive of change, progression and desistance from offending. This therefore relates to the culture that individuals bring with them into the establishment and that which is created in response to being in prison. There are clear similarities between the elements of culture believed to reduce prison violence and those that make up a rehabilitative culture, meaning that changing

our culture in this way should both reduce violence and support wider rehabilitation. The high secure estate's rehabilitative culture strategy aims to strike a tricky balance of providing establishments with concrete support to understand and develop their culture whilst modelling the underlying theory of the strategy. This

18. Nijman, H. L. I. (2002). A model of aggression in psychiatric hospitals. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 106, 142-143.
19. Crew, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P., & Smith, A. (2013). The emotional geography of prison life. *Theoretical Criminology*, DOI: 10.1177/1362480613497778.
20. Van der Helm, G. H. P., Stams, G. J. J. M., Van Genabeek, M., & Van der Lann, P. H. (2011). Group climate, personality and self-reported aggression in incarcerated male youth. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, 1, 23-39.
21. Ros, N., Van der Helm, P., Wissink, I., Stams, J., & Schaftenaar, P. (2013). Institutional climate and aggression in a secure psychiatric setting. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, 24, 713-727.
22. Rehabilitation Services Group & Maruna, S. (2010). *Understanding desistance from Crime*. National Offender Management Service.
23. Wills, F. (2014). The myth of redemptive violence in prison. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 22, 5-20.
24. Byrne, J. M., & Hummer, D. (2007). Myths and realities of prison violence: A review of the evidence. *Victims and Offenders: An international Journal of evidence-based research, policy and practice*, 2, 77-99.
25. Lee, B., & Gilligan, J. (2006). The resolve to stop prison violence project: Transforming an in-house culture of violence through a jail-based programme. *Journal of Public Health*, 27, 149-155.
26. O'Brien, R., Marshall, J., & Karthaus. (2014). *Building a rehabilitative culture*. RSA Transitions. Retrieved from www.thersa.org on the 10th April 2015.

involves allowing establishments to maintain ownership and responsibility for their work in this area; allowing differences across the estate to be recognised at management level; and avoiding the generation of inappropriate performance targets focusing solely on tasks and outcomes at the expense of other less concrete but equally important elements of culture.

It is important to first understand our culture if we want to effectively influence it. A number of assessments exist that can be used to capture elements of prison culture, including PRISM²⁷ and MQPL.²⁸ Interventions Services have also developed a Rehabilitative Culture Questionnaire, used by all sites that deliver accredited interventions. Across the high secure estate culture is being explicitly explored through the culture web. The culture web, developed by Johnson and colleagues,²⁹ consists of six interrelated elements relevant to organisational culture. These are: the stories, rituals and routines, symbols, organisational structure, control systems and power structures of an organisation. Initial sessions are led by an Organisational Development practitioner external to the establishment but these can then be run by establishments with different staff and prisoners groups in order to gain a fuller understanding of their culture. The session considers the six elements to understand the current culture but also how people would like the culture to be in the future. Differences are identified and used to inform plans for working towards cultural change. When planning cultural change establishments can consider four levers that need to point towards a rehabilitative culture for change to be successful.³⁰ These are: the symbols around us (e.g. posters and language), rewards and measurements (what we pay attention to), behaviours (how people succeed and how we can encourage this) and the business context (our policies and processes). Establishments are encouraged to take this initial exploration into their culture forward and explore their policies, practices, relationships and beliefs more widely to identify opportunities to further develop their rehabilitative culture.

It is important to first understand our culture if we want to effectively influence it.

For some places the cultural web may identify a need for change in order for a rehabilitative culture to develop. Given this potential need for change, and the fact that a rehabilitative culture in itself includes a belief in the possibility of change, the development of a rehabilitative culture involves an explicit focus on hope and its importance for all. We need hope that our working environments can get better and hope that offenders are capable of change. Violence can be the result of individuals feeling hopeless about their current situation and the future. Hope has been found to be a critical aspect of successful change and so it has an important role in helping staff and prisoners adapt to changes across our service and in reducing re-offending for prisoners. Hope can also lead to creative ways of problem solving and open up new possibilities. Sharing our hope with others can also enhance our own levels of hope. One description of hope is that it has two elements; namely *'the will'* and *'the way'*.³¹ The idea

being that we need the willpower or energy to achieve a goal (the will), and the perceived ability and ideas about how to achieve it (the way). People with higher levels of hope have been found to perform better at work, have more goals, be more successful in achieving their goals, be less distressed, happier, better at coping in difficult situations and generally feel more satisfied and less likely

to experience burnout.^{32,33}

To help support establishments a handbook of initiatives is also being developed. These initiatives aim to influence various different aspects of the culture including: relationships, engagement in the regime, our knowledge and beliefs, and support and recognition. While it is expected that all establishments will make use of the early chapters of this handbook it will be for them to decide which other chapters, if any, would best meet their needs. The aim of the handbook is to share best practice across a range of areas; both to support implementation but also to generate the best possible evidence of effectiveness.

One example of an approach from the handbook is the Strategy of Choices.³⁴ This will already be familiar to

27. Johnstone, L. & Cooke, D.J. (2008). PRISM Promoting Risk Intervention by Situational Management: Structured Professional Guidelines for Assessing Situational Risk Factors for Violence in Institutional Settings.
28. Liebling, A., Hulley, S., & Crewe, B. (2012). Conceptualising and measuring the quality of prison life. In D. Gadd, S. Karstedt, & S. Messner, S. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods* (p. 358-372). London: Sage
29. Johnson, G., Whittington, R., & Scholes, K. (2012). *Fundamentals of Strategy*. UK: Pearson Education.
30. de Lattre, M. (2003) A Culture of Innovation. In A. Jolly (ed.) *Innovation – Harnessing Creativity for Business Growth*. Kogan Page.
31. Snyder, C. R. (1995). Conceptualizing, measuring and nurturing hope. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 73, 355-360.
32. Larsen, D. J., Stege, R., & Flesaker, K. (2013). 'It's important for me not to let go of hope': Psychologists' in-session experiences of hope. *Reflective Practice*, 14, 472-486.
33. Valle, M. F., Huebner, E. S., & Suldo, S. M. (2006). An analysis of hope as a psychological strength. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 393-406.
34. Harris, D., Attrill, G., Bush, J. (2005). Using choice as an aid to engagement and risk management with violent psychopathic offenders. *Issues in forensic psychology*, 5, 144-151.

many involved in offending behaviour programmes. This is a strategy for communicating that combines the exercising of authority with respect for the individual's right to make their own decisions. It demands people make their own decisions without giving them permission to break the rules and do as they please. Choosing to be disruptive or violent attracts different consequences than choosing to engage. In this way the strategy is transparent about each offender's right to choose their own path, but also about staff's right to protect themselves and others. This strategy is compatible with the suggestion that our first approach with violent prisoners should be to make them aware that their behaviour is not acceptable and reminded of the consequences of their actions.³⁵ It also fits with the literature regarding violence in prison, in that it encourages respectful communication, the use of legitimate authority and supports opportunities for change and progression. It also creates a sense of control for prisoners as it requires them to actively engage in managing their own life.

The practical elements of the handbook are being developed through stakeholder events whereby the establishments themselves decide how best to turn the theory into meaningful practice. It is recognised that managers are crucial to maintaining a culture,³⁶ with this work being actively supported by the DDC of the High Security Estate and the Governors of every establishment. However, the wider staff group and prisoners are also critical to the understanding, development and maintenance of culture. As such this work includes input from all grades and disciplines of staff as well as prisoners.

NOMS processes and the messages these give make up an important part of our culture. Within this, the sentence management process is particularly significant for offenders. As such it is important for this to be compatible with a rehabilitative culture. As a group the High Security Estate is specifically focusing on the Category A review element of the sentence management process. A Category A prisoner is one whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public, police or security of the state and for whom the aim must be to make escape impossible. This group therefore potentially includes prisoners at high risk of being violent. Once classified as a Category A prisoner an individual is periodically reviewed with a view to downgrading them if sufficient progress regarding risk has been made. This has historically felt like quite a hopeless process and can set the tone for the rest of someone's sentence.

Creating a Category A review process that is less repetitive, more user friendly and is clear about the value of everyone's contributions will hopefully be more engaging and meaningful for staff; ensuring that everyone's knowledge and expertise is heard. The new process also explicitly considers positive behaviours and factors that may help protect an individual from future offending (protective factors). This should mean that the process is also less frustrating and more engaging and progressive for prisoners. Acknowledging protective factors and progress, even if not sufficient for a downgrade in category, can help to promote further progress and create a sense of hope for the future. This, combined with clear targets and a clear route for progression, can also help increase an individual's sense of control and therefore responsibility over their own future.

All of this work is in its early stages and, while based on sound theory, there is a clear need to continue to drive its implementation and evaluate its effectiveness. Anecdotally, it already appears that culture can start to feel different in places that start to progress this work. It will be important to see if this is the case for all and ultimately if it impacts on violence in custody, progression and desistance from offending.

Conclusion

Prison culture and prison violence are complex but highly inter-related. Given that we shape our culture we have the power to change it and therefore impact on prison violence. The elements of culture that may help reduce violence overlap with those that help to create a more rehabilitative culture. Increasing a sense of control and responsibility, increasing hope for progression and change, and ensuring we acknowledge and reward progress for staff and prisoners, are all relevant for a rehabilitative culture and violence reduction. The high secure estate has started work to try and improve its rehabilitative culture, which it believes will also impact on prison violence. This work can support the more explicit work through structured treatment programmes. Given the challenges of developing a culture that is more rehabilitative within a high security environment, the passion of staff for this to happen, combined with their development of creative ways to achieve it, can hopefully help to increase hope for others that this is not only possible but also worthwhile.

35. Safer Custody PSI (64/2011).

36. Kane-Urrabazo, C. (2006), Management's role in shaping organizational culture. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 14, 188–194.

Conflicts in prison

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Penny was in the upstairs association room. Behind her were Kay and Kay's cellmate. Penny heard Kay make a rude remark about Penny's cellmate. She turned round and told Kay to shut up. Kay denied she had said anything rude. She told Penny to shut up. Penny became verbally abusive. They stood facing each other, two inches apart. Penny was furious. She saw Kay's hands, about to grab her.

Conflict and violence

This sequence illustrates how interactions between prisoners escalate into fights or assaults. At each step, Kay and Penny made decisions about how to react. The way they handled the situation was based on interpretations of their opponent's intentions. For example, when Kay told Penny to shut up, Penny perceived that Kay was trying to belittle her. Penny explained that when Kay stood up to face her: *'I was thinking it's physical – she is confronting me. And she is not big enough.'*¹

Penny head-butted Kay, breaking her nose. Other prisoners stepped in to separate them.

This paper discusses situations that result in violent incidents among prisoners. It is based on empirical evidence gathered for the book, *Prison Violence: The dynamics of conflict, fear and power*.² This research included a large prisoner survey to measure the prevalence of verbal abuse, theft, assault, threats of violence and other forms of victimisation; and an in-depth investigation of 141 fights or assaults among prisoners.

The prevention of violence depends on understanding what led up to it. A useful way to analyse prison violence is to explore it as conflict. Conflicts are:

Situations in which there are competing interests which the parties pursue in uncompromising ways.

Some of the factors that contribute to violence include:

- ☐ Tactics, such as intimidation or threats, that tend to aggravate disputes
- ☐ Theft, exploitation, and other forms of victimisation
- ☐ Racial and cultural tensions and misunderstandings
- ☐ Emotions, such as frustration, anger and shame
- ☐ Transitory relationships; lack of familiarity with peers
- ☐ Low self esteem

Limited access to goods and services in prisons creates competition among prisoners. It also helps to explain why the risk of being exploited is a widespread concern. The fear that someone might take advantage (e.g. by gaining a place in the queue for food) assumes special significance. Values and attitudes also fuel conflicts; disputes can arise over honour, loyalty, fairness, respect, or other values. For example, a prisoner accused of cheating may fight to defend their personal honour, even when there is no material interest at stake.

A common cause of conflict is anti-social behaviour. The 2004 version of PSO 2750 stated:

The risk of being victimised, for example by theft of property, verbal/racist abuse, fraud, creates the conditions in which prisoners might be tempted to use violence to defend their interests.

There may be a temptation to infer that prisoners can be divided into the vulnerable, who must be protected, and the predators who need to be monitored. But conflicts that lead to violence are rarely so one-sided.

A conflict-centred analysis of prison violence differs significantly from approaches that distinguish between bullies and victims. The harmful behaviour that escalates disputes toward violent outcomes is usually reciprocal. It follows that the most effective measures against violence will focus on two aspects: intolerance of all victimisation and the promotion of conflict resolution.

Most of the conflicts that lead to violence in prison occur between parties where the power balance is yet to be determined. Established bullying relationships, in which one person dominates and exploits a victim, are atypical. In part, this ties in with the transitory nature of relationships in prison, which is exacerbated by large establishments and by high turnover.

Power contests

The most common form of conflict that culminates in violence is a power contest, where two prisoners size each other up through mutual attempts to intimidate each other. Prisoners tend to respond to these situations with tactics such as accusations, threats, ultimatums, and challenges ('What are you looking at?' 'Who do you think you're talking to?').

1. Names have been changed. Quotes from prisoners in the text are drawn from this research, unless otherwise noted.

2. Edgar, K, O'Donnell, I and Martin C (2012) *Prison Violence: The dynamics of conflict, fear and power*, London: Routledge.

Conflicts often begin over a clash of interests: One person wants to stay on the phone with his girlfriend; those in the queue become more anxious as bang-up approaches. Or, one person plays his radio loud, late into the nights; his neighbour needs his sleep. Power contests emerge when the interests at stake become less important for both parties than personal dominance.

The conflict between Penny and Kay was a typical power contest. The problem began when Penny heard Kay make a disparaging remark about her cellmate. Their dispute became a power contest when each commanded the other to shut up.

When Penny told Kay to shut up, Kay felt that:

She was trying to intimidate me. She thought I would just sit down and shut my mouth.

When Kay reacted by telling Penny to shut up, Penny thought:

She felt she could intimidate me. She thought she could push me about.

Rather like the duels of the 18th century, both parties to power contests are intent on 'satisfaction' and that can come only through the submission of their opponent.

When a power contest is triggered by a dispute over a piece of property, there may be a temptation to trivialise the conflict as a fight over a pot of yogurt, a borrowed CD, or a game of pool. But these contests are fought to preserve self-respect and to win the respect of one's opponent.

When their dispute became a power contest, Kay and Penny forgot about the original problem – comments made about Kay's cell-mate – and concentrated on finding the other's weak points. The important shift was when both perceived that the conflict was about who would establish control over the other.

In power contests, both participants attempt to show the other person that they cannot be dominated. Whatever the original source of the dispute, each sets a new objective, which is to demonstrate their strength to the opponent. They rely on hostility, both to protect themselves and make the other person back down. Each judges the behaviour of the other to be aggressive. The decisions each make in response to

their foe in a power contest put them on a collision course towards violence.

Many conflicts can be resolved by practical steps that provide something for each party to gain. The person who needed his sleep could ask for a cell move. Power contests are more difficult to resolve because they are about the quality of relationships, and the balance of power can be impossible for outsiders to assess.

Purposes of violence

The conflict approach shows how arguments escalate into violence, but it also provides insights into why people decide to use force as a response to conflict.

The following is not an exhaustive list, but illustrates how the prisoner's objectives can shed light on why they considered violence a feasible option.

A common motivation for the use of force is to demonstrate toughness. Richard McCorkle³ analysed assaults in prisons in Tennessee (USA). He described the challenge prisoners faced:

Unless an inmate can convincingly project an image that conveys the potential for violence, he is likely to be dominated and exploited.

Prisoners who used force to demonstrate their toughness expressed a fear that other inmates would consider them to be weak and vulnerable. Their use of force was intended to send a message to the other inmates on the wing — the sea of unfamiliar faces — to establish a reputation that would protect the attacker from future victimisation.

If it wasn't for the other inmates, we wouldn't have fought. Most prison fights aren't about being angry. They're about what other inmates will think of you if you don't fight.

An analysis of violence reduction by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman found a considerable variation among different prison populations in feelings of safety:

. . . perceptions of safety can often contrast with a relative rate of recorded assaults. YOIs, for example, may appear the most 'unsafe' from assault statistics, but prisoners' own perceptions across functional types did not

3. McCorkle, R.C. (1992) 'Personal precautions to violence in prison', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 19: 160-173.

reflect this. Perceptions of safety were at their lowest in the dispersal (or high security) prisons, despite the rate of recorded assault incidents being below the average for all types of establishments.⁴

The social consequences of demonstrations of toughness are counter-productive. An individual feels at risk, and believes that using force will make him safer. He commits an assault, and in so doing, makes his environment more dangerous for everyone.

Yet it is important to bear in mind that the majority of prisoners who used force were not motivated by a perceived need to demonstrate their toughness.

Among young offenders, fights were often used attempting to settle their differences. The young offenders seemed genuinely to believe that violence could provide a solution to their differences, in contrast to the sense of resigned necessity evident among adults who fought.

Toby was arguing with an officer about his food. An orderly, Manny, told Toby to be quiet and take his food back to his cell. Toby told him it had nothing to do with him. Manny came out from behind the servery, removing his jacket. An officer stepped between them. That afternoon, Manny told Toby off for the way he had spoken to him at the servery. He invited Toby to the showers. Toby followed, carrying a sharp plastic blade. Others ran to watch, alerting an officer who arrived in time to prevent the fight. Later, on association, Manny came to the pool table and threatened Toby. Toby explained that at this point in the conflict he was thinking,

Talking, talking — I was getting tired of this. We had to settle this, we had to have a fight.

Violence to resolve conflict was often signalled by fights taking place by prior agreement.

Another reason prisoners used force was punishment, for example, in reaction to ‘grassing’, cell theft, or defaulting on a debt. Sara and Kate learned that Mary had informed on them. Sara threatened her; then, later, Kate assaulted Mary. Sara explained:

These purposes — to demonstrate toughness, to settle differences, or to punish — were the most commonly cited reasons prisoners decided to use force.

She’d grassed people up. She broke the worst rule ever. If you let someone get away with it, it is telling others it is no problem. You got to be seen doing something. She has got to pay for it.

These purposes — to demonstrate toughness, to settle differences, or to punish — were the most commonly cited reasons prisoners decided to use force. The picture becomes a bit more complex, as the purposes differ across types of prison. As stated, while young offenders fought to resolve a conflict, adult prisoners — male and female — almost never said they believed a fight would settle their differences. The use of force to punish a prisoner who had broken a code of behaviour was most common among women prisoners.

The purposes reflect prisoners’ perceived needs; meeting their needs more effectively will help to reduce the occasions where violence is considered a pragmatic option.

Managing conflict

The escalation of conflict into violence is not inevitable. In every conflict, there are chances to divert the course into a non-violent outcome.

Overnight on the induction wing, the men in neighbouring cells struck up a conversation about football. It transpired that they were supporters of arch enemies. The chat turned into an argument, with each trying to outdo the other’s insults about their team. One lost his temper and became racially abusive. The conversation ended with mutual insults. In the morning, when the first door was opened, the wing’s diversity rep was standing next to the officer. He told the man, ‘I’d like to welcome you to this prison. We all understand how emotional people get about football. But we heard you use a term that isn’t tolerated here. I hope you can understand that we all have to respect each other and part of that is that we don’t tolerate racism. Let me know if you need anything and I’ll try to help.’⁵

Rachel came to Bobby’s cell and asked to borrow her radio. Bobby, who was serving a sentence for a

4. Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales (2011) *Learning from PPO investigations: Violence reduction, bullying and safety*, London: Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.
5. Described on a prison visit to investigate effective responses to racist tensions, see Prison Reform Trust (2010) *A Fair Response: developing responses to racist incidents that earn the confidence of black and minority ethnic prisoners*, online: http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/fair_response%20developing%20responses%20to%20racist%20incidents%20.pdf

serious assault, told her no. The next day, on association, Bobby went to her cell and saw her radio was missing. She rushed down the wing to find Rachel chatting to others, with the radio on. She pointed her finger in Rachel's face and told her she was 'out of order'. Rachel stood and told her, 'Don't ever talk to me like that.' Bobby returned to her cell, with Rachel following close behind, shouting and making threats. An officer stood between them and told Rachel to return to her cell. A group of women asked Bobby to explain the problem. They then went to Rachel and heard her point of view. Just before bang-up, the women returned to Bobby's cell to tell her that Rachel was sorry.

Ideas about how to make prisons safer from violence are often reduced to two: tighten up the regime, or make it more liberal. Coercive controls, such as lock-downs and discipline, can keep prisoners separate, but this path tends to increase frustrations and resentment.

Ross Homel and Carleen Thompson reviewed research on prison violence and concluded:

... the more coercive the prison environment the greater the potential for violence. This is especially so where the prison management and treatment of prisoners are perceived by prisoners as illegitimate, as this strengthens prisoner solidarity in opposition to the authorities.⁶

Alternatively, creating opportunities for personal responsibility enables some prisoners to find positive roles, but for a few prisoners, such tolerance is seen as an opportunity to victimise and exploit peers.

Both strategies assume that the problem of assaults in prison is predominantly a function of discipline, and that the solution lies in how rules are made and enforced.

A conflict-centred strategy provides a fresh alternative to the dichotomy between strict and liberal regimes. Managing violence begins by exploring the conflicts among prisoners in each establishment; working to minimise the sources of conflict; encouraging officers to adopt a more pro-active role in preventing conflicts from escalating; and setting up schemes to facilitate conflict resolution.

There is a continuum of attitudes within prisoner culture toward violence from respect for an assailant, through resigned apathy about violence, to disapproval and a positive commitment to everyone's safety. For example, most long-term prisoners know they are not moving on soon, and therefore have an incentive to maintain a stable environment. On wings with enhanced privileges, prisoners may feel that they have too much to lose, and have a motivation to intervene to prevent two inmates arguing.

Prisoners who prioritise safety and who could contribute to a safer environment may be inhibited by a culture that condones the use of force. In prisons that do not prioritise safety, there is a lack of opportunities available to prisoners to resolve their conflicts non-violently: no wing forums, impartial mediators who are trained to intervene in disputes, or formal opportunities to negotiate win-win solutions.

Measures for preventing violence

The prison inspectorate's expectations on violence reduction contain steps that, practised consistently, have great potential for preventing conflicts from escalating into fights or assaults.⁷

In particular:

1. Build a knowledge base about factors that contribute to

conflict in each prison.

Effective prisoner surveys establish prisoner perceptions of safety and the findings are used to inform regular reviews of the strategy and the nature and seriousness of incidents.

An inherent weakness of violence reduction strategies is a lack of detailed knowledge about the causes of fights or assaults among prisoners. Regular prisoner surveys about victimisation provide evidence about underlying factors contributing to violence: the extent to which prisoners are dealing with exploitation or threats, or criminal activity such as thefts or assaults. Surveys can provide evidence upon which to refine strategies, for example by revealing basic human needs which prisoners believe are not being met. Prisoners should also be asked, directly, to contribute ideas about how to prevent violence.

6. Homel, R and Thompson, C (2005) 'Causes and prevention of violence in prisons', in Sean O'Toole & Simon Eyland (Eds.), *Corrections criminology* (pp. 101-108), Sydney: Hawkins Press.
7. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2012) *Expectations: criteria for assessing the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons*, London: HMCIP.

Prisons run by management and staff who are determined to improve the service to prisoners are good at bringing conflicts to light and working with prisoners to try to find solutions. They need to be resourceful in trying to learn from prisoners what their main concerns are about. For example, they might use a prisoner council to raise and resolve some of the basic, structural conflicts in the prison.

2. Focus officers on confronting the harmful behaviour that escalates into violence.

Staff supervise prisoners, confront unacceptable behaviour and are consistent in challenging these behaviours.

Or, as the expectation for women's prisons states:

Staff have the necessary training and skills to promote positive and supportive relationships, and to consistently identify and challenge problematic behaviour.⁸

Prison officers play a number of crucial roles in preventing violence. When they protect all prisoners from harmful behaviour, staff foster a culture of mutual respect and counter the impact of anti-social behaviour in escalating disputes. Rules against drugs, weapons, and other contraband are rigorously enforced. 'High-crime' areas within the prison are closely supervised. Dynamic security enables officers to recognise signs of trouble early and employ conflict resolution, persuading the foes to discuss their differences non-violently.

In developing the skills staff need, governors should focus on supporting staff in:

- ☐ identifying aggressive tactics and intervening to prevent prisoners using behaviour such as insults, threats, accusations, or hostile gestures
- ☐ improving communication between the parties
- ☐ striving to create a culture that favours negotiation and the fulfilment of basic human needs over coercive controls.

The House of Commons Justice Committee highlighted the crucial role of prison officers:

The main foundation of a safe prison is dynamic security, established through

consistent personal contact between officers and prisoners, enabling staff to understand individual prisoners and therefore anticipate risky situations and prevent violence.⁹

3. A whole-prison commitment to conflict resolution

Interventions are aimed at achieving sustained and agreed changes in behaviour and include mediation and conflict resolution.

Non-violent responses by prisoners are rewarded. Prisoners' skills in responding to conflict are developed. Improving skills at resolving conflicts can reduce their risk of assaulting others and their risk of being assaulted.¹⁰

The prison should ensure that mechanisms for resolving conflicts among prisoners are easily accessed by all prisoners. Mediation should be widely available to provide prisoners with a choice of non-violent means for resolving their differences. Mediation could be provided direct by voluntary sector organisations or by prisoners trained in mediation and/or restorative justice.

Regular wing meetings discuss causes of tensions. As a prisoner explained to the Prison Reform Trust's study of prison councils:

'You get anger in other prisons. You walk past another con and you feel the anger welling up. Soon you feel that with every other prisoner. You feel the tension all of the time. Here, you bring it up in the wing meeting, and settle it.'¹¹

Reducing violence is a huge and complex challenge in a prison. Detailed data about the conflicts that lead to violence can enable managers to make well-informed decisions about the most effective ways to implement a conflict resolution approach to preventing violence. The sources of fights and assaults can be minimised by:

- ☐ fulfilling prisoners' basic human needs
- ☐ protecting prisoners' personal safety
- ☐ providing opportunities to exercise personal autonomy, and
- ☐ building in mechanisms for prisoners to resolve conflicts.

8. HMCIP (2014) Expectations: Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for women in prison, London: HMCIP.

9. House of Commons Justice Committee (2015) Prisons: planning and policies, Ninth Report of Session 2014-15, HC 309, online: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmjust/309/309.pdf>

10. Examples of organisations providing conflict resolution training are: Leap Confronting Conflict; Khulisa (Silence the Violence); and AVP Britain (workshops and a correspondence course, Facing up to Conflict).

11. Prison Reform Trust (2004) *Having their say: The work of prisoner councils*, by E. Solomon and K. Edgar, London: Prison Reform Trust.

Preventing and Reducing Prison Bullying

Dr Kate Gooch and **Dr James Treadwell** University of Birmingham, and **Russ Trent** Governor, HMP Brinsford.

'[Bullying] happens in every jail. You are never going to be able to cut it out completely but you can try and make it as little as possible, minimum amount.'

(Peter, prisoner)

Bullying is often said to be endemic in young offender institutions. Indeed, a series of recent HM Inspectorate of Prisons reports note high levels of violence and bullying across the YOI estate.¹ The true scale of prison bullying is, however, difficult to accurately assess, partly because of its subtlety and complexity, but also because prisoners may not recognise certain behaviour as 'bullying' or, if they do, may be unwilling to disclose concerns to staff. This, coupled with the young age of prisoners, their physical and emotional immaturity, and the use of new psychoactive substances, can render the task of reducing prison bullying particularly challenging. However, as the quote above suggests, both the prevalence and severity of prison bullying can be reduced, even in establishments holding high numbers of young prisoners. Drawing on our shared knowledge of prison bullying amongst young men – as a Governing Governor (Russ Trent) and as academic researchers (Kate Gooch and James Treadwell) – this article discusses the dynamics of prison bullying and explores the ways in which both the prevalence and severity of bullying can be prevented and reduced. We argue that strong staff-prisoner relationships are central to, and ultimately underpin, a whole prison approach to prison bullying. In establishing these relationships, it is the small details that make a big difference.

The Dynamics of Prison Bullying

Whilst it is largely assumed that bullying is common in YOIs, teasing out specific incidents of 'bullying' is fraught with difficulty. First, incidents of 'bullying' bleed into a wider range of inter-connected incidents that include verbal abuse, threats, cell theft, robbery, extortion, physical assault and sexual assault. Second, prisoners and staff do not always have a shared

understanding of what 'bullying' is. Third, and linked to both points, 'bullying' is a conceptually ambiguous and subjective term, far harder to record, evidence and define than 'violent' incidents. Physical violence represents only one facet of prison bullying and can (and more often does) occur independently of a bullying relationship and for reasons such as grudges, personal vendettas, family feuds and 'beef' from 'on road.' Against this backdrop, we found that prison bullying typically took one of several forms, to include: exploitation and extortion; theft and robbery; verbal abuse; threats and intimidation; physical assault; and, coercion to assault others.

Bullying is often inextricably linked to the possession, supply and exchange of permitted and contraband items. Almost everything in prison has currency – paper, clothes, toiletries, mobile telephones, drugs, tobacco, and, as we discovered, even religious texts such as bibles. Prisoners particularly prize property such as tobacco ('burn'), 'exclusive shower gels', clothes, chains and trainers, and are keen to line their cells with a plentiful supply of material possessions in a manner that mimics the flashy, visually garish displays of consumer success that young criminals are known for.² The desire to visibly accrue large amounts of material goods is such that some prisoners find themselves being threatened to hand over property to another prisoner or order 'canteen'³ for them. Charging 'double bubble' when lending canteen or tobacco to other prisoners is also common practice amongst young prisoners. The phrase 'double bubble' is used to describe the practice of lending items, such as tobacco, but requiring twice as much in return. When debts are not repaid by the due date, the debt is doubled again. Not only can prisoners incur debts that quickly became impossible to repay, but the failure to pay often leads to physical violence, intimidation and threats.

The link between prison bullying and the *sub rosa* economy is such that the typical ways of categorising prisoners' involvement in bullying have proved insufficient. Ireland, for example, suggests that there

1. See, for example, the most recent HM Inspectorate reports for Feltham, Brinsford, Glen Parva, Hindley, Werrington and Wetherby.
2. S Hall, S Winlow and C Ancrum, *Criminal Identities and Consumer Culture: Crime Exclusion and the Culture of Narcissism* (Willan, 2008).
3. Canteen refers to the range of goods that can be ordered by prisoners from a selected list and using money either earned in prison or given by family members and friends. A range of items can be ordered, including food, soft drinks, tobacco and writing equipment.

are four types of prisoner: 'bully'; 'bully-victim'; 'victim'; 'not involved'.⁴ These terms did not adequately capture the range of behaviour demonstrated in our research, even within specific categories, which was often far more nuanced than this typology would suggest. Furthermore, the typology fails to adequately grapple with the challenges and difficulties that arise when seeking to care for young prisoners and maintain safety, security and decency. There is also a degree of fluidity between the various groups depending on the dynamics of prison life. Those prisoners who were 'not involved' and appeared to be 'doing their time' could, just as easily, be assaulted, assault, exploit or fight with others. We, therefore, propose a new way of thinking about prisoner roles and involvement in bullying but also victimisation more generally.⁵

Since bullying represented only one form of victimisation, we prefer the term 'perpetrator' as an overarching term to describe those who initiated violence, bullying and victimisation. Within this group, prisoners may perform the role of a 'Basic Bully,' the 'King of the Wing,' the 'Wheeler Dealer,' 'Debt Collectors and Enforcers' and 'Individual players.'

Whilst the 'Basic Bully' is a predatory individual who exploits and bullies vulnerable prisoners, the 'King of the Wing' (a term used by prisoners themselves) acts from a position of power and control, running and co-ordinating nefarious trade activities, controlling certain activities on the wing and, in some cases, orchestrating assaults on other prisoners. Conversely, the 'Wheeler Dealer' had far less status but was active in the sub rosa economy, trading and exchanging desired items across landings, wings and residential units. These individuals were not always overtly bullying or victimising others, but often carefully and deviously 'playing the game.' The 'Debt Collectors and Enforcers' often acted at the behest of the 'Basic Bullies' and 'King of the Wing,' threatening, assaulting and intimidating others to repay debts, assault others or hand over desired items. They tended to be co-conspirators in violent incidents but did not have the power or status to orchestrate prohibited activities, whether that be the supply of contraband or a planned assault on another prisoner. 'Individual players' were those involved individuals who do not necessarily neatly fit into the categories above. Their latent violent

potential and reputation meant that they would not necessarily permanently occupy a core perpetrator role or status, but were primarily self-interested as they navigated the sometimes turbulent waters of the wing. They were just as likely to assault others and extort others but also have the social dexterity to maintain convivial relationships with other known perpetrators and could form convenient alliances and act in cahoots with others when necessary.

The role of 'perpetrator-victim' could be subdivided further still, to include those who assault others but are equally vulnerable to retaliation, those victims who became a perpetrator, and those who assault others under duress. Whilst in the first two cases, the changing roles reflected something of the unpredictable, risk-laden and fluid dynamics of prison life, in the latter, the very act of coercion was in and of itself a form of

victimisation and firmly entrenched a social hierarchy based on power and control. By compelling others to do their 'dirty work,' more powerful and controlling prisoners could achieve certain goals — such as sending a signal to disliked prisoners, punishing non-payment of debt or 'putting someone back in line' — without the risk of detection and the sanctions that this might invite.

Those who might be characterised as 'not involved' in victimisation may not always present as compliant in other

ways. It was certainly true that there were a core group of prisoners who were simply 'doing their time' and a further group of prisoners who were making the most of the available privileges and opportunities to progress, earned Enhanced status and occupying positions of trust and responsibility within the prison. However, other prisoners who were not necessarily involved in directly victimising others, could be highly disruptive in other ways or perform the role of the 'bandit,' holding contraband items (and also bearing the risk of seizure and discipline charges) either for themselves, or more likely, the key players and perpetrators on the wing.

Whilst Ireland identified only one group of 'victims,' we found that the experiences and behaviours of victims varied significantly, ranging from those who were victimised but highly disruptive, those who were victimised but violated prison rules, those who were assaulted but could navigate the prisoner society with

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4. Ireland, J. (2001) 'Distinguishing the perpetrators and victims of bullying behaviour in a prison environment: a study of male and female adult prisoners,' *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 6(2): 229-246; Ireland, J. (2002) *Bullying among Prisoners: Evidence, Research and Intervention Strategies*. Hove: Brunner – Routledge.
5. For further detail, see Gooch, K. and Treadwell, J. (2015) *Prison Bullying*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

ease, and those who could be described as 'pure victims.' Whilst it was the vulnerability and poor adaptation of the 'pure victim' that generated concerns regarding the possibility of significant emotional distress, anxiety and self-harm, those victims who were both highly disruptive or posed disciplinary problems could prove very difficult to manage. 'Pure victims' were more likely to withdraw from social interaction and disengage from the prison regime. Such prisoners often needed considerable care and support to help them develop the kind of resilience and social skills that would enable them to adjust more effectively to prison life as well as address underlying vulnerabilities and needs. Victims who were highly disruptive could prove challenging for staff and required or demanded large amounts of staff time and attention. In such cases, it was important to discern why such prisoners were being disruptive since such behaviour was, in some cases, a manifestation of their fear and distress and a way of alerting staff to their concerns. Thus, a better understanding of the diverse ways in which prisoners demonstrate and manifest their concerns about the existential problems of prison life and ontological insecurity allows for a more nuanced response by staff.

Responding to Prison Bullying

The importance of staff-prisoner relationships in creating and sustaining a safe, secure and decent prison cannot be underestimated nor overstated. In seeking to reduce the prevalence of bullying, situational controls, robust and proportionate security measures, effective systems of reward and punishment, a decent environment and good governance are all crucial. However, without good quality staff-prisoner relationships, the effectiveness and utility of these 'tools' can be easily undermined. When a prison 'feels' unsafe or incidents of assaults against staff and prisoners are high, (understandably) the tendency can be for staff to withdraw from social interaction with prisoners and focus on increasing security and control. Paradoxically, what is actually most needed to restore safety and reduce bullying is an investment in relational capital rather than 'ratcheting up' security and control. For example, at a time when violence and bullying was still high, several gates were removed along a corridor that spanned the width of an establishment to allow prisoners to move easily between the residential units

and other areas of the prison. These gates had served to disrupt the movement of young prisoners along the corridor and, for some, offered a sense of physical and existential security since prisoners could be quickly segregated into different areas of the corridor by locking gates should an incident arise. Removing physical controls and barriers may have appeared counter-intuitive but it ensured that officers were not reliant on such measures to maintain order. In addition, it also enabled prisoners to move far more easily to work, education and other appointments, the environment felt less oppressive and there was less confrontation, both between prisoners and between staff and prisoners, whilst prisoners were moving around the establishment.

The importance of staff-prisoner relationships in creating and sustaining a safe, secure and decent prison cannot be underestimated nor overstated.

Tightening 'operational grip' in response to specific concerns or incidents can be a prudent strategy for addressing immediate threats to prison safety and security, but is largely counter-productive as a long term strategy. This is not to say that there aren't times when such a response is necessary. For example, tensions between different groups of prisoners on two different landings of a particular residential unit escalated to the extent that several fights occurred almost simultaneously. It was quickly clear that these fights had not resolved the dispute and further

violent incidents were likely to occur should the normal regime continue. Intelligence also suggested that prisoners were in possession of improvised weapons. In response, cells were searched, CCTV images examined and reports investigated. The normal regime was suspended for a short period so staff, managers and prisoners could work together to gather intelligence, ultimately ensuring that the subsequent response was proportionate. Whilst this meant a temporary reduction in time out of cell, ultimately, this course of action ensured that both staff and prisoners remained safe. But, such strategies can only be employed for short periods and cannot work in isolation, and, ultimately, must be underpinned by strong staff-prisoner relationships. Not only does the quality of these relationships affect the extent to which prison bullying is allowed to occur, but also directly impacts the likelihood of detection, the willingness of prisoners to seek support, the efficacy of responses to perpetrators and the level and quality of support given to victims.

Crewe *et al* (see also this issue) have observed that staff-prisoner relationships exist on a continuum

between being 'heavy' and 'light,' as well as 'absent' or 'present.'⁶ 'Absence' refers to the physical and interpersonal availability and visibility of prison officers.⁷ In the context of prison bullying, this absence can provide the fertile conditions for bullying to go unchecked. If officers retreat to wing offices or otherwise avoid social interaction with prisoners, the little details are often missed — but these details matter. Simply knowing who prisoners are, where they are located and whether or not they were engaging with the regime matters in small but tangible ways. Generally, the signs and symptoms of bullying, and the key 'flash points' are obvious if you are looking closely enough. Even if victims feel unable to report bullying, they often behave in ways that indicate their despair and fear, such as not collecting their meals, refusing to attend work or education, avoiding social interaction, avoiding association and failing to shower or use the telephone. Officers who are an active and observant presence on the wings and landings can quickly identify such issues and respond effectively, ultimately improving prisoner safety and reducing the likelihood of incident.

Knowing who prisoners are also means that the dynamics of social interaction between prisoners and the flow of power can be observed, with the effect that prisoners who are known perpetrators can be located away from known victims. Since perpetrators are often in cahoots with others, an awareness of the relationships between prisoners means that peers who are affiliated with each other can be separated and not located in the same cell or on the same landing or wing. Whilst this does not permanently prevent such people from interacting, it does disrupt activity and the ease with which groups of prisoners are able to exert a negative influence on others. It also avoids victims forming the impression that they are surrounded by those who would seek to harm or exploit them, which could easily prove overwhelming. Knowing who prisoners are also means that prisoners who were active in the sub rosa economy and regularly extorting others are not promoted to positions such as peer mentor or wing cleaner, since it is in these positions that more manipulative prisoners could exploit others, exchange contraband and enforce debts. Taken together, an

awareness of who prisoners are, how they interact and where they are located serves to prevent or reduce opportunities for perpetrators to victimise others.

It is often assumed that prisoners will not approach staff to disclose concerns about bullying for fear of being seen as a 'grass'. Whilst this remains true for a sizeable majority of the prisoner population, it is possible to foster an environment where more prisoners will come forward to report bullying, but they will only do so if they believe they can trust officers to take their concerns seriously. Officers who are willing to offer practical assistance and 'get things done' — that is those who are 'present,' 'active' and 'engaged' — instill a faith and confidence in prisoners. For example:

You pick out certain officers that are genuine and are good and everything. You basically stick with them. You build your trust and bonds with them and then if you have any problems or issues you go to them. They will help you.

Prisoners are only prepared to risk disclosing concerns if they feel confident that officers will act intelligently to protect them.

Prisoners are only prepared to risk disclosing concerns if they feel confident that officers will act intelligently to protect them. Thus, fostering the kind of social environment where prisoners turn to staff for help and support requires officers to be proactive in a range of very practical and seemingly unrelated ways, such

as responding to requests for toilet roll.

The most effective way we've observed of building strong staff-prisoner relationships is when staff make 'every contact matter' and use each small interaction as an intervention. Essentially, this means that the seemingly routine, normal and everyday conversations and interactions between staff and prisoners are reframed as opportunities for rehabilitative interventions. In so doing, staff seek to: offer hope and opportunity; help 'turn a negative into a positive;' build trust; reinforce reward; assist problem solving; and, demonstrate care and kindness. This involves skills such as Socratic questioning, active listening, verbal reinforcement and motivational interviewing. When staff have been trained to do so, outcomes can be stronger. The outcomes for staff include a greater propensity for praise and encouragement, enhanced empathy, greater practical and emotional support and

6. Crewe, B., Liebling, A., and Hulle, S. (2014) 'Heavy-light, absent-present: revisiting the weight of imprisonment' *British Journal of Sociology* 65(3): 387-410.

7. Ibid 397.

increased job satisfaction. Prisoners are more likely to feel that someone cares, that their concerns are taken seriously, that someone has listened, possess greater hope in their ability to change, engage in self-reflection and engage in behavioural change. Overall, relationships are stronger, more likely to be based on respect and more likely to be seen as positive by both staff and prisoners. When staff are minded to make 'every contact matter', they are also more likely to see opportunities to intervene before incidents escalate, ultimately reducing the likelihood of harmful behaviour to themselves and others.

Prison staff are not only significant in terms of enabling victims to raise concerns, but they are fundamental to the success of initiatives designed to support victims. Typically, anti-bullying and violence reduction strategies focus on challenging, managing and disciplining perpetrators. Whilst this is certainly necessary, the importance of victim identification and support can be easily overlooked. The ACCT process seeks to offer support to those prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide, but support for victims of violence and bullying who are not necessarily demonstrating such behaviour can be limited. Often there is no formal support mechanism for victims who are not attempting self-harm or suicide but still require higher levels of care and assistance. The 'Supported living Unit' (SLU) is a specialised unit seeking to do just that. The initial idea was developed from innovation at HMP Bullingdon and, in the first instance, the SLU offers respite and sanctuary to prisoners who are struggling to adapt to prison life and/or who are being victimised by others. In seeking to provide high levels of care and support, a dedicated team of competent, skilled and motivated staff is essential. In addition, a small number of carefully selected and trained peer mentors provide support and advice to prisoners located on the SLU. The peer mentors also reside on the SLU and, as prisoners also serving time, they are able to relate to the experiences of prisoners on the SLU. Moving a prisoner from normal location to the SLU effectively severs contact between

perpetrators and victims, eliminating the risk of sustained victimisation. By creating a place of safety, levels of fear, distress and anxiety can be alleviated, which in turn reduces the propensity towards self-harm, cell fires and cell damage. It also allows prisoners to regain confidence and begin re-engaging with the regime. Thus, the availability of a dedicated SLU has served to prevent and reduce bullying, provide high levels of care to those who need it most, and ensure that the most vulnerable prisoners feel safe.

Conclusion

High levels of prison bullying are not inevitable. Whilst bullying may not ever be eliminated entirely, its incidence and severity can be significantly reduced. The reduction of prison bullying requires a whole prison approach, and central to that approach is good quality staff-prisoner relationships. Such relationships underpin the success of strategies to prevent and respond to bullying and violence. In establishing such relationships, every contact matters so that even brief interactions present opportunities to strengthen these relationships. When the relational approach is 'right,' not only is it possible to prevent bullying, but when bullying occurs, the response is swift and appropriate, victims are supported and the behaviour of perpetrators is addressed in constructive ways. Moreover, in order to adequately address bullying, prisoners need to be located in the right places, whether that be on normal location or in a unit with a specialist function — such as healthcare, segregation or a supported living unit. In those locations, staff competence, skill, expertise and ideological approach matters, as does the quality of engagement between staff and prisoners. Preventing and reducing bullying is not a numbers game. Sufficient numbers of staff are essential but, crucially, it is quality of the relationships and the willingness of staff to be active, present, caring and engaged that makes the difference.

The illicit economy, debt and prison violence: Is prisoner debt inevitable?

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Prisons are familiar with the challenges posed by prisoner debt, bullying and violence and these, together with the illicit economy in prisons, are not new issues. So has anything changed? This article describes research findings that prisoners now view participating in the illicit economy as low risk, fuelling activity and contributing to rising prisoner debt. The authors argue that while the illicit economy is inevitable at some level, this does not preclude keeping those who are in debt safe by helping them to change the behaviour that compels them to buy what they cannot afford.

Introduction

This article draws on a research study undertaken with support from NOMS to gain a better understanding of the illicit economy (IE) and its impact on prison safety and on violence in prisons. The study began in October 2014 and involved process mapping, financial modelling and extensive interviews with prisoners, staff and managers.¹

The IE is taken to mean trade between prisoners that is forbidden by law or by prison rules. Illicit trade includes goods (ranging from canteen items to classified drugs, New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), prescribed medications, alcohol or mobile phones) and services (such as money lending and gambling). The impact of the IE on prisoners may be both positive, by filling idle hours or keeping prisoners calm, or it may be negative, by giving rise to debt which may well lead to threats, assaults, bullying, self-harm, isolation and transfer to another wing or to another prison. This article does not seek to pass judgement on the balance of positive and negative impacts of the IE. It takes the

perspective that the IE in some form is inevitable and that the challenge is to maximise any benefits and to minimise any harm.

The scale of the problem

It is helpful to have some concept of the scale of the 'legitimate' economy in prisons. As a crude indicator of this, we sampled total wages and money sent in through the post in four adult male prisons in the last week of January this year. This revealed that each prisoner would have 'income' of some £18 per week on average.² Averages per prisoner are misleading in the context of the IE because prisoners have told us that they believe over seventy percent of them participate in the IE,³ but there will be far fewer sellers than buyers and many buyers will not have the 'average' £18 per week to spend. For those who are smokers and have no money sent in, buying an ounce of tobacco through the canteen could account for their entire weekly income.

There is money to be made in the IE for those willing and able to trade, not least because margins available are extremely attractive for sellers. This is best illustrated by reference to drugs. Ten years ago, it was thought that drugs in prison would fetch between three and four times their street value.⁴ Now, using NPS is thought to be lower risk because they are not illegal and they evade drug testing detection.⁵ Demand for these drugs is therefore higher and this is reflected in the price. Prisoners estimate that between half and three-quarters of them use or have used NPS (although social norms research more generally would suggest that this is the kind of situation where the scale of use might be overestimated). Even if the precise level of use cannot be determined, it was reported to us that NPS fetches

1. The material included almost 40 hours of recorded interviews conducted by the authors on the illicit economy with 71 prisoners in one Category B and three Category C adult male prisons in England during the first quarter of 2015.
2. See Footnote 1: For the four prisons in the interview sample, Prisoners' Monies, Finance Audit Log, Week commencing 26 January 2015.
3. See Footnote 1: Average participation estimated in our interview sample to be 72% (range 30-95%).
4. Crewe, B. (2005). Prisoner society in the era of hard drugs. *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 7(4), pps. 457-481.
5. Faure Walker, D. (2015). The informal economy in prisons. *Criminal Justice Matters*, Vol. 99, pps. 18-19.

between eight and ten times its street value.⁶ Using modest assumptions about activity levels and prices, the weekly IE would generate margins equivalent to one third of the legitimate prisoner economy.⁷ So the IE is not insignificant and those with an appetite but limited means for buying illicit goods will need to find a way of paying other than their weekly earned prison income. They may access their own external funds, get help from their families with payment, sign over their canteen sheets, 'do favours', steal from fellow prisoners or get into debt. Prisoners confirmed these options for payment in a recent study of prisoner debt at HMP and YOI Moorland.⁸ The study reported prisoners' perceptions that debt was a problem, but stopped short of attempting to estimate the possible scale of the issue. Of the prisoners we interviewed as part of our research, more than one in three acknowledged that they had then or in the past had an issue with debt.⁹

The inevitability of the problem

Before looking in more detail at the issue of prisoner debt, we might usefully explore what insights are offered in recent research on consumer debt. The literature distinguishes borrowing or credit (planned and intended) from debt (unplanned and unintended).¹⁰ Ottaviani pointed out that the variables that drive household debt have typically been taken to be socio-demographic (age, gender, location, education level etc.) and economic (income, work status, net wealth etc.),¹¹ but acknowledged that behaviour deviates from rational choice – 'buy now, pay later' decisions bring instant gratification at a future cost. Building on this, Martin and Potts found that impulsive individuals are biased towards immediate rewards and pay less attention to the future negative consequences of their

choices.¹² Gathergood concluded that lack of self-control and poor financial literacy in individuals are associated with high debt burdens.¹³ This would seem to be consistent with expectations of prisoners' circumstances and behaviour.

Consideration of 'crisis debt' (where there is no prospect of paying off or even reducing debt) may offer even more insight. Lea identified particular characteristics of a 'severe debtor group' that ring true for prisoners in debt. In brief, these severe debtors are chronically short of money, have troubled life histories and particular behavioural and psychological features (such as feeling the stigma of debt so keenly that they spend to cover up the issue).¹⁴ The combination of impulsivity, poor self-control and an imperative to 'chase the high' or to 'kill time' combine to minimise attention to the inevitable consequence of spending money they have little or no prospect of repaying. These personality features are also very common among people who have committed crime and indeed are seen as a key aspect of the explanation of criminal behaviour.¹⁵ As a result, these features will be over-represented

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among the prisoner population, making the incidence of debt in prison even less surprising.

There may in addition be something to be learned from consideration of so-called 'payday lending'. This might typically involve borrowing £100 and repaying £120-125 in a weeks' time — interest charged at an annual percentage rate (APR) in excess of 1,000 per cent per annum! Each lender has their own policy on fees, interest and how to collect any money owing to them.¹⁶

6. See Footnote 1: NPS bought for £8 per gramme on the high street or on the internet could be worth £65-80 in prison.
7. See Footnote 1: Weekly trade estimated at half the prison buying 2 NPS roll-ups, one in five buying half-an-ounce of tobacco at 'double bubble' and a small handful of mobile devices changing hands.
8. Picksley, M. & Midgley, V. (2014). An exploration of prisoners' perceptions of debt acquired between prisoners at HMP & YOI Moorland. *Report by Yorkshire & Humberside Psychological Services*, pps. 1-30. Ministry of Justice, London.
9. See Footnote 1: 26 of 71 interviewees self-reported existing or past debt in prison.
10. Webley & Nyhus (2001). Lifestyle and dispositional routes into problem debt. *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 92(3), pps. 423-446.
11. Ottaviani, C. & Vandone, D. (2011). Impulsivity and household indebtedness: Evidence from real life. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol 32, pps. 754-761.
12. Martin, L. & Potts, G. (2009). Impulsivity in decision-making: An event-related potential investigation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 46, pps. 303-308.
13. Gathergood, J. (2011). Self-control, financial literacy and consumer over-indebtedness. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 33, pps. 590-602.
14. Lea, S., Mewse, A. & Wrapson, W. (2012). The psychology of debt in poor households in Britain. In *A Debtor World: Inter-disciplinary Perspectives on Debt*, (Eds. Brubaker, R., Lawless, R & Tabb, C.), pps. 151-8.
15. Andrews, D. & Bonta, J. (2010). The Major Risk/Need Factors of Criminal Conduct. *The psychology of criminal conduct*, 5th Edition, pps. 157-294. LexisNexis, New Jersey, USA.
16. See <http://paydayloans.money.co.uk>

Using payday lenders is extremely expensive and the financial penalties are severe for not paying off a loan on due date. In response to complaints about lender practices and profitability, earlier this year the Financial Conduct Authority ruled that borrowers will never pay back more than double what they borrowed (in prison jargon, 'double bubble')¹⁷ and the Competition and Markets Authority required payday lenders to give borrowers more information on costs and greater ability to compare offers.¹⁸ These moves were in part designed to curb lender profitability and to reduce the scope for preying on the vulnerable. Are the experiences of prisoners in debt any different to those under severe financial pressure, whether having 'crisis debt' or resorting to payday lenders?

The additional prison variables

Trading 'morality' in the prison IE would seem to be consistent with 'we made a deal and we should both live up to our obligations, or consequences flow'. Follow-up action in the event of default tends to be swift and may be violent. Because terms of trade in prison generally follow a weekly cycle, escalation timescales are inevitably compressed. In business, the financial settlement cycle is typically monthly but many, including some government organisations, defer payment to 120 days and more (generally without any financial or other penalty). Business practice is markedly less aggressive than what is found in prisons. The 'captive' trade in prisons makes terms of trade much easier to enforce because those in debt cannot hide behind telephone calls and administrative hold-ups. The escalation through threats into violence may be swift (perhaps as a message to others, or to teach the individual a lesson) or more measured (a repeat customer to be kept hold of) and trust between buyer and seller plays a significant role. Sellers want their trade to run smoothly, but they are likely to be sensitive to their reputation and they do not want to be thought of as a soft touch. This suggests there will be a place for some leeway on payment terms and this already happens informally to some extent when prisoners 'look out for each other'. So quite how some or all of extended terms, threats, assaults, self-imposed isolation, self-harm and wing or prison transfer play out does vary.

Where it has been attempted, the challenge with a more formal mediation arrangement is that an

intermediary or mediator, such as a prisoner Violence Reduction representative, would need to be trusted by both parties. This trust would have to be earned because mediators need to be both skilled and impartial. Neither fellow prisoners nor prison staff will necessarily be trusted in the role of mediator. Those who are owed money will in any event typically not want to be identified or involved in a mediation process.

Because the financial settlement cycle for the IE is weekly (usually on canteen day), the pressure is intense to settle any debt quickly. For those who are not able to pay at the end of the weekly cycle, some may be given extended credit. This may be a rational customer retention ploy on the part of the seller, or it may be a manipulation to make the buyer even more obligated to the seller, who is likely to be aware that the buyer is spending beyond his means. The three main tactics used by a prisoner in debt are: (1) start trading to generate the margin needed to pay off the

debt; (2) 'buy time' by agreeing extended terms and by stopping buying; or (3) try to avoid the obligation (for example, by getting transferred to another prison). It may be that those who are prone to getting into debt lack the motivation or skills to become traders and they may find it difficult to exercise the

self-control to stop buying what they cannot afford. These factors would suggest that being transferred to another wing or prison to avoid or 'run away' from their debt problem may be a popular strategy, although the phenomenon of 'debt transfer' means that this does not necessarily remove the debt or the violence from the local illicit economy.

During our research, some prisoners reported instances of 'debt transfer' from prisoner to prisoner. This can take a number of forms. It may be that an attempt is made to 'attach' the debt of a prisoner transferred away from the prison to an incoming prisoner who happens to be allocated to the leaver's cell. It may be that a prisoner is held accountable for the financial loss by confiscation of, say, a mobile phone that he was holding (whether willingly or not). It may be that a prisoner from a particular locality who is isolated on a wing has the debt of another prisoner from his area 'allocated' to him by a rival locality-based group or gang. In one instance, it was alleged that no rationale was offered for the debt to be taken on (in other words it was an attempt to extort money from the victim). When the debtor moves on, the debt

Follow-up action in the event of default tends to be swift and may be violent.

17. See <http://www.fca.org.uk/news/fca-confirms-price-cap-rules-for-payday-lenders>

18. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-finalises-proposals-to-lower-payday-loan-costs>

may not, so the local cycle of trading, debt and possibly violence carry on.

Debt related violence

Crewe suggested that there is little sympathy for those in debt (many of whom are drug users) because prisoners subscribe to a code of individual responsibility for meeting their obligations.¹⁹ Our interviews confirm a strongly held view (at least among sellers) that, if a deal is done for goods at a price and the goods are delivered, the buyer must pay or face the consequences. The escalation path for non-payment may include intimidation and threats of violence or may move straight to a violent incident (fight or assault) involving one or many assailants. Those in debt may seek 'help' from staff at any stage in this process, usually a wing transfer or a transfer away from the prison (to escape the debt), citing the prison's obligation to keep them safe. If the plea is acted on, the prisoner may be moved to a segregation unit or vulnerable prisoners' wing (if there is one). The 'quid pro quo' for this action may or may not involve disclosing the name of the person(s) issuing the threats, with the negative implication of being dubbed a 'grass' if they comply. If the plea is not acted on, the prisoner may opt for self-isolation in their cell, or try more extreme ways of prompting a transfer, for example by assaulting a member of staff, or by self-harming or setting a fire in their cell. Whatever the particular strategy selected, the action is instrumental: to be moved away to 'escape' the debt.

To the extent that violence is implicated in the financial settlement cycle, the literature proposes many possible causes of prison violence; for example, social context,²⁰ mental health problems,²¹ personality disorders²² and bullying.²³ It is entirely possible that some or all of the above factors apply (for example, to 'send a message' to a rival that a particular individual or group are not to be 'messed with' — in effect

bullying). Debt-related violence is nonetheless purposive and instrumental (to get the debt paid) and, on the face of it, is the root cause of many reportable incidents in prison. For example, at one prison, we found that almost 40 per cent of violent incidents against other prisoners reported over a seven-month period in 2014 were recorded as debt-related.²⁴ In another prison, the most common factors attributed to violence between prisoners were debt, stealing of property and drug issues, all of which are highly likely to be inter-related.²⁵ We looked more closely at what happens with prisoners following a reportable incident (involving threats or violence between prisoners) that gave rise to adjudication. So, for example, at one prison, by the day after a twelve week period ending October 2014, one-third of prisoners implicated as victims in debt-related reportable incidents had been transferred away from the prison; one third remained in the segregation unit or on the vulnerable prisoners' wing and one-third were back on a normal wing.²⁶ This lends support to the notion that avoidance by way of transfer is a crucial coping mechanism for debt in the IE. While it is appropriate that prisons are fulfilling their mandate to keep prisoners safe, the concern is that in some cases, because of exactly this pressure, the underlying prisoner behaviour giving rise to the debt issue — prisoners buying what they cannot afford — is not being confronted.

Understanding the dilemmas

Outside of prison life, there is constant questioning of the extent to which the 'grey market' for goods and services and the 'grey economy' or 'cash economy' should be tolerated and of the resources that should be applied to tackling them, as exemplified by the election comment by then Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls that people should insist on getting a receipt for the smallest cash-in-hand jobs as opposed to tackling tax-evading

Our interviews confirm a strongly held view (at least among sellers) that, if a deal is done for goods at a price and the goods are delivered, the buyer must pay or face the consequences.

19. See Footnote 4: Crewe, p.468.

20. Edgar, K. O'Donnell, I. & Martin, C. (2003). Prison Violence: The dynamics of conflict, fear and power. Willan Publishing, UK.

21. Codd, H. (2010). Mental health problems in prisons. At <http://site.elibrary.com/id/10441966>

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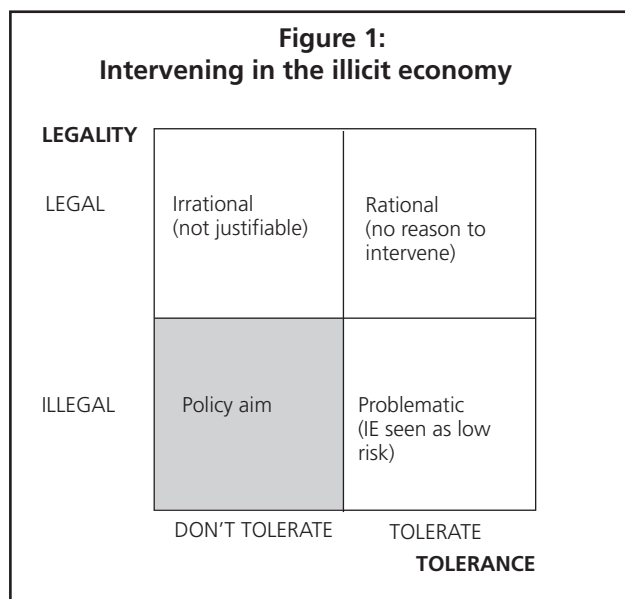
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hedge funds.²⁷ One way of thinking about whether and how to intervene in the IE is to distinguish legal from illegal activity and what should be tolerated from what should not be tolerated (see Figure 1 below).



The logical policy aim would be not to tolerate any illegal activity (the shaded area). It would be rational for prisons to tolerate any activity that is legal (and irrational not to). It would be problematic if activities that are illegal or against prison rules were to be tolerated or perceived to be tolerated, because prisoners would view any such activity as being low risk. A particular dilemma for prisons is that the boundaries have become somewhat blurred, meaning that there is pressure to be lenient on what is 'against prison rules' (for example, prisoners getting into debt) and to be tolerant (for example, prisoners borrowing tobacco on reception to fill a void in process). This pressure may be having the effect of creating uncertainty in the minds of staff on when to intervene in the IE and when not to intervene and skewing prisoner perception of risk of being involved in the IE.

Among the dilemmas in dealing with prisoner debt is the challenge of how to distinguish between vulnerable and manipulative prisoners. Is the request for help to be kept safe from threatened assault because the debt issue is genuine, or is it a manipulative ploy to achieve the aim of getting 'shipped out' to leave the debt behind, or for reasons that are nothing to do with debt at all? In an ideal world, there would be the time and the resources available to investigate what is going on. The reality would seem to be that the imperative to keep prisoners safe is the overriding concern, so that moving the problem around by transferring it from A to B to C to D is the understandable but costly pragmatic

solution. This strategy, unfortunately, plays into the hands of the manipulators. Sadly, knowledge that getting transferred is very much on the cards, possibly after having had to take a beating or to stage manage a beating to authenticate being unsafe, is unlikely to discourage the genuinely vulnerable from continuing with the buying behaviour that is causing the problem. And there will always be hard-nosed or cynical sellers who exploit weakness by preying on the vulnerable, arguing that there is demand for what they have to offer and that available product needs to be moved.

So what is to be done?

In business, tackling grey markets can involve restricting supply to unauthorised sellers, using whatever legal remedies may be available, or it can involve making goods freely or at least more readily available at lower prices to reduce the attractiveness of the unauthorised trade. Regrettably in the prison context, enabling rather than restricting supply to the IE would place prisoners at risk, certainly in relation to NPS and drugs. Reducing the price and increasing the accessibility of goods in high demand (such as tobacco) and services in demand (like telephone calls) would in effect boost disposable income for many prisoners. The difficulty would be that any increase in disposable income might be directed to undesirable spend. Another approach might be to bear down aggressively on the IE by introducing more stringent controls and penalties for participants in the IE, both sellers and buyers, in effect increasing the perceived risk to individuals. Bearing down aggressively on the IE would call for significant investment (for example in body scanners, mobile signal blocking equipment, drug testing procedures and better equipped staff intervening positively to discourage harmful buying behaviour). A tougher stance would need to be counter-balanced by providing support for those genuinely vulnerable prisoners who struggle with making the ill-advised purchases that put them in debt. There is no 'silver bullet' that will make the IE or at least its most problematic elements disappear overnight.

The IE is a complex challenge. Our contention is that prisoners' perception of the risk of being involved in less desirable aspects of the IE may be pivotal in keeping prisoners safe. At present, it seems that many prisoners view participation in the IE as a risk that is worth taking. That perception needs to be changed. So the sort of questions that might usefully be asked (including at a prison level) include: What illicit trade is tolerated and what not? Are prisoners and staff clear on what is and is not tolerated? Is effective use being made of screening tools available to help identify

27. See <http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/ed-balls-keep-all-odd-job-receipts-1-3691697>

vulnerable prisoners on arrival? Where vulnerable prisoners are isolated for a time in a Vulnerable Prisoner wing, is re-integration of a vulnerable prisoner possible without resolving his debt problem? Are we over-using transfers as a means of dealing with prisoner debt? Is information on involvement in IE passed on effectively (particularly between prisons when prisoners are transferred due to their involvement)? Is intelligence on illicit activity used to good effect? Could more be done to support those who do fall into debt, such as providing schemes to mediate repayment? Are staff engaged in a way that both challenges and supports prisoners involved in the IE?

The existence of the prison IE is not a sign of a failing service but is universal and to a certain extent inevitable. People habitually trade and ways of trading

develop in all forms of society and micro-society. We believe there are two important messages from our research so far. The first is that not all aspects of the IE are harmful, but those aspects that are harmful are important to define and understand, not least the links between the IE, debt and violence. The second is that the propensity to get into debt is imported into prison because the personality characteristics and lifestyle associated with debt are similar to those associated with crime more generally. So, if debtors can be helped to resolve their debt problems in ways other than avoidance, (for example, by changing the behaviour that gets them into debt and puts them at risk of violence on non-payment), there should be a long-term beneficial impact on their broader ability to cope with life's challenges.



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Violence, Aggression and Agitation — What part do New Psychoactive Substances play?

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A psychoactive substance is a chemical or drug that when taken acts primarily on the central nervous system resulting in temporary changes in perception, mood, consciousness and behaviour.

Between the early 1980s and late 1990s there was a significant increase in reported illicit drug use in the UK. Following a period of stability, since 2000 there has been a gradual decline in all drug taking ranging from heroin to cannabis. The period since 2008, however has seen what appears to be a significant increase, in both interest and use, of a new range of psychoactive substances.¹

What are New Psychoactive Substances?

Novel or new psychoactive substances (NPS) are essentially drugs, naturally occurring or synthesised from patented substances, which are designed to replicate the effects of illegal drugs. People often misleadingly refer to these drugs as 'legal highs'. However, in 2013-14, nearly 20 percent of 'legal high' samples collected by the Home Office forensic early warning system were actually controlled drugs.² NPS are also known as research chemicals, club or designer drugs and are now increasingly coming under the control of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Manufacturers try to circumvent the legal and marketing drug controls by labelling products 'not for human consumption', and NPS are often sold as plant food, bath salts, cleaning solutions or incense with 'risk of harm if consumed' written on the product packaging. The recent Global Drug Survey³ found that the majority of people using NPS buy online or purchase from friends, dealers or head shops (specialist outlets supplying NPS).

Media attention is often devoted towards announcements that significant numbers of 'new drugs' have been identified. In total, over 300 NPS had been identified by member states of the European Monitoring Centre for Drug and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) by mid-2013.⁴ It appears that, *'the world is witnessing an alarming new drug problem... NPS are proliferating at an unprecedented rate and posing significant public health challenges'*.⁵

How prevalent is NPS?

Evidence from national surveys in the UK describe the use of NPS amongst the general adult population as relatively low compared with the use of other illicit drugs. However, use amongst younger age groups and some other sub-sections of the population is higher. The most robust estimates of NPS use from the national crime surveys 2012-2013 report that, in Scotland, 0.5 per cent of all adults had tried any NPS with mephedrone being the most common.⁶ In England and Wales, 0.6 per cent had taken mephedrone, 2.3 per cent nitrous oxide and 0.5 per cent salvia⁷. In Northern Ireland, in 2010-2011, Mephedrone and 'NPS' was 0.2 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively amongst all adults.⁸

The prevalence of NPS use in prisons is not currently known. In 2014, the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales reported that, *'the increased availability in prison of NPS was a source of debt and associated bullying and a threat to health'*.⁹ The Chief Inspector concluded that whilst 'Spice' (a synthetic cannabinoid) in prisons may not be widespread it can have consequences for all security of the prison and the safety of other prisoners as well as potential damage to

1. Not for human consumption: An updated and amended status report on new psychoactive substances and 'club drugs' in the UK. Drugscope 2015.
2. Annual report on the Home Office Forensic Early Warning System (FEWS). A system to identify NPS in the UK. Home Office, 2014.
3. www.globaldrugsurvey.com
4. EMCDDA – Europol 2013 Annual Report on the implementation of Council Decision 2005/387/JHA.
5. www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/NPS_leaflet_E.pdf
6. NPS – Evidence review. Scottish Government Social Research 2014.
7. NPS in England – A review of the evidence. Home Office 2014.
8. Drug use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: Drug Prevalence Survey 2010/11. National Advisory Committee on Drugs & Public Health Information and Research Branch 2012.
9. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2013-2014.

the users health. Spice and Black Mamba (another synthetic cannabinoid) were cited as causes for concern in 14 (37 per cent) of the adult male prisons inspected, highlighting the need for staff and prisoners to be given accurate and up to date information on the acute health dangers associated with NPS.

As well as health dangers, it is also recommended that data be gathered to evidence the actual incidence of NPS use in prisons rather than rely on perceived use. The apparent perceived epidemic of NPS use may in fact not be the case but may have become a 'constructed social norm'. A social norm is a cultural product that 'represents individuals' basic knowledge of what others do and what others think they should be doing'.¹⁰ Social norms have two dimensions: how much a behaviour happens, and how much the group approves of that behaviour.¹¹ Therefore, people may be less likely to want to take NPS if they believe the majority of their peer group are not taking it and don't think it is acceptable to do so. An ongoing study in one prison aims to test this concept and has found, as predicted, that the rate of self-reported use was lower than the perceived rate of use by other prisoners. This study will evaluate a social norms campaign to promote this view in the hope of discouraging NPS use. There may be many lessons to learn from this approach.

What are the effects of taking NPS?

NPS use carries serious health risks. Many NPS contain chemicals that are harmful or toxic. Users are never certain what they are taking and what the effects might be. A pill or powder that looks like one taken previously may in fact contain different chemicals and be much stronger. Risks are increased if multiple NPS are consumed.

Negative physical effects of taking synthetic cannabis such as Spice include fast and irregular heart rate, decreased blood pressure, dizziness, loss of consciousness as well as vomiting, seizures and loss of motor control. Psychological effects can include paranoia, psychosis, increased anxiety and hallucinations.

Professor John Huffman, who first synthesised many of the cannabinoids used in synthetic cannabis for pain management research, describes these

substances as very dangerous drugs. He says, *'It's like playing Russian roulette. You don't know what it's going to do to you'*.

Most of the effects of NPS fit into one of the following six groups (common slang in brackets):

- ❑ **Stimulants (uppers)** — increase alertness in the brain and mimic substances such as amphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy and these NPS include BZP, mephedrone, MPDV, NRG-1, Benzo Fury, MDAI and ethyphenidate
- ❑ **Depressants (downers)** — sedative type drugs that can feel like tranquilisers that inhibit and relax brain activity mimicking various sedating, anti-anxiety opioid like drugs. These NPS include pyrazolam, flubromazepam and nitrous oxide.
- ❑ **Hallucinogens (trips)** — can cause hallucinations (auditory, visual and tactile) leading to either feelings of happiness and relaxation, or, on a bad trip, agitation and confusion. These drugs mimic substances like LSD and include NPS such as 25i-NBOMe, Bromo-Cragonfly and metoxetamine (similar to ketamine)
- ❑ **Dissociative (spaced out)** — induce feelings of being detached, as if the mind and the body have been separated, with some people feeling incapable of moving. These drugs mimic substances such as PCP, katamine, DXM and can cause hallucinations and have both a

stimulant and depressant effect. Examples include diphenidine and methoxphenidine

- ❑ **Opioids (painkillers)** — these mimic the effects of opiates such as morphine and heroin. Synthetic morphine (AH-7921) and O-desmethy Tramadol (an opiate analgesic) are examples
- ❑ **Synthetic Cannabis (Spice)** — designed to mimic the active chemical Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found in Cannabis frequently used in prisons and traded under such names as Spice, Clockwork Orange, Black Mamba and Exodus Damnation all commonly referred to as 'spice' in prisons. These substances could be included in the downer-type drugs with psychedelic effects but are worthy of a separate category because of perceptions of use and incidence in prisons.

This list shows that NPS drugs can take many different forms and have very different effects. A user, taking an unlabelled white powder, does not know if

... people may be less likely to want to take NPS if they believe the majority of their peer group are not taking it and don't think it is acceptable to do so.

10. R.D. Cialdini (2003) 'crafting normative messages to protect the environment'. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 105-109.

11. J. Jackson (1965) 'Structural characteristics of norms'. In I.D. Steiner & M. Fishbein (eds), *Current studies in social psychology* (pp.301-309).

the drug they are taking is a stimulant, hallucinogen or cannabinoid. Hence, a user who is expecting the effect of cannabis may feel alarm and agitation if they experience instead the effects of a stimulant or hallucinogen.

The effects of NPS vary throughout the experience following ingestion to withdrawal and from person to person. However, the growing body of clinical evidence demonstrates that taking NPS causes acute and persistent health risks that can include agitation, aggression and violence.

Does NPS cause violence?

The media often promote a recurring theme that NPS incites users to act violently. Is this myth or a reality?

Drugs and violence have been described as being related in three possible ways: economically, systemically and psychopharmacologically.¹² The economic model suggests that some drug users engage in economically orientated violence such as robbery in order to support the costs of using drugs. The systemic model describes violence as being intrinsically involved with drug use as part of the traditionally aggressive patterns of interaction within the system of drug distribution (turf wars) and enforcing 'hierarchical' codes associated with the drug or group culture. These models will be addressed elsewhere in this journal. This article concentrates exclusively on the psychopharmacological effects.

The psychopharmacological model suggests that some individuals, as a result of taking substances, may become excitable, irrational, aggressive, agitated and even violent. The EMCDDA reports illicit drug use (acute and chronic), particularly the use of stimulants, as potentially leading to violence or crime by exacerbating existing psychopathological and social problems or by increasing the risk of paranoid or psychotic episodes. There is however a general lack of credible evidence related to psychopharmacology and violence. A study of mephedrone use in South Wales¹³ found over 40 per cent of the sample reporting acting violently whilst under the influence of mephedrone, many in combination with other drugs (including for half of the

women surveyed). There were four distinct links to violence identified: when high; associated with comedown; economic compulsion; and systemic involving the purchase and dealing in mephedrone. Exploring specifically violence when 'high', some mephedrone users became involved in what seems like random acts of violence, often becoming easily and instantly enraged in response to the most trivial triggers. Paranoia was frequently used to explain their involvement in acts of violence, such as believing the people around them (friends, acquaintances or strangers) were talking about them or planning to harm them. Users also reported acts of violence against their partners and family members. Many had no recollection of being violent and they became aware of their actions

by the police after arrest. Aggression and violence during the 'high' or the 'comedown' aspects of mephedrone use were difficult to disentangle. Other studies have also reported that the irritability associated with the withdrawal syndrome from opiates and other drugs may lead to agitation and sometimes violence.

Evidence of the psychopharmacological link between other NPS use and violence is generally sparse despite numerous anecdotes. This is not to suggest there are no links, but rather that there have been few credible studies to consider the issues.

It is assumed that many people in everyday life quickly suppress unacceptable impulses related to becoming violent. NPS may appear to trigger psychopharmacological mechanisms that inhibit the neurobehavioural systems which under normal circumstances control violence. Further research is needed to better understand if the strength of the violent impulse increases or the control mechanisms decline when under the influence of NPS. More research is also needed to disentangle psychopharmacological from potential economic or systemic causes. All this and having to 'control' for alternative individual level causal explanations such as hormonal influences, genetic factors, variations in substance metabolism rates and intoxication decay, psychological functioning, co-current alcohol and other drug use, gender differences and illicit drug dosage makes this type of research very difficult.

... the growing
body of clinical
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taking NPS causes
acute and persistent
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aggression and
violence.

12. P J Goldstein (1985) 'The Drugs/Violence nexus: a tripartite conceptual framework. *Journal of Drug Issues*, v.39, 143-174.

13. Fiona Brookman (2014) The links between mephedrone use, violence and other harms in South Wales. University of South Wales.

It is therefore difficult to conclude that NPS use causes violence psychopharmacologically but we do know that some NPS users, like alcohol use, whilst intoxicated have the propensity to become violent.

Is NPS and violence experienced in other countries? — The phenomena of Excited Delirium, Agitated Chaotic Events and Excited Delirium Syndrome

Robust evidence that attributes NPS and violence to psychopharmacological mechanisms is limited, but plenty of anecdotal reports exist. A potentially relevant development worthy of further exploration is a condition being reported in North America called Excited Delirium (ED), also known as agitated delirium. This condition or state manifests as a combination of delirium, psychomotor agitation, anxiety, hallucinations, speech disturbances, disorientation, violent and bizarre behaviour, insensitivity to pain, elevated body temperature and 'superhuman' strength or endurance.¹⁴ Behaviours such as profuse sweating due to hyperthermia, removing clothes, dilated pupils, skin discolouration, hyperactivity, uncontrollable shaking or shivering, and respiratory distress ('I can't breathe') have also been reported. Several psychological symptoms have also been observed like intense paranoia, panic, extreme agitation, emotional changes, disorientated about time/places and purpose, hallucinations, delusions, scattered ideas and psychosis. Accompanying communication cues include screaming for no apparent reason, pressured, loud and incoherent speech, grunting, guttural sounds, talking to imaginary people and irrational speech. ED has been recognised to occur with NPS use, as well as certain types of mental illness and their associated treatment medications but this is not to say that NPS use causes ED; links between the two are still hotly debated.

Situations where these behaviours are seen are termed Agitated Chaotic Events (ACE). Some instances of death have been reported during ACEs as the result of a combination of factors many attributed to NPS.

Where this occurs, the cause of death can be defined as Excited Delirium Syndrome (ExDS). About 250 people per annum are reported to have died in the USA from ExDS, (between 8–14 per cent of those who experience ED). Many of these deaths were in police custody. Deaths from ExDS have also been linked with the use of physical control restraint measures (usually reported in police custody) including positional asphyxia, transitional restraint, noxious chemical control (such as 'Mace' spray) and deployment of conducted electrical weapons (Tasers).

What can be done to respond to NPS use in Prisons?

NOMS have embarked on a universal communications campaign for staff, prisoners and visitors which will reinforce key messages associated with the risks posed by NPS.

Organisations are responding to NPS and associated harms in three main ways: Prevention (trying to persuade people not to take NPS in the first place), Treatment (for users including when intoxicated) and Enforcement (legal controls and sanctions to reduce supply).

Prevention

Evidence shows that building resilience by supporting people in creating opportunities for alternative, healthier life choices and improving skills, decision making and developing social networks helps people to avoid drugs and associated harms or problems.

Accurate, relevant and accessible information should be an integral part of any substance misuse strategy intending to reduce the harm and demand for drugs including NPS. Prevention campaigns should cover three levels: universal, directed at all people; selective, targeting groups at risk of NPS use; and indicated or direct, people who are known to have used or be using.¹⁵ Messages may need to differ depending on who is being targeted. NOMS have embarked on a universal communications campaign for staff, prisoners and visitors which will reinforce key messages associated with the risks posed by NPS. This includes a prison radio campaign and the production of a video for use on reception and induction into prisons. There are opportunities for this campaign and associated materials to be developed for targeted or indicated groups.

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14. White Paper Report on Excited Delirium Syndrome (2009), American College of Emergency Physicians & JR Grant et al (2009), Excited delirium deaths in custody: past and present. *Am. J. Forensic Med Pathol* 30 (1): 1-5.
15. A.D.Berkowitz 'Social Norms Approach'. www.edc.org/hec/socialnorms/theory.html

NPS Interventions and Treatments

Usually interventions and treatments are required following acute toxicity where the effects have caused the person to display challenging behaviours. Three responses are suggested:

a) Managing acute toxicity

Guidance on the clinical management of acute and chronic harms of club drugs and NPS (NEPTUNE)¹⁶ describe the wider principles within which treatment and care should be provided. This guidance complements the resources provided by the National Poisons Information Services and its online toxicology database and telephone enquiry services (TOXBASE) for advice on the clinical assessment and management of acute toxicity. The aim of the guidance is to improve the confidence and competence of clinicians in the detection, assessment and management of the harms associated with the use of NPS. Specific areas addressed include detection/identification, assessment, management and harm reduction.

b) Longer term support

The Faculty of Addictions Psychiatry report¹⁷ describes how substance misuse providers need to widen their doors to welcome NPS users as 'core business' and place them on an equal footing with alcohol and opiate treatment. Substance misuse services need to understand and meet the needs of the emerging population of drug users and the different cultural and social context associated with this issue. Services need to be responsive to needs and competent to identify, assess and management people with NPS related problems. This means acquiring new skills and knowledge to particularly address this issue. This should be incorporated into service development plans.

c} Collaborative working between custody and healthcare staff

Where Prison Officers are confronted with challenging behaviours, including excitable or agitated conduct, which may be linked to NPS use, they should wherever possible collaborate with healthcare staff to facilitate a clinical assessment of the prisoner/patient in order to effectively manage the situation.

Assessing risk of harm to self and others is of paramount importance. Where use of force, proportionate to the presenting behaviours, is required in order to remove the person to a place of safety for treatment to begin, consideration should be given to any potential health related conditions that may be aggravated by the use of force. Again, collaborating with healthcare staff will minimise any presenting risks.

In the Queen's speech (May 2015) the Government announced that 'new legislation will... ban the new generation of psychoactive substances'.

Enforcement

In the Queen's speech (May 2015) the Government announced that 'new legislation will... ban the new generation of psychoactive substances'. The Bill aims to make it an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, import or export psychoactive substances; that is, any substance intended for human consumption

that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect. Whilst the bill works its way through Parliament there are several initiatives that can be deployed to help restrict the availability of NPS in prisons.

David Blakey produced a report on disrupting the supply of illicit drugs into prisons.¹⁸ He identified various supply routes for drugs into prison such as visitors, over the wall, in the post and parcels, brought in by prisoners and through staff who have been compromised. He advocates sharing good practice, disrupting the use of mobile phones, use of searching and search dogs and enforcing prison rules as a way to disrupt drugs supply. The Prison Drugs Supply Reduction Good Practice Guide also describes interdiction practices that can help stifle availability of NPS in prison and security teams within prisons would be advised to revisit their materials and refresh approaches to stifling availability.

16. www.neptune-clinical-guidance.co.uk/

17. One new drug a week. Faculty of Addictions Psychiatry, Royal College of Psychiatrists (2014).

18. www.drugscope.org.uk/resources/drugscope/documents/pdf/good%20practice/blakeyreport.pdf

Currently, it is a criminal offence to throw a wide range of articles or substances into a prison (including controlled drugs); those NPS not controlled are not covered by this legislation. However, a clause in the Serious Crime Act, expected to come into force later this year, aims to remedy this by making it an offence to throw or project any item over a prison perimeter so that it lands in a prison. This followed reports that NPS was being thrown over the wall or fence of prisons and the police were powerless to take action.

NOMS has recently circulated new guidance to prison governors, which sets out clearly for the first time the enforcement measures available to them to deal with NPS use. Work is also underway to develop an effective test for NPS as part of the Mandatory Drug Testing programme.

Conclusion

Only a minority of prisoners who consume NPS will exhibit challenging behaviours as a result of consumption. Nevertheless, this presents a significant problem for staff to manage. It is likely that the drugs of choice in the future will be synthetics rather than plant products, will be very potent and selective in their action and will be marketed very cleverly.¹⁹ The issues related to NPS use are not going to go away.

It is clear that aggression and violence can be a symptom of NPS use for some people. Each user has a unique bio-psycho-social expectation and underlying

conditions that interact with NPS creating a truly individual response. More research is needed to understand why violence occurs in some people and not others, in order to better predict and manage difficult situations.

Prison officers have a clear role to maintain safe, decent and secure prisons. To achieve this, when confronted with someone potentially intoxicated from a NPS, there is a responsibility to identify, manage and, where absolutely necessary, restrain a person to enable and facilitate the medical professionals to stabilise and treat the individual.

The approach to addressing NPS related violence in prisons needs to be tri-fold including both prevention, interventions/treatments and enforcement. One single approach deployed in isolation is unlikely to be effective. As new evidence informed practice emerges this should quickly be incorporated into new ways of working.

Whilst it is important that prisoners understand that breaking prison rules leads to sanctions and consequences, we are not going to be able to punish our way out of NPS related problems. Punishment does not change behaviours. Prevention, education and treatment, along with care and support, can better help address NPS related problems. This needs to be incorporated into a collaborative culture in every prison and all staff be supported to feel capable and confident in addressing the issue. Working together, can make a big difference.

19. Op Cit. Drugscope 2015.

Reducing Gang Related Prison Violence

Dr Rachel Horan, Christopher Dean and Phil Sutcliffe are based in NOMS Intervention Services.

When considering how violence can be reduced in prisons, it is important that violence committed by groups is acknowledged and understood. Violence may be committed by individuals affiliated with various types of group, such as extremist or terrorist groups, organized crime groups or criminal gangs. The focus of this article is on understanding and reducing violence committed by criminal gangs in custody. To establish how such violence can be reduced, this article will outline and explore some key issues which help to address this question: What do we mean when we talk about 'gangs'? How is gang-affiliated violence different to other violence? Why do people join gangs? Why do they leave? What role can prison staff, policies, environments and interventions play in reducing violence?

Gang: An Elusive Definition

Gang is a word frequently used, yet there is little consensus or agreement about its definition. Definitions vary amongst academics and criminal justice agencies. The Home Office¹ define 'gang' as 'a group of three or more people who have a distinct identity (e.g. a name/badge/emblem) and commit general crime or anti-social behaviour as part of their identity. This group uses (or is reasonably suspected of using) firearms, or the threat of firearms when carrying out these offence.' The Centre for Social Justice paper 'Dying to Belong'² provides the following commonly accepted definition: 'A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:

1. See themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group and
2. Engage in a range of criminal activity and violence.
They *may* also have any or all of the following features:
3. Identify with or lay claim over territory
4. Have some form of identifying structural feature

5. Are in conflict with other similar gangs.'

An advantage of having a clear definition is that this helps to distinguish between different types of criminally-orientated groups and how they should be managed. The 'street orientation' identified in the above definitions appears to be a helpful marker to discriminate gangs from other criminally-orientated groups. However, whilst street orientated gangs from the community may operate in prisons, it is questionable whether this adequately defines similar groups who form in prison. A prison gang has been defined as:³

'an organisation which operates within the prison system as a self-perpetuating criminally orientated entity, consisting of a select group of inmates who have established an organised chain of command and are governed by an established code of conduct'.

Forming and belonging to groups in prison (or having peer relationships) are not inherently problematic behaviours, but are a normal part of being human. Not all groups in prison are gangs. To survive and 'get on' in prison, forming relationships in small groups for many will be an inevitable and necessary part of prison life. Improving ways of distinguishing between groups who define themselves through committing indiscipline, criminality or violence from those who do not, is important if prisons are to effectively target and manage those groups and individuals of genuine concern.

The Nature of Prison Gangs

Research suggests that prison gangs are likely to be more stable, controlled, organised versions of street gangs who commit more co-ordinated acts of violence.⁴ They tend to be comprised of members from more similar ethnic and racial background; have more unqualified loyalty to the gang and engage in more instrumental violence, covert activity and collective drug dealing than street gangs.⁵ In U.K prisons, regional affiliations have been identified as a key feature of prison gangs as individuals from the same regions tend

1. Home Office, (2008). *Tackling Gangs: Practical Guide for local authorities, CDRPS and other local partners*. London: Home Office. p.23.
2. Centre for Social Justice (2009) *Dying to Belong: An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain*, London, Centre for Social Justice. p. 2.
3. Lynman, M.D., (1989) *Gangland*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas. In Pyrooz, D.,C., Decker, S.H., and Fleisher, M. (2011) From the street to the prison, from the prison to the street: understanding and responding to prison gangs. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1. Pier Professional Ltd. p.48.
4. Klein, M.W., Maxson, C.L. (2006). *Street gang patterns and policies*. Oxford University Press, New York.
5. Pyrooz, D.C., Decker, S. H., Fleisher, M. (2011). From the street to the prison, from the prison to the street: Understanding and Responding to Prison Gangs. *Journal of Aggression and Peace Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 12-24.

to associate with one another.⁶ Theories seeking to explain why gangs form in prison tend to argue this is because individuals bring their community gang affiliations into prisons or because they are an adaptation to the structure, culture and dynamics of prison life.⁷ Both theories may be valid, suggesting that prison gangs may both reflect those from 'the street', those created in prisons or a combination of both.

Gang Violence

To warrant placing specific attention on prison gangs, valid questions to ask are whether gang violence is different to other violence and are gang members more likely to perpetrate violence than non-gang members? Research in the USA has consistently shown gang membership to be associated with violence and crime.⁸ Research suggests they are also frequent offenders who are criminally diverse.⁹ One study,¹⁰ suggests that individuals who join gangs are, in general, more delinquent than their peers before they join the gang. However, this study also found that their level of violence significantly increased after becoming gang members.

Why do gang members increase their violent behaviour when joining a gang? It is likely that gang violence (both inside and outside prison) occurs because of a variety of motives and circumstances, for example, to control or maintain control of high value resources (money, power, drugs etc), to impose power and influence and to enhance group status and worth. Social psychology as well as criminology provide various theories to help answer this question. Violence may occur when gang members come to see themselves primarily (or exclusively) as gang member rather than an individual. In gangs,

individuals may see themselves as less identifiable, responsible and accountable for their behavior, which can allow for empathy, moral values, consequential thinking and perspective taking to be dismissed, ignored or overlooked. Group-based justifications and attitudes which legitimise violence may also allow conventional moral values to be overcome.

When individuals identify strongly with a gang or group, they can be strongly motivated to enhance or preserve the status of their group, especially when they feel this is threatened by other groups.¹¹ Perceptions of other groups or rival gangs develop which can encourage and enable violence, such as 'us and them' thinking and the demonisation and dehumanisation of other group members.¹² Such thinking can prevent people from recognizing and respecting the values of others; prevent similarities and commonalities from being acknowledged; fuel a sense that other groups deserve to be harmed and strips away the human qualities of other group members making it easier to harm them.

To warrant placing specific attention on prison gangs, valid questions to ask are whether gang violence is different to other violence and are gang members more likely to perpetrate violence than non-gang members?

Why Do People Join Gangs?

There are a range of theories for why individuals form and join gangs from both sociological and psychological perspectives. Factors identified

include breakdown of social order, communities no longer being able to meet the needs of individuals, ties being cut with other important social groups (such as family, friends and school); being surrounded by delinquent peers; the absence of positive male role-models and social exclusion.¹³ Whilst these factors have been identified as typically 'pushing' people towards gang membership, factors which attract and 'pull' individuals into gangs have also been highlighted. These include money; protection against

6. Wood, J.L. (2006) Gang Activity in English Prisons: The Prisoners' Perspective. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, Vol. 12, 605-617.

7. DeLisi, M., Berg, M. T. & Hochstetler, A. (2004) Gang Members, Career Criminals and Prison Violence: Further Specification of the Importation Model of Inmate Behavior. *Criminal Justice Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 369-383.

8. Decker, S. and Van Winkle, B. (1996). *Family, friends and violence*. Cambridge University Press.

9. See n4.

10. Melde, C and Esbensen, F. A. (2013). Gangs and violence: disentangling the impact of gang membership on the level and nature of offending. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, Vol. 29, 143 – 166.

11. Tajfel, H. & Turner, J.C. (1986) The Social Identity Theory of Inter-Group Behaviour, in Worchel, S & Austin, W. *The Psychology of Inter-group Behaviour*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall. P. 7-24.

12. Wood, J., and Alleyne, E. (2010) Street gang theory and research: Where are we now and where do we go from here? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Vol. 15, 100-111.

13. Marshall B, Webb B, Tilley N. (2005). Rationalisation of Current Research on Guns, Gangs and Other Weapons: Phase 1. London: Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science.

victimisation; love; excitement; belonging; status and respect.¹⁴ Many of these factors such as belonging, security, worth, significance have been labelled as 'identity needs' or needs which are met when people identify with particular aspects of their lives.¹⁵

Once individuals join gangs, the factors which maintain their involvement may be different from those which got them involved initially. Factors that have been identified which maintain gang involvement include: An ongoing source of money; loyalty and ties of reciprocity; force of habit and being 'stuck'.¹⁶

The reasons why gangs form and individuals join gangs in prison do not appear to be significantly different to those in the community for example for survival/protection; power; identity; security; to access drugs. These may vary however depending on the dynamics of individual prisons. Consideration therefore needs to be given to both the individual motives and external circumstances that may encourage or necessitate gang membership in individual prisons.

Understanding individual motives for joining or remaining in gangs is important if such behaviour is to be understood and appropriately managed. Prisoners who *identify* with a gang (i.e. it becomes important to how they defines themselves as individuals and significantly influences their lifestyle) may need to be managed differently to those who simply associate with a gang for more opportunistic reasons, such as to access drugs or to exploit others.

Gang Disengagement and Exit

An individual's likelihood of offending is significantly reduced when they disengage or exit a gang. In one study,¹⁷ participants said that joining a gang was a part of a transition stage prior to adulthood, suggesting it is a phase individuals may go through as they search for a sense of who they are and what their place in the world is. Factors that seemed important in why these individuals left the gang (or disengaged) was a desire to leave; a turning point or life

event such as becoming a father and alternative path to follow such as gaining legitimate employment.

Researchers have identified other factors and circumstances which may encourage disengagement. These include: the availability of alternative and attractive activities and and criminal justice involvement;¹⁸ maturity, increased family commitments and peer victimisation;¹⁹ exposure to gang related violence (to themselves, friends or family);²⁰ fatherhood, conventional aspirations and increased responsibilities.²¹ Researchers have suggested that suggested that 'where they may once have been uninterested or disdainful of various job opportunities, training, or educational programmes, after fatherhood many gang members were increasingly desirous of such supports, but sometimes found them difficult to access'.²²

Interestingly, a number of these factors are consistent with those found to support desistance from offending more generally although a focus on supporting individuals to disengage or leave a particular group does appear to be different. Disengaging from a gang can require significant changes in the way people think, socialise, strive to earn a living, and ultimately behave.²³ Those individuals who have turned their backs on gang affiliated violence appear to have done so because their particular lifestyle no longer fulfils their needs, expectations values, and priorities. Exploring identity is important to understand how and why an individual may leave such a lifestyle behind. Perhaps most importantly, association with their gang no longer seems to reflect the type of person they want to be and therefore something they no longer want to identify with. The role of identity is therefore considered central in understanding why individuals become part of a gang that offends.

Potential barriers involved with this process that have been highlighted include: Potential gang leavers continuing to receive threats of violence; mistrust and labelling by statutory agencies; the challenge of renegotiating relationships with extensive networks of relatives and friends; underestimating the challenge of

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14. Young, M.A. and Gonzalez,V. (2013) *Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs: Gang intervention and Desistence Strategies*. National Gang Centre, USA.
 15. Vignoles, V.L., Gollledge, J., Regalia, C., Manzi, C. and Scabini, E. (2006) Beyond Self-Esteem: Influence of Multiple Motives on Identity Construction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 90, No. 2, 309-333.
 16. Aldridge, J. and Medina, J. (2007) *Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs, and Violence*. Swindon: ESRC.
 17. See n16.
 18. Decker, S. H. and Pyrooz, D. C. (2011) 'Gangs, terrorism, and radicalization. *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 4, 151-166.
 19. Vigil, D. 1988. *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California*, Austin, Texas. University of Texas Press. In Young, M.A. and Gonzalez,V. (2013) *Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs: Gang intervention and Desistence Strategies*. National Gang Centre, USA.
 20. Decker, S. H., and Lauritsen, J. L. 2002. 'Breaking the Bonds of Membership: Leaving the Gang,' in C. R. Huff (ed.), *Gangs in America III* (pp. 103-122), Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc. In Young, M.A. and Gonzalez,V. (2013) *Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs: Gang intervention and Desistence Strategies*. National Gang Centre, USA.
 21. Maloney M., MacKenzie K., Hunt G., and Laidler, J. (2009) The Path and Promise of Fatherhood for Gang Members. *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 49, 305-325.
 22. See n21. p.318.
 23. Harris, D, Turner, R., Garrett, I. and Atkinson, S. (2011) *Understanding the psychology of gang violence: implications for designing effective violence interventions*. Ministry of Justice Research Series 2/11.

leaving home areas; a lack of acknowledgement from criminal justice workers in the positive changes they had made in their lives; unpreparedness of schools, health, and prison services to collaborate or respond adequately to the problems brought about by gangs.²⁴

Interventions to Prevent Gang-Related Violence in prison

Understanding why people join gangs and offend and why they may disengage from gangs and desist all provide important indicators as to how we can effectively intervene to prevent offending.

At a primary level, preventing people from joining gangs and committing group-enabled violence is a critical aspect of intervention and multi-agency approaches. At a secondary or tertiary level, interventions and multi-agency responses with particular features have been identified as those most likely to be effective. Such features include: Targeting risk factors for gang membership and offending; utilising appropriate assessment; focusing on facilitating gang disengagement and disidentification; empowering individuals to desist; addressing gang -related anti-social thinking and behavior; accommodating wider social circumstances and embracing evaluation.²⁵

NOMS Interventions Services have recently developed an intervention called *Identity Matters* which incorporates the aforementioned features and has been acknowledged by academics with expertise in this area as an innovative, important and promising addition to the field.²⁶ It has been specifically designed to encourage offenders to reduce their affiliation and identification with gangs in order to reduce their likelihood of committing serious violence because or on behalf-of their gang. The intervention focusses on various areas including supporting participants in addressing issues which contributed to them joining a gang, encouraging disillusionment and dissatisfaction with gang involvement, managing group influence and challenging their perceptions OF other groups that make them willing to commit violence. An initial process evaluation of this intervention suggests that IM has promise in enabling gang members to reexamine their involvement and offending and make

steps towards desisting from group-related offending in the future.

Conclusions: Reducing gang-related violence in prisons

Gang violence is different in some ways to other forms of violence, and gang members are more likely to commit violent crime than non-gang members. In coming to better understand why individuals join gangs, why they commit violence in gangs and why they leave gangs or stay in them, we are developing insight into how we can reduce such violence in both custody and the community. Opportunities to prevent individuals from joining or identifying with gangs as well as supporting them in exiting or disengaging from gangs once involved, appear crucial. Options need to be available for prisoners to meet their needs legitimately in prisons to support desistance, without seeing gang membership as the only pathway to meet these. Similarly, making those involved in gangs less willing to offend on-behalf of their gang through addressing their attitudes, challenging their perceptions other groups and disrupting peer influences which can facilitate such violence. Staff can play a crucial role here in modeling respectful, non-

Gang violence is different in some ways to other forms of violence, and gang members are more likely to commit violent crime than non-gang members.

judgmental, and pro-social values and behaviours through their daily interactions. Emerging interventions such as Identity Matters may provide promising new options for addressing these issues. Ensuring interventions are part of holistic multi-agency approaches which empower individuals to make lifestyle changes through enabling environments and supportive relationships in prisons perhaps offer the most likelihood of success. Below are some suggested principles derived from the literature and practice to guide how prisons can proactively develop policies, processes, interventions to reduce gang-affiliated violence.

1. Social groups that are not criminally orientated should be promoted in prisons, especially those that provide opportunities to develop pro-social identities and fulfil personal needs for belonging, purpose, significance and worth.

24. See n16.

25. Personal communications: Prof Scott Decker; Asst Prof Caleb Lloyd; Asst Prof David Pyrooz and Dr Jane Wood (2015).

26. See n25.

2. Assessment and monitoring frameworks should be in place to help identify why individual prisoners join and maintain their membership of gangs.
3. Pro-social alternatives to gang activity such as sport, facilitated family access, resettlement support, should be available (either in prison or in the community) to make joining or remaining in gangs less attractive to prisoners.
4. Support that includes interventions such as Identity Matters and holistic multi-agency responses should be provided to prisoners who show signs of wanting to reconsider their gang involvement. Care should be taken to ensure such approaches are discrete and avoid putting the individual at risk from group reprisals.
5. Specific interventions should be made available to prevent individuals identified as vulnerable to gang recruitment from becoming affiliated with gangs.
6. Prevention strategies in custodial establishments should limit opportunities for gangs to form and sustain themselves. Processes should include community liaison and intelligence sharing, promoting non-criminally orientated groups and early identification of vulnerable individuals.
7. Consistent and comprehensive processes for the identification and management of those recruiting prisoners into gangs should include awareness training for establishment staff, intelligence sharing within and external to the establishment and family support via multi-agency partnership working.
8. Processes should be agreed with agencies outside of the prison (including police, probation, local authority community safety partnerships and social services) to prevent offending both inside and outside the prison (including 'real time' information sharing arrangements about those at risk and those identified as being affiliated to gangs).
9. Processes are in place to monitor the relationships of outside visitors and gang members in prison especially in specific areas of the prison (such as in visits).
10. Processes to review serious incidents involving gangs and incorporate learning into revised policies, guidance or actions.

Mindfulness meditation as a tool for increasing emotion regulation and reducing violence

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Introduction

Aggressive and violent behaviours are often thought of as either reactive or proactive. While reactive aggression usually follows a perceived insult or slight, and is driven by strong emotions including anger, proactive aggression refers to planned aggression for instrumental and personal gain.¹ These contrasting forms of aggression may be commonly referred to as 'hot' and 'cold', reflecting the emotional nature of reactive aggression, and the cold and calculating nature of proactive, instrumental aggression. An appreciation of the different underlying motivations for these two forms of aggression is important to inform the development of treatment programs and interventions that aim to reduce violence. For example, interventions aiming to reduce aggression with a strong emotional component should have a focus on developing strategies for successful emotion regulation. These strategies, however, may enjoy relatively less success with instrumentally violent individuals. In this paper I will briefly outline the importance of emotion regulation abilities for keeping a check on impulsive and reactive aggression, and the potential for mindfulness meditation to improve emotion regulation among adult male, and female, offenders.

Emotions refer to spontaneously arising mental states, and can be either fleeting or long lasting, are linked to the goals of the perceiver of the emotion, and involve multisystem changes, including changes in physiological processes and behaviour. Although emotions can be experienced as weak or particularly strong and powerful, the intensity of emotional experience can be regulated. This process of emotion regulation broadly refers to the ability to influence which emotions are experienced, and when and how they are felt. Thus, one can upregulate an emotion making the emotional experience more intense, or down

regulate an emotion, such that the emotional experience is reduced. Emotion regulation can be achieved using a variety of different strategies, including *situation selection*, whereby particular situations are sought out or avoided; *situation modification*, where active efforts are made to modify an emotionally unpleasant situation to make the experience more positive; changes in the deployment of attention such that the emotional situation becomes the focus of attention, or attention is distracted away from the situation; or *cognitive change*, including the effortful process of reappraisal.²

Mechanism of emotion regulation

The process of emotion regulation, and particularly that of reappraisal, relies heavily on cognitively taxing resources. The prefrontal cortex (PFC), a neural structure situated toward the front of the brain that is essential for carrying out tasks that require cognitive effort, is crucial for the process of emotion regulation. The PFC has reciprocal connections with deeper lying structures, including those in the limbic system, most notably the amygdala. The amygdala refers to a small, almond shaped structure found deep in the temporal lobes. It is responsible for the processing of emotion and emotional reactions, including aggression, fear and anxiety, as well as motivation, emotional learning, and fear conditioning. The reciprocal connections between the PFC and the amygdala mean that the PFC can modulate the amygdala response to emotional stimuli. Research has shown that the cognitive reappraisal of emotion is associated with increased activity in territories of PFC, and associated reductions in amygdala activity.³ Similar results have also been noted with respect to the regulation of positive emotion.⁴ Here, participants were instructed to either respond in a normal manner, or inhibit their arousal while viewing erotic film excerpts. This study showed increased PFC activity, and reduced amygdala responsivity, during the attempted inhibition of positive emotion, in this case sexual arousal.

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2. Gross, J. J. (1998a). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2, 271-299.
3. Ochsner, N., Bunge, S. A., Gross, J. J., & Gabrieli, J. D. E. (2002). Rethinking feelings: An fMRI study of the cognitive regulation of emotion. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 14, 1215-1229.
4. Beauregard, M., Levesque, J., & Bourgouin, P. (2001). Neural correlates of conscious self-regulation of emotion. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 21, RC165.

Impulsive aggression and the neural circuitry for emotion regulation

The systems outlined above that are involved in emotion regulation have also been linked with violence when these systems go wrong. A review of the literature on the neural mechanisms of emotion regulation concluded that impulsive aggression and violence arise as a consequence of dysfunction in neural circuits involving the PFC, amygdala, and the anterior cingulate cortex.⁵ Specifically, it was suggested that impulsive violence may reflect a greater propensity to experience negative affect, including anger, distress, and agitation, and an impaired ability to respond appropriately to the anticipated negative outcomes associated with violent and aggressive behaviour. However, it should also be noted that there are significant individual differences in the ability to regulate and suppress emotions.

Despite findings of emotion regulation difficulties among antisocial populations, treatment has typically focussed on other areas of criminogenic need, including pro-offending attitudes and empathic functioning. Typically, antisocial individuals are treated through the use of cognitive behavioural therapies. More recently it has been suggested that other modes of treatment might better target emotion regulation difficulties, with the ultimate aim of reducing violence. For example, it has been suggested that a 'third wave' of cognitive behavioural therapies that are influenced by Eastern philosophical and contemplative traditions may be of relevance in a forensic context.⁶ Such therapies, perhaps most notably mindfulness, have achieved growing attention in the clinical literature and their use is supported by various promising outcome studies.

Mindfulness

Increases in executive function, attention, and emotion regulation have been noted in relation to various meditative techniques. Although mindfulness is probably the most studied meditative practice in Western clinical, psychological and neuroscience disciplines, other meditative techniques have been studied (e.g., yoga, tai chi). Mindfulness meditation, adapted from Buddhist traditions and of growing influence in more Westernized countries, has been incorporated in to the treatment of various mental and physical health problems, including depression, anxiety, and chronic pain.

Although it is difficult to define mindfulness, most definitions recognise multiple components to the approach. For example, a two-component definition of mindfulness includes an attention regulation component, and an experiential component.⁷ The self-regulation of attention refers to the ability to focus attention on immediate experience — on changes in thoughts, feelings, and experiences, from moment-to-moment – without mind wandering or intrusive thoughts. This component requires skills in sustained attention, to focus attention on current experience, and skills in attention switching, to bring attention back to the present moment. The second component refers to an attitude of curiosity, openness, and acceptance. Here, the individual is challenged to be open to the stream of internal experience, to separate out different experiences, emotions and sensations, and to accept these experiences without judgment, and independent of valence. Mindful individuals are therefore less reactive and more accepting in coping with emotional experience.

Mindfulness techniques have been integrated into several therapy programs, for example, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)⁸ and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).⁹ MBSR is usually delivered in group sessions over an eight-week period. As well as guided weekly sessions lasting up to three hours and including mindfulness and yoga exercises, participants are also urged to self-practice, and often take part in a full day silent retreat. Mindfulness exercises may consist of body scan meditation, where attention is focussed in turn on different parts of the body, mindful stretching exercises, and sitting mindfulness meditations. MBSR outcome studies show decreased emotional reactivity and a shift away from the tendency to engage in harmful and ruminative thoughts following the program. This approach generally assumes that greater practicing of mindfulness will reduce negative affect and increase wellbeing and coping.

Although the findings from MBSR treatment outcome studies for psychological disorders are too numerous to review here, meta-analytical reviews of the literature have been conducted and support the therapeutic utility of MBSR for the treatment of various mental health problems. In a review of 20 reports of the health benefits associated with MBSR across clinical populations with pain, cancer, heart disease, depression and anxiety, it was concluded that MBSR helped a variety of populations to cope with their clinical and non-clinical problems.⁹ Similarly positive results have been reported for MBCT. In a review of the benefits associated with MBCT, it was found that across six separate studies

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6. Howells, K. (2010). The 'third wave' of cognitive-behavioural therapy and forensic practise. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 20, 251–256.
7. Bishop, S. L., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., ...Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11, 230–241.
8. Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 57, 35–43.
9. Teasdale, J. D., Williams, J. M., Soulsby, J. M., Segal, Z. V., Ridgeway, V. A., & Lau, M. A. (2000). Prevention of relapse/recurrence in major depression by mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 68, 615–623.

MBCT reduced the incidence of depressive relapse/recurrence, with a 43 per cent risk reduction in a subgroup of patients with three or more previous episodes.¹⁰ The results of such outcome studies are of relevance for the prison system, which houses a large number of individuals with mental health problems, including mood and anxiety disorders. However, as well as helping individuals in the prison system to feel better, mindfulness based therapies may also lead to reductions in aggressive behaviours. Such benefits may be mediated by improvements in mood, as well as improvements in self-regulation.

Mindfulness and emotion regulation

An extensive body of evidence suggests that the effects of mindfulness may reflect changes in attention regulation and emotion regulation processes. For example, the emotion regulation strategy of rumination, the repetitive rehearsal on something negative, may lead to increased levels of hostility, anger, and verbal aggression. In one study it was found that mindfulness was related to anger and hostility through a relationship with rumination, such that increased mindfulness was associated with lower levels of rumination, and lower levels of rumination were associated with reduced levels of anger and hostility.¹¹ These results are also consistent with the results of several other studies.

In further support of a relationship between mindfulness and emotion regulation, it has been suggested that experienced meditators may show a more flexible pattern of emotion regulation, whereby prefrontal circuits are engaged to regulate more automatic amygdala based responses.¹² Altered PFC and amygdala activation has also been reported for inexperienced meditators following the instruction to experience negative images without judgment.¹³ In particular, the neural circuits activated during mindfulness may be similar to those activated when using the cognitive reappraisal strategy for emotion regulation. Thus, overlap in areas of neural activation has been observed among inexperienced meditators when asked to experience images mindfully, or when asked to engage in a process of cognitive reappraisal.¹⁴ These results therefore suggest

considerable overlap in those regions underlying emotion regulation and mindfulness meditation.

As well as differences in brain structure and function, mindfulness has also been linked with changes in physiology, most notably in heart rate variability (HRV). HRV refers to differences in the inter-beat interval of the heart. More elevated levels of HRV have been linked with greater abilities for emotion regulation and more flexible physiological responding to emotional situations. Notably, increases in HRV have been observed among trained meditators during mindfulness meditation,¹⁵ and indicate increased autonomic regulation. However, other results suggest that the relationship between mindfulness and HRV may not be straight-forward, with a positive relationship between the two observed only for people with high levels of general anxiety.¹⁶ The precise relationships between mindfulness and autonomic indicators of emotion regulation are not well understood in relation to aggression and antisocial behaviour. However, the hypothesis that mindfulness meditation would be related to more flexible physiological responding could be easily tested in forensic settings with minimal intrusion. If confirmed, this work could have huge benefits for the treatment of aggressive and antisocial behaviour, and would represent a well understood mechanism of change for reducing violence.

Mindfulness in a forensic context

Although the use of mindfulness programs in forensic settings is still in its infancy, some studies have found benefits of meditation based programs among offending participants. One review identified eight studies of mindfulness and other Buddhist-derived interventions in correctional settings, and results suggested significant improvements across various factors including negative affect, substance use, and anger/hostility.¹⁷ Of those studies that used a mindfulness based intervention, the results of one study are of particular note, reporting that between 1992 and 1996, a sample of approximately 2,000 individuals in Massachusetts correctional institutions took part in a MBSR program lasting between six and eight weeks.¹⁸

10. Piet, J., & Hougaard, E. (2011). The effect of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for prevention of relapse in recurrent major depressive disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31, 1032-1040.
11. Borders, A., Earleywine, M., & Jajodia, A. (2010). Could mindfulness decrease anger, hostility, and aggression by decreasing rumination? *Aggressive Behavior*, 36, 28-44.
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13. Lutz, J., Herwig, U., Opialla, S., Hittmeyer, A., Jäncke, L., Rufer, M., ... & Brühl, A. B. (2014). Mindfulness and emotion regulation—An fMRI study. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 9(6), 776-785.
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17. Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W., Slade, K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2013). Mindfulness and other Buddhist-derived interventions in correctional settings: a systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 18, 365-372.
18. Samuelson, M., Carmody, J., Kabat-Zinn, J., & Bratt, M. A. (2007). Mindfulness-based stress reduction in Massachusetts correctional facilities. *The Prison Journal*, 87, 254-268.

Sessions were typically of 60 to 90 minutes in duration, and involved guided meditation, mindful stretching, and yoga exercises. Benefits of mindfulness meditation included reduced hostility, and increases in self-esteem and mood states, although changes were typically greater for females compared to males. Although the authors do not report effects on the incidence of violent and aggressive behaviours, the results do suggest that mindfulness may be an effective intervention for individuals with convictions, helping them to handle the stress of incarceration and to better deal with emotional challenges.

The effects of mindfulness meditation have also been examined by Singh and colleagues who observed reduced signs of verbal and physical aggression among three individuals with a history of mental illness and hospitalization.¹⁹ Singh and colleagues have also evaluated the benefits of mindfulness in a sample of three adolescents with a diagnosis of conduct disorder.²⁰ Here, participants were instructed to focus attention on a particular part of the body, and away from anxiety provoking or emotionally challenging thoughts or situations. Participants received instructed training with a therapist three days a week for four weeks, and follow up was conducted over one school year. Mindfulness in this sample was associated with reductions in cruelty and non-compliance over a one year follow up period. Although promising, these studies are limited by small sample sizes. Furthermore, the methodology employed for analysis does not allow for the interpretation of effect sizes and significance levels in these data.

Mindfulness modules have also been successfully incorporated in to forensic therapeutic programs including Dialectical Behaviour Therapy [DBT] for the treatment of borderline personality disorder (BPD). The mindfulness component of DBT emphasizes the use of mindful observation, description and participation, and states that these actions should be performed nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively. However, unlike other mindfulness based practices, DBT does not require formal mindful meditation, such as sitting meditation. In a test of the therapeutic benefits of DBT for BPD, one study randomly assigned 58 women with BPD to either 12 months of DBT or 'treatment as usual' which involved not more than two sessions with a psychologist or psychiatrist.²¹ Retention rates were significantly higher among those attending DBT, while rates of self-mutilating and self-harming were reduced relative patients with 'treatment as usual'. Emerging evidence suggests that these components help individuals to

develop more acceptance based techniques for emotion regulation. However, although this evidence supports the use of mindfulness in a forensic context, it should be noted that there is currently a lack of empirical research to support a conclusion that mindfulness represents an effective violence reduction strategy. Future research should seek to examine the benefits of mindfulness and other meditational practices on the incidence of violent and aggressive behaviours in prison populations.

Barriers to mindfulness in secure settings

The use of mindfulness in forensic settings requires careful consideration not only of the potential benefits of mediational training, but also potential negative effects. Adverse effects of meditative practice have been reported for non-mindfulness variants of mediation. These effects include panic attacks, despair, and uncomfortable kinaesthetic sensations.²² The extent to which negative effects are experienced following mindfulness based mediation should be carefully monitored. Furthermore, potential negative effects may apply in particular to individuals who show low trait mindfulness at the beginning of training. For example, it has been shown that mindfulness, compared to cognitive training, increased salivary cortisol reactivity to a social evaluative stress test, and this increase was particularly pronounced for low trait mindfulness participants.²³ This finding may reflect the cognitively demanding nature of initial mindfulness training and associated cognitive self-regulatory resource depletion.

Other potential barriers involve the measurement of mindfulness and assessment of change in mindfulness. Although self-report mindfulness measures exist, the psychophysiological and neural underpinnings of mindfulness remain poorly articulated, and such measures may not be practical in some forensic settings. Furthermore, cultural barriers to mindfulness training may also exist, and participants may be unwilling to engage in Buddhist spiritualist techniques, or find it difficult to understand these concepts. Despite these barriers, the evidence that mindfulness exerts beneficial effects on emotion self-regulatory abilities suggests that it may represent a useful therapeutic tool when working with violent populations. Furthermore, mindfulness may reduce violent and aggressive behaviours among individuals in highly emotionally charged environments, including prisons and therapeutic communities.

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Reducing prison violence: the role of programmes

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As rising levels of violence in prisons are reported in England and Wales, managing prisoner behaviour has become a pressing concern for managers. This paper considers the role that programmes, particularly treatment programmes, can have in helping to reduce levels of prison violence.

The research in this area stems mostly from America where prisoner antisocial behaviour is typically described in terms of prison 'misconducts.'¹ High levels of misconduct mean reduced safety for both prisoners and staff.² Further, research suggests that prisoners are more likely to reoffend if they are released from jails with high levels of misconduct.³ High rates of misconduct are also more likely to lead to stress amongst staff and job dissatisfaction. There is a subsequent impact on absenteeism and turnover.⁴

Rates of prison misconduct are also important because of their association with recidivism. Several studies have found that prison misconduct, particularly violent misconduct, significantly predicts recidivism.⁵ Researchers suggest that the link between misconduct and recidivism should not come as a surprise, given that prison misbehaviour is a key indicator of continuity in delinquent and other anti-social behaviours.⁶ Misconduct is, therefore, important because it a) may contribute to recidivism, and b) may provide additional information about recidivism risk.⁷ There is an urgent need to identify effective management solutions to help reduce the levels of violence in prisons.

Can programmes help to reduce prison violence?

One possible management solution could be to use programmes. Programmes offering opportunities for self improvement, such as work, education and treatment programmes, can positively impact on levels

of institutional misconduct.⁸ Indeed, it seems that increasing the number of treatment programmes in a jail is one of the most frequently recommended techniques for maintaining order in a prison.⁹ Is this the right approach? What role should treatment programmes play in efforts to reduce prison violence?

There are many and varied kinds of treatment programmes. However, when it comes to programmes which reduce rates of recidivism, research has shown that some types of programmes perform consistently better than others. There is a substantial body of evidence which demonstrates that programmes which have been designed in line with the 'What works' literature, have a significant impact on reoffending rates.¹⁰ More specifically, effective programmes are designed and delivered in line with the principles of effective treatment; Risk, Need, and Responsivity (RNR). The risk principle states that treatment is most effective when it is applied to those who have an appreciable risk of offending; that is, the treatment of higher risk offenders should be prioritised over lower risk offenders. The need principle states that criminogenic needs (the dynamic or changeable characteristics that contribute to an individual's criminal activities such as criminal attitudes and criminal associates) must be assessed, identified and targeted in order for treatment to be effective. The responsivity principle states that treatment effectiveness can be maximized if cognitive behavioural treatment approaches are used, and if the content is adapted to accommodate specific individual needs (e.g., cognitive ability, cultural background). A fourth principle, sometimes described as the fidelity principle, also increases the likelihood of programme effectiveness. This principle stresses the importance of ensuring that staff are well trained and interpersonally

1. Prison misconducts are officially recorded incidents which include violent, nonviolent, unspecified, and institutional adjustment incidents. This definition therefore, unless explicitly stated, includes non-violent acts.
2. Goetting, A., & Howsen, R., (1986) Correlates of prisoner misconduct. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2, 31-46
3. Eichenenthal, D., & Blatchford, L., (1997) Prison crime in New York. *The Prison Journal*, 77, 456-466.
4. Cullen, F.T., Latessa, E.J., Burton, V.S., & Lombardo, L.X., (1993) Correctional orientation of prison wardens: Is the rehabilitative ideal supported? *Criminology*, 31, 69-92.
5. Cochran, J.C., Mears, D.P., Bales, W.D., & Stewart, E.A., (2012) Does inmate behaviour affect post release offending? Investigating the misconduct-recidivism relationship among youth and adults. *Justice Quarterly*, 1-30.
6. Trulson, C.R., DeLisi, M., & Marquart, J.W. (2011) Institutional Misconduct, delinquent behaviour, and rearrest frequency among serious and violent offenders. *Crime and Delinquency*, 57, (5), 709-731.
7. Bushway, S.D., & Apel, R., (2012) A signalling perspective on employment based reentry programming: training completion as a desistance signal. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 11, 21-50.
8. French, S.A., & Gendreau, P., (2006) Reducing prison misconducts: What works! *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 33, 185-218.
9. Gendreau, P., & Keyes, D., (2001) Making prisons safer and more humane environments. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*; 43, 123-130.
10. Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J., (2010) *The psychology of criminal conduct*. (5th ed). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.

sensitive. It also directs that programmes should be monitored and evaluated to ensure they are delivered as designed.

However, this paper is not concerned about the impact of programmes on recidivism. Rather, it is concerned with the impact of programmes on violent misconduct whilst the offender is still in prison. Surprisingly, there are few evaluations of the impact of treatment programmes on violent prison misconduct.¹¹ Further, the evaluations which do exist are often flawed (inadequate comparison groups, small sample sizes, limited follow up time and so forth). Nevertheless, there are some studies which, taken together, help us to understand the impact of these programmes on prison violence.

In this paper, I will review the studies which describe the impact of programmes for specific offender segments within a prison/ cluster of prisons. Second, I will describe an attempt to review the research in a more robust way using meta analysis. Meta analytical research designs combine the results from a number of studies to determine if there is an overall effect amongst the studies as a whole. By combining studies, a meta-analysis increases the sample size and thus the power to study effects of interest.

Determining the impact of programmes on prison behaviour: individual studies

Intuitively it makes sense that programmes which aim to reduce violent recidivism would also have a positive impact on levels of prison violence. Surprisingly, few studies have attempted to determine this. The 'Strategies for Thinking Productively' programme was designed to teach prisoners the basic principles of self change. The programme enabled prisoners to be able to observe their thoughts and feelings and recognise risks associated with these. They were also taught to use new thinking patterns to reduce this risk, and be able to apply this new

Intuitively it makes sense that programmes which aim to reduce violent recidivism would also have a positive impact on levels of prison violence.

understanding to real life situations. The programme was delivered to violent offenders who volunteered to complete treatment. Evaluation found that those who had completed at least ten months of the programme experienced a reduction in inmate assaults and refusals to obey direct orders as compared to those who were waiting for treatment.¹² The study also revealed that institutional misconducts were reduced even for those inmates who did not successfully complete all parts of the programme (i.e., they had started but not completed). Due to the success of this programme, a decision was made to extend it to a wider group of prisoners (including those who had not volunteered to attend). The results of this evaluation were not so favourable. There was no significant impact on misconducts among those who participated in the programme and those who did not.¹³ In a follow up study, where levels of misconduct were compared between 213 treatment participants (who had not volunteered to take part) with a control group of 91 prisoners, a similar finding emerged.¹⁴ There was no difference between the treatment participants and the control group. As such, it appears that treatment is most effective when participants volunteer to take part.

In another study, the impact of treatment on prisoners who had committed serious acts of violence while incarcerated was examined.¹⁵ The 'Aggressive Behavioural Control' (ABC) programme was designed for impulsively and/ or chronically aggressive offenders with an extensive history of violent crime and/ or significant institutional management problems. It targeted high risk and personality disordered prisoners in maximum security conditions. It used cognitive behavioural techniques to help prisoners identify and modify the thoughts feelings and behaviours that were influencing and maintaining their violence. It aimed to enable their progression to a lower security prison post-treatment. Thirty one prisoners were included in the sample. Eighty percent were progressed successfully

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11. French, S.A., & Gendreau, P., (2006) Reducing prison misconducts: What works! *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 33, 185-218.
 12. Baro, A.L., (1999) Effects of a cognitive restructuring program on inmate institutional behaviour. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 26, 446-484.
 13. Lambert, E.G., Hogan, N.L., Barton, S.M., & Stevenson, M. T., (2007) An evaluation of CHANGE, a pilot prison cognitive treatment program. *Journal of Articles in Support of the Null Hypothesis*, 5 (1), 1-17.
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 15. Wong, S.C.P., Van der Veen, S., Leis, T., Denkhuis, H., Gu, D., Liber, E. & Middleton, H. (2005) Reintegrating seriously violent and personality disordered offenders from a super-maximum security institution into the general offender population. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. 49 (4), 362-375.

into a low security facility without returning to maximum security conditions within 20 months. The treatment participants' rate of institutional offending was also lowered after treatment.

The impact of the ABC treatment programme with gang members has also been examined.¹⁶ Treated gang and non-gang groups were compared to matched untreated gang and non-gang comparison groups in relation to the impact of treatment on recidivism and institutional misconduct. Overall, criminal recidivism was significantly reduced in the treated groups compared to the untreated comparison groups. The treated groups also had lower rates of major (but not minor) institutional infractions than the comparison groups. There was significantly less violent misconduct such as fights and assaults. Researchers concluded that cognitive-behavioural treatment, designed according to the risk, need and responsivity principles, can reduce the likelihood and seriousness of criminal recidivism in the community and lower the rate of major institutional misconduct while incarcerated.

Researchers have also examined the impact of a faith-based programme on prison misconducts.¹⁷ As noted earlier, prison misconduct covers a whole range of behaviours from the very serious, such as murder or an escape, to the less serious, such as falling to follow a work order or smoking in an unauthorised area. The researchers were interested in the impact of treatment on both types of misconduct. The programme encouraged desistance from crime by encouraging offenders to develop pro social thinking, recognise offence related thinking errors, and accept responsibility for the harm they had caused. The researchers used different matching methods to create comparison groups. They found that participants who had received the faith based programme were just as

likely as comparison subjects to be involved in misconduct generally. However, when misconduct was divided into serious and less serious categories, results indicated that programme participation did lower the probability of engaging in serious forms of misconduct.

Prisoners with substance misuse needs have been found to be significantly more likely than other prisoners to commit institutional misconduct.¹⁸ A number of researchers have looked at the impact of substance misuse programmes on rates of prison misconduct. One American study compared a sample

of 462 prisoners before and after their attendance on the 'Drug and Alcohol treatment programme (DAP). This programme provided 500 hours of treatment over 9 months. It used a cognitive behavioural approach which addressed criminal lifestyle issues and included a relapse prevention Component It was delivered across 4 federal penitentiaries.¹⁹ Records from one year before treatment and one year after treatment were examined and compared to a comparison group which did not receive the programme. A decline of 45 per cent in overall misconduct rates for the treatment group, and a 23 per cent reduction rate for the non treatment group was reported. Similar levels of impact on prison misconduct following the DAP were also found in a

subsequent study where 600 federal prisoner programme completers, were matched against a comparison group of 451 prisoners who did not complete the programme.²⁰

Another interesting study used a peer led approach to reduce levels of prison violence.²¹ The 'Alternatives to Violence Project' was run for prisoners by prisoners in a medium secure correctional facility in Maryland, USA. The programme taught conflict resolution skills to participants via three day long

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and seriousness of
criminal recidivism in
the community and
lower the rate of
major institutional
misconduct while
incarcerated.

16. DiPlacido, C., Simon, T.L., Witte, T.D., Gu, D., & Wong, S.C.P., (2006) Law and Human Behavior, 30 (1) 93-114.

17. Camp, S.D., Daggett, D.M., Kwon, O., & Klein-Saffran, J., (2008) The effect of faith program participation on prison misconduct: The Life Connections Program. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 36, 389-395.

18. Chamberlain, A.W., (2012) Offender Rehabilitation: Examining changes in inmate treatment characteristics, program participation, and institutional behaviour. *Justice Quarterly*, 29, 2, 183- 228.

19. Innes, C.A., (1997) Patterns of misconduct in the federal prison system. *Criminal Justice Review*, 22, 157- 174.

20. Langan, N.P., & Pelissier, B.M.M., (2002) *The effect of drug treatment on inmate misconduct in federal prisons*. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Prisons.

21. Walrath, C., (2001) Evaluation of an inmate run alternatives to violence project: the impact of inmate to inmate intervention. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol.16, No 7, 697-711.

sessions. Each of the days involved a series of structured exercises including role plays. Prisoner facilitators had successfully completed all of the five training stages (basic training, advance training, training for trainers, facilitation and management council membership). All participants volunteered to take part. Participants were compared to a comparison group on a range of self report (including psychometrics) and behavioural change measures. There was a positive impact on anger and rates of confrontation (including violent confrontations) for those who completed the programme in comparison to those who did not.

In conclusion, despite limitations, it seems that treatment programmes, like offending behaviour Programmes, can lead to reductions in the level and/or severity of prison misconducts. The results generally suggest that cognitive behavioural interventions are more effective, especially at reducing serious incidents of misconduct such as violence, than other types of treatment approaches. Further, it is possible that programmes are more effective when participants volunteer to take part. The positive results from the peer led intervention are also of interest.

Determining the impact of programmes on prison behaviour: meta analysis

The most significant contribution to the literature is a meta-analysis.²² In one example of this approach focusing on prison behaviour, the researchers were interested in a number of important areas. Firstly, they wanted to explore the impact of a range of programmes on prison misconducts. More specifically, they wanted to determine the impact of programmes based on the principles of effective offending behaviour treatment. That is, they were interested in finding out what the impact of behavioural treatment which targeted the criminogenic needs of high risk offenders was on prison misconducts. In order to determine this, the researchers categorised programmes into four areas; behavioural (i.e. radical behavioural, social learning, cognitive behavioural, or punishment), non behavioural (e.g., nondirective therapy, psychodynamic, group milieu), educational/vocational, and others, or a

non specified grouping. Second, they were interested in the therapeutic integrity of programmes; i.e., how well the programme is delivered and maintained. The researchers used the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI 2000)²³ to assess programme factors. This assessment is similar in intent to the NOMS Intervention Integrity Framework. It seeks to identify how well the programme is being delivered and determine if it is being delivered in line with the evidence. Their final aim was to determine if there was a link between programmes which reduce prison misconducts and recidivism.

The researchers only selected suitable studies, or those who met certain standards of robustness, to be part of the research. For example, studies were only included if they used a randomised or comparison group control design, and contained sufficient numbers to enable statistical analysis. They found 68 studies generating 104 effect sizes between various types of programmes and prison misconducts. There were 21,467 prisoners included in this research. Eighty two percent of the effect sizes came from studies undertaken in American prisons. Seventy three percent of effect sizes came from male samples and 8 per cent came from female samples. The remainder came from studies with mixed samples, or studies where gender was not specified. Forty percent of the samples were adult, 49% per cent were juveniles.

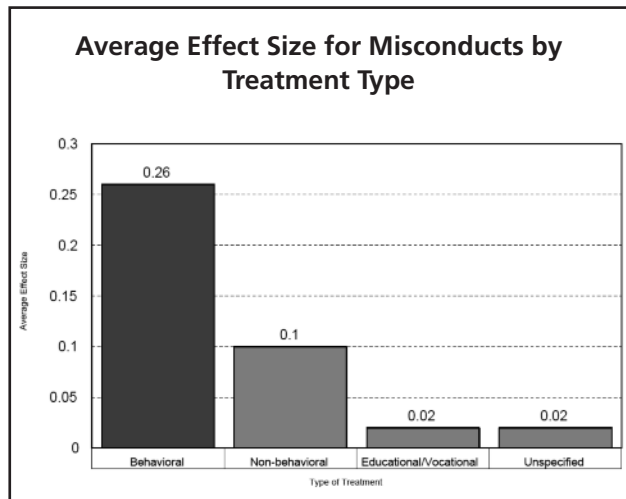
Findings indicated that behavioural treatment programmes produced the greatest reductions in prison misconduct. These treatment programmes were significantly more effective than educational, vocational and/or other programmes. Behavioural treatment programmes have several important characteristics. Firstly, they focus on the present (as opposed to focusing on the past which is the main focus of other treatment approaches like counselling). They target and change current risk factors that influence behaviour. They are also action orientated, rather than talk orientated. That is, they encourage prisoners to do something different, not simply talk about doing something different. They teach new prosocial skills to replace antisocial ones. Finally, they include techniques

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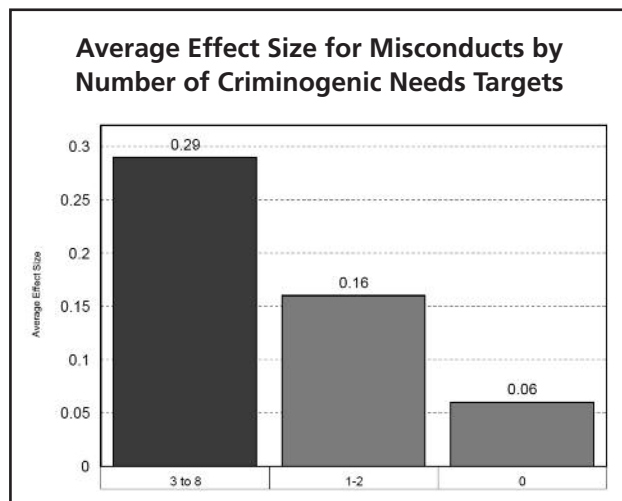
22. French, S.A., & Gendreau, P., (2006) Reducing prison misconducts: What works! *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 33, 185-218.

23. Gendreau, P., & Andrews, D.A., (2001) *Correctional Program Assessment Inventory – 2000* (CPAI 2000). Saint John, Canada: University of New Brunswick.

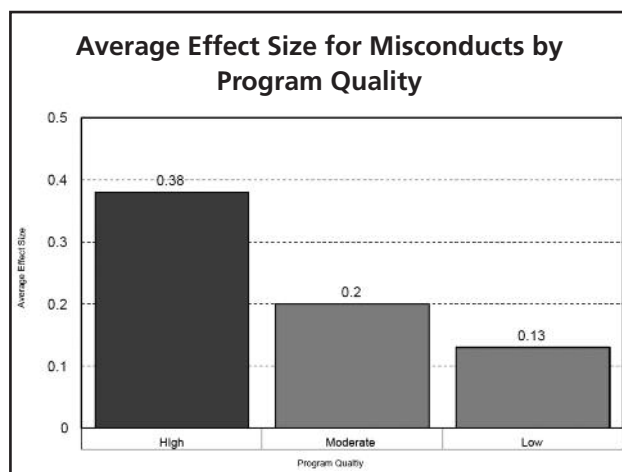
to model and reinforce appropriate behaviour. On average, when a prison offered behavioural programmes, the reduction in misconducts was 26 per cent, compared to 10 per cent from non behavioural programming and even less for educational, vocational or unspecified programmes. This is demonstrated in the table below.²⁴



The results also found that reductions in misconduct were greater in programmes which targeted multiple criminogenic needs. All prisoners have needs, but only some of these are known to have a relationship with reoffending, e.g. for example substance misuse, antisocial thinking, and problematic relationships. Research has found that certain criminogenic needs are predictive of institutional misconduct. These include antisocial thinking,²⁵ substance misuse, low levels of education, and unemployment.²⁶ Programmes which target non-criminogenic needs, or very few criminogenic needs, are unlikely to have an impact on prison violence. Reductions in misconduct for those studies that targeted three to eight criminogenic needs were greater 66 per cent of the time when compared to those that targeted only one to two criminogenic needs, and they had greater effects 79 per cent of the time versus those programmes that targeted no criminogenic needs. This is shown in the following table.²⁷

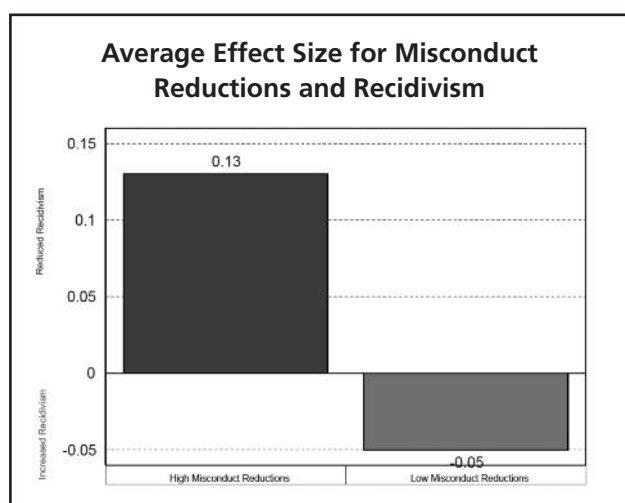


Analysis of the relationship between therapeutic integrity and misconducts was also conducted. That is, the relationship between quality of delivery (as assessed by the CPAI- 2000) and prison misconducts. The 36 items on the CPAI 2000 assessment were categorised. Treatment strategies receiving a score between 0–4 on the therapeutic score variable were designated as having a 'low' level of integrity. A score between 5–9 was classified as 'medium' integrity and 'high' integrity programmes were characterised by having a score of 10+. Programmes which were rated as high quality produced the strongest effects. The mean effect on misconduct for treatment programmes of high therapeutic integrity ($r=.38$) was higher than the mean effect for treatment programmes with medium therapeutic integrity ($r=.20$) and low ($r=.12$) levels. This is shown in the table below.²⁸



24. Reproduced from Latessa, E.J., (2011) What Works and What Doesn't in Reducing Recidivism: The Principles of Effective Intervention. Accessed from http://www.txcorrections.org/PDF/Dr._Latessa_What_works_and_What_Doesn%27t_in_Reducing_Recidivism.pdf on 27.5.15
25. Baro, A.L., (1999) Effects of a cognitive restructuring program on inmate institutional behaviour. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 26, 466-484.
26. Chamberlain, A.W., (2012) Offender Rehabilitation: Examining changes in inmate treatment characteristics, program participation, and institutional behaviour. *Justice Quarterly*, 29, 2, 183- 228.
27. Reproduced from Latessa, E.J., (2011) What Works and What Doesn't in Reducing Recidivism: The Principles of Effective Intervention. Accessed from http://www.txcorrections.org/PDF/Dr._Latessa_What_works_and_What_Doesn%27t_in_Reducing_Recidivism.pdf on 27.5.15.
28. Reproduced from Latessa, E.J., (2011) What Works and What Doesn't in Reducing Recidivism: The Principles of Effective Intervention. Accessed from http://www.txcorrections.org/PDF/Dr._Latessa_What_works_and_What_Doesn%27t_in_Reducing_Recidivism.pdf on 27.5.15.

The researchers found that the programmes that had the greatest effect on prison misconducts were also associated with larger reductions in recidivism. Of the 12 high misconduct—reduction effect sizes, 92 per cent were attributed to programmes that were behavioural in nature. Fifty percent were derived from programmes that targeted three or more criminogenic needs, and 92 per cent had therapeutic integrity scores in the medium to high categories. In the low misconduct-reduction effect sizes, 36 per cent came from programmes designated as behavioural, 10 per cent from programmes that targeted three or more criminogenic needs and 36 per cent from programmes considered to be medium to high in therapeutic integrity. This finding reinforces the view that prison misconduct behaviour is a reasonable proxy for recidivism. This is shown in the table below.²⁹



In conclusion, this meta analysis tells us that behavioural treatment programmes are more likely than other types of programmes to have a positive impact on prison misconducts. Moreover, programmes which were designed and delivered in line with the principles of effective rehabilitation (RNR) were the most successful. These programmes were behavioural in nature, focused on multiple criminogenic needs, and had high levels of therapeutic integrity. Further, these programmes were not only the most successful in reducing misconduct whilst the offender was still in prison, they were also the most likely to reduce recidivism once the offender had left prison.

However, we must apply some caution when interpreting these results. It is important that we pay attention to the various reported limitations, including the fact that missing information may have affected the results. Further, the findings are not classified by type of misconduct and so caution must be applied when considering the specific relevance to violent incidents. That is, we cannot tell from this study whether violence was reduced or whether the effect was on other sorts of rule-breaking. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that programmes which have been devised and delivered in line with the RNR principles, can have a significant impact on changing prison behaviour as well as offending after release.

Recommendations

The research from both individual studies and the meta analysis suggest that treatment programmes can be effective in reducing levels of prison misconduct. Although the research in this area is not conclusive, it does show that a number of the same factors are important in reducing both recidivism and misconduct.^{30,31}

NOMS has a range of accredited programmes which are designed in line with the RNR principles. These programmes were designed to reduce reoffending, but they share the properties identified as being important in reducing prison misconducts. That is, they are mainly cognitive behavioural in approach, target a range of criminogenic needs, and are monitored and quality assured by an independent assessors to ensure that programme integrity is not compromised. Accredited programmes are, therefore, likely to have a positive impact on prison misbehaviour and, as such, it is recommended that they be used as part of a strategy to reduce violence in prisons.

The literature also highlights the relationship of misconduct to recidivism and, as such, it is likely that information about misconducts might be important in the risk assessment process. Some researchers have recommended that information about prison experiences is included to improve risk prediction.³² Prison misconducts may indicate changes in the likelihood of offending that are not captured adequately by static risk measures. Further, they may pick up on desistance factors such as willingness (or

29. Reproduced from Latessa, E.J., (2011) What Works and What Doesn't in Reducing Recidivism: The Principles of Effective Intervention. Accessed from http://www.txcorrections.org/PDF/Dr_Latessa_What_works_and_What_Doesn%27t_in_Reducing_Recidivism.pdf on 27.5.15.

30. Cochran, J.C., Mears, D.P., Bales, W.D., & Stewart, E.A., (2012) Does inmate behaviour affect post release offending? Investigating the misconduct-recidivism relationship among youth and adults. *Justice Quarterly*, 1-30.

31. Trulson, C.R., Delisi, M & Marquart, J.W., (2011) Institutional misconduct, delinquent background and rearrest frequency among serious and violent delinquent offenders. *Crime and Delinquency*, 57 (5), 709-731.

32. Mears, D.P., & Mestre, J., (2012) Prisoner reentry, employment, signalling, and the better identification of desisters: Introduction to the special issue. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 11, 5-15.

lack of willingness) to change.³³ Further research is needed to determine the relationship between prison misconduct and reoffending within the prison population in England and Wales.

A recent study has found that offenders with high levels of criminogenic needs are more likely to engage in institutional misconduct than those who do not.³⁴ This research indicates that those with high levels of needs might disproportionately account for the majority of misconduct in prisons. As such, it would be useful to replicate this study to determine the relevance of these findings to our population. If we were able to identify those who at greatest risk of prison violence based on their criminogenic need profile, prison managers would be able to target resources at those who need it most. Treatment providers could also use this information to ensure that treatment programmes were targeted appropriately.

NOMS may need to revisit eligibility criteria for treatment programmes so that all programmes are accessible to those who engage in prison violence. Some accredited programmes (notably the accredited programmes that aim to reduce violent reoffending) are already available to men and women who have engaged in institutional violence, but others may need to consider how they can respond to the needs of this group. Given the reported relationship between prisoners with substance abuse needs and prison misconduct, it seems particularly pertinent for treatment approaches which address this criminogenic need to take institutional behaviours into account in the selection process.

Finally, evaluation of programmes has historically focused on reducing recidivism, but it takes a long time to complete this type of evaluation. Follow up times need to be lengthy; at least one or two years after release from prison, and it can be hard to compare programme participants with others who have not completed treatment. Given the likely relationship between levels of prison misconduct and recidivism, it is recommended that evaluation of programmes should focus on the impact on prison behaviours as well as recidivism.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that treatment programmes are a useful investment for managers in the effort to reduce prison violence. Indeed, it appears that they can reduce prison misconducts by 26 per cent. This is a significant reduction which could result in a more stable prison environment and enable considerable physical and emotional savings. Although, it is difficult to quantify the potential cost savings to NOMS, one study³⁵ reported that a six figure cost saving can result from even a modest reduction in misconducts for some prisons. The greatest impact can be made by programmes which are behavioural in nature, target multiple criminogenic needs, and are delivered well. Accredited programmes meet these criteria and are, therefore, recommended as part of the strategy to reduce violence in prisons and improve the likelihood of prisoners leading a crime free life.

33. Maruna, S., (2012) Elements of successful desistance signalling. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 11, 73-86.

34. Chamberlain, A.W., (2012) Offender Rehabilitation: Examining changes in inmate treatment characteristics, program participation, and institutional behaviour. *Justice Quarterly*, 29, 2, 183- 228.

35. Lovell, D., & Jemelka, R., (1996) When inmates misbehave: The costs of discipline. *Prison Journal*, 76, 165-188.

Eating your insides out:

cultural, physical and institutionally-structured violence in the prison place

David Scott, Liverpool John Moores University.

The aim of this article is to explore prison violence from an abolitionist perspective. Penal abolitionists argue that prisons are not only ineffective as a way of handling conflicts, troubles and problematic conducts but that they actively create harmful outcomes. Abolitionists maintain that the prison place cannot be successfully reformed and that it is essential that its inherently harmful nature is fully acknowledged. Abolitionists promote radical alternatives grounded in non-violent values and principles and in recent times critique of the prison place has often been framed through the language of the 'violence of incarceration'.¹ In following this tradition this article identifies and critiques three interconnected forms of violence in the prison place — cultural violence, physical violence and institutionally-structured violence.²

How we come to think about prison violence, whether violence is considered justifiable or not and what we judge to be the best ways to reduce violence are all cultural questions. *Cultural violence* performs a key role in naturalising the 'way things are done round here', shaping how conflicts are handled and whether violence is celebrated, condoned or condemned.³ Significantly, it also provides a lens through which we understand what prison violence is in the first instance. In *Violence, Inequality and Human Freedom* Peter Iadicola and Anson Shupe argue that 'violence is any action or structural arrangement that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more persons'.⁴ This article draws upon this approach to conceptualise prison violence.

People are most familiar with defining violence as a physical action. This implies an actor and that the act of violence was intended by that person. Such a focus leads us to think directly about *physical violence* in prison. Much of the academic literature concentrates on physical violence, especially violence perpetrated by prisoners on other prisoners,⁵ although there has for some time been considerable evidence of prison officer violence.⁶ Yet whilst scrutiny of physical violence is very important, analysis should not be restricted to this form of prison violence alone. It is too narrow. It misses too much harm.

Penal abolitionists focus on the inherently harmful consequences of the prison place. For abolitionists violence is a form of coercive power producing violent outcomes, such as psychological distress, self-harm, and death. *Institutionally-structured violence* is silent, invisible and yet potentially deadly. It pertains when autonomy and choices are severely curtailed; human wellbeing, potential and development are undermined; feelings of safety and sense of security are weak; and human needs are systematically denied through the restrictive and inequitable distribution of resources.⁷ Rather than a perverse or pathological aberration, institutionally-structured violence is an inevitable every day feature of prison life. Permanent, ubiquitous and operating independently of direct human action or intention, institutionally-structured violence slowly but surely eats into people 'from their insides out'⁸ and forms the bedrock upon which physical violence takes root.⁹ It is the third and most insidious form of prison violence discussed here.

1. Scraton, P. and McCulloch, J. (eds) (2009) *The Violence of Incarceration* London: Routledge.
2. Galtung, J. (1969) 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research' *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 pp. 167-191; Gilligan, J. (2000) *Violence: Reflections on our deadliest epidemic* New York: Jessica Kingsley.
3. Galtung, J. (2013) 'Cultural Violence' in Galtung, J. and Fisher, D. (2013) *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace* London: Springer at p. 57.
4. Iadicola, P. and Shupe, S. (2003) *Violence, Inequality and Human Freedom (second edition)* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, at p. 23.
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The meaning of violence

A culture is a shared set of beliefs, traditions, norms and values transmitted from one person or group to another reproducing patterns of interaction and power relations. Culture provides a repertoire of available meanings in a given space and time. All places of violence are underscored by what Johan Galtung has called 'cultural violence'.¹⁰ *Cultural violence* consists not of the violent act itself, but rather the cultural codes, norms and values adopted to define and legitimate violence in the prison place.¹¹ Physical violence is normalised in many prison cultures: it is not only accepted but expected and sometimes encouraged. Whilst there may be a relative absence of actual physical violence in prisons, the constant fear of violence is ever present. This fear of physical violence undoubtedly exacerbates insecurities and trust-deficits. Prisoners must be constantly vigilant, cautious and alert to those around them for the rules of engagement that pertain outside are suspended in the prison place.

Prisons are hierarchal institutions and this is no more evident than in the relationships among prisoners and those between prisoners and prison officers. Indeed, physical violence can be spawned by such hierarchies. For prisoners, physical violence can be a way of acquiring goods and services, keeping face or fronting out problems. Physical violence can secure prestige, honour, respect and a reputation for toughness: Gresham Sykes famously referred to those at the top of the prisoner hierarchy as 'wolves' who engaged in violence to send a message to other prisoners.¹² Physical violence can therefore have a symbolic meaning or be perpetrated in the false belief that the act will reduce, rather than escalate, violent encounters in the future.¹³

Culture also provides the framework through which we either see, or don't see, violence in the first instance. Culture gives us eyes or makes us blind. Prisoner physical

violence is often taken seriously because it is the most visible form of violence and it is a direct threat to the states monopoly of the use of force. Focus on prisoner physical violence is often grounded in individual pathologies and considered the more or less natural consequence of a prisoner cultural code made up of 'less civilised', unemployed (especially youth) working class from deprived inner cities. There are official condemnations of prisoner physical violence, but nearly always alongside references to the deprived nature and inherent violence of perpetrators.¹⁴ Less emphasis is placed on institutionalised violence — that is the violence of prison officers and the harms generated by the structural arrangements of the prison place. Penal abolitionists thus call for a more sophisticated and comprehensive account of prison violence.

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The Spatial and Temporal Contexts of Prison Violence

Prisoner physical violence is a significant problem, and one which appears to be increasing. Recorded prisoner-on-prisoner assaults rose from 14,664 incidents in 2013 to 16,196 in 2014, whilst serious assaults increased from 1,588 incidents to 2,145 in the same period.¹⁵ Care must be taken though when measuring physical violence for there is a considerable unknown 'dark figure'. Levels of

assaults are influenced by recording practices, whereas much prisoner on prisoner physical violence goes undetected or unreported. Prisoners may lie about injuries from fear of further repercussions or because they think they may be perceived as an 'informer'. They may want a 'quiet life' and thus accept a beating or be planning retaliatory violence.¹⁶ Physical violence by prisoners is often relatively minor (there are only small numbers of prisoner homicides) but it is recognised that victimisation is routinised and part of the social organisation of the prison.¹⁷ As such, physical violence cannot be separated from a consideration of the institutionalised violence generated by the organisational structure of the prison place.¹⁸ It is to the

10. Galtung, J. (2013) 'Cultural Violence' in Galtung, J. and Fisher, D. (2013) *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace* London: Springer at p. 57.
11. Scraton and McCulloch (2009) 'Introduction' in Scraton, P. and McCulloch, J. (eds) (2009) *The Violence of Incarceration* London: Routledge at p. 7.
12. Sykes, G. (1958) *Society of Captives* New Jersey: Princeton; Levan, K. (2012) *Prison Violence: Causes, Consequences and Solutions* Aldershot: Ashgate.
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15. Ministry of Justice (2015) *Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales: Deaths in prison custody to March 2015 – Assaults and Self-Harm to December 2014* London: MoJ.
16. Levan, K. (2012) *Prison Violence: Causes, Consequences and Solutions* Aldershot: Ashgate; Trammell, R. (2012) *Enforcing the Convict Code: Violence and Prison Culture* London: Lynne Rienner.
17. Edgar, K., O'Donnell, I. and Martin, C. (2003) *Prison Violence: the dynamics of conflict, fear and power* Devon: Willan.
18. This is especially the case with physical violence such as self-harm which is reaching near epidemic proportions. In 2014 there were 25,775 reported incidents of self-harm, an increase of 2,545 incidents from 2013. For further details see: Ministry of Justice (2015) *Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales: Deaths in prison custody to March 2015 – Assaults and Self-Harm to December 2014* London: MoJ.

spatial and temporal contexts of such violence that we now turn.

Although prisoner physical violence is relational and dependent upon a number of contingencies, it is embedded in, and socially produced by, the situational contexts of daily prison regimes.¹⁹ Most obviously, we think of this in terms of prison conditions, crowding and the spatial restrictions created by the architectural dimensions of the prison place itself. Prisons are a specifically designated coercive *spatial order* controlling human choices, actions and relationships. External physical barricades regulate the conditions of social existence through sealing the prisoner from their previous life, whilst internal control mechanisms survey and place constraints on the minutiae of the prison day. Security restrictions on prisoner movements — such as access to educational and treatment programmes; religious instruction; work and leisure provision — are carefully structured and regimented around predetermined orderings of time and space. The architecture of the prison place determines the location of events and distribution of bodies and in so doing also highly regulates relationships, and subsequently physical violence.

Institutionally-structured situational contexts include a general lack of privacy and intimacy; the forced relationality between prisoners sharing a cell; insufficient living space and personal possessions; the indignity of eating and sleeping in what is in effect a lavatory; living daily and breathing in the unpleasant smells of body odour, urine and excrement; the humiliation of defecating in the presence of others.²⁰ Yet if these visible daily spatial constraints were all there was to institutionally-structured violence then calls for improved prison conditions, greater forms of autonomy and enhanced resources allowing prisoners to choose how they live their lives might be considered sufficient. But they are not. The spatial and temporal penal order cuts into people much more deeply than this.

Violence is built into the prison place like bricks and mortar. To understand fully its harmful consequences requires a consideration of how imprisonment distorts time. The highly regulated temporal order of the prison place not only results in recurrent and dull cycles of events with predictable actions, intervals and periods of

duration, but also puts a straight-jacket on a prisoner's ability to control their own *personal time*. The prisoner is compelled to adhere to *prison time* — an imposed regimented timetable created in the interests of organisational convenience. Ruptures to prison time only rarely come from prisoners — and if so, are through direct means of contestation — but penal authorities have the ability to change the flowing of time, to interrupt it or expand it.²¹ This can be hugely unnerving. Time slows down in prison. But the slowness of time creates only an illusion of certainty. The daily monotony, when disrupted by unexpected and sudden events erupting beyond the prisoner's control, erodes the ability to predict or confidently anticipate what the day will be like.

The prison place starts 'eating the prisoner inside out', penetrating the inner-self, destroying the natural rhythm of life and passing of time. Past, present and future meld into one, and prisoners becomes trapped in time-now-awareness.²² Existence is only the here and now. The heavy weight of the boring mundane dull realities of prison life appear endless: the moment of the

prison situation is ever present, distorting the real flow of time. As such, time consciousness results in an incredibly painful awareness of the passing of *wasted time* that can never be recaptured or spent differently. Most prisoners barely cope. Many do not.²³ Coping

becomes a tenuous, relative and fluid concept that ebbs and flows over time. The most intense pains of imprisonment are not to be found in the given quality of living conditions, but in the denial of personal autonomy, feelings of time consciousness, and the lack of an effective vocabulary to express the hardship of watching life waste away.²⁴

For abolitionists the acute pains created through a saturation in time consciousness can be considered a manifestation of institutionally structured-violence. In one way or another, the sense of loss and wasting affects all prisoners.²⁵ Such pain can be overwhelming and as a result prisons become places of death. The literal death of a person — corporeal death (the death of the body) — has haunted the prison place throughout its history. In recent years deaths in prisons have once again taken an upward turn. Between 2012 and 2013 self-inflicted deaths rose from 60 to 74 deaths — a 23 per cent rise — and this number increased to 83 self-inflicted deaths

Violence is built into the prison place like bricks and mortar.

19. Cohen, A.K. (1976) 'Prison violence: a sociological perspective' in Cohen, AK, Cole, GF and Bailey, RG (eds) (1976) *Prison Violence* London: Lexington Books.
20. Nagel, WG. (1976) 'Prison architecture and prison violence' in Cohen, AK, Cole, GF and Bailey, RG (eds) (1976) *Prison Violence* London: Lexington Books.
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22. Ibid; Cohen, S. and Taylor, L. (1981) *Psychological Survival* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
23. Medlicott, D. (2001) *Surviving the Prison Place* Aldershot: Ashgate.
24. Scott, D. and Codd, H. (2010) *Controversial Issues in Prison* Buckingham: Open University Press.
25. Medlicott, D. (2001) *Surviving the Prison Place* Aldershot: Ashgate; Serge, V. (1929) *Men in Prison* London: VGL.

in 2014. There were 242 deaths in total in prison in 2014, approximately one third of which were self-inflicted.²⁶ The deadly outcome of a self-inflicted death needs not the intentional hands or actions of another. Rather it is a harm directly produced by the structural arrangements of the prison place.

Prisons are places of both *pain* and *blame* and historically prisons have produced two other forms of 'death': civil death and social death. Civil death means that a person is 'dead in law'. Talk of the legal or civil death of prisoners inevitably draws parallels with slavery, for which the concept was first deployed. Though the removal of the legal rights of prisoners is no longer entirely complete in English law, prisoner rights are still very restrictive.²⁷ Since the 1970s the legal recognition of prisoner rights have been placed

on 'life support' and though the judicialisation of penal power has allowed access to the courts and strengthened prisoner due process rights, successful prisoner petitions are still relatively rare, especially with regards to living conditions.²⁸ The other form of 'death' is social death. Social death is a 'symbolic death' rather than physical death, where the former self is consciously extinguished as a worthy and moral subject. Social death is about the 'death' of human relationships, status and moral standing and at its extreme refers to the non-recognition of the prisoner as a fellow human. Whilst

in prison the prisoner is treated like an outcast. The prison sentence is a moral judgement that leads to the construction and distancing of a perceived morally inferior person. The person imprisoned is denounced and censured. The prisoner label is a category of blame, shame and humiliation — and, irrespective of their offence, the label prisoner carries with it the weight of social and moral condemnation. The prisoner is now a less eligible subject whose views, opinions and voice can be refused or ignored. The former self has died. Consequently the prisoner may be required to find new ways to securing respect in the convict code.

The long term harmful consequences of social death come from the literal severing of the prisoner from previous relationships in the wider community. An

individual's self-identity is shaped through relations with other people and a person can only recognise themselves through engagement with fellow humans. Prisons remove previous positive foundations of personhood.²⁹ Living relationships become dead ones. The elimination of relationships constituting the self-identity can result in the demolition of the former personality.³⁰ Imprisonment removes mechanisms of support and mutual aid, undermines family life and damages the ability to live in normal human society. It takes people out of their familiar situational contexts and subsequent damage to the self can prevent re-socialisation. For abolitionists the long-term harmful consequences wrought by social death are further evidenced by high recidivism rates and the difficulties in successful resettlement.

For abolitionists the long-term harmful consequences wrought by social death are further evidenced by high recidivism rates and the difficulties in successful resettlement.

To highlight that prisons have disastrous consequences is not the same as pointing the finger at individual people working in the penal system or saying they deliberately intend to bring about such dreadful outcomes. The problem is much bigger than 'individual pathology'. Prison life is patterned in such a way that it results in systematic need deprivations. We must be prepared to ask openly and honestly whether prison can ever be anything other than a claustrophobic box: a suffocating yet empty space draining the soul of meaning and hope and eating people up from the inside out.

That the prison is not always victorious in destroying the human spirit or ruining the mind is surely testament to the sometimes remarkable fortitude and endurance of those it contains.

Challenging Violence

The aim of this article has been to consider three different forms of violence — cultural, physical and institutionally structured violence — from an abolitionist perspective. It has been argued that in prison culture, physical violence is often considered as legitimate, whilst the harms generated by the structural organisation of the prison place are generally not recognised as violence despite the fact that they produce harmful outcomes: often serious injuries much worse than the harms of

26. Ministry of Justice [MoJ] (2015) *Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales: Deaths in prison custody to March 2015 – Assaults and Self-Harm to December 2014* London: MoJ.

27. Scott, D. (2013) 'The Politics of Prisoner Legal Rights' in *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* Vol. 52, No. 3 pp. 233-250.

28. Ibid.

29. Sofsky, W., (1993) *The Order of Terror* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

30. Scott, D. and Codd, H. (2010) *Controversial Issues in Prisons* Buckingham: Open University Press.

physical violence at the hands of others. For abolitionists two things need to be urgently done: existing prison cultures legitimating physical violence need to be effectively challenged and moves must be made to develop a language about, and recognition of the existence of, institutionally-structured violence.

1. Make institutionally-structured violence more visible

We must start by naming the prison place for what it actually is — an institution of legalised violence. This means looking beyond explanations of individual pathology and focusing instead on harmful outcomes. This requires denaturalising the taken for granted deprivations of dignity and need organisationally structured within daily penal regimes. We must debunk current myths around the virtuous and morally performing prison and instead acknowledge that prisons produce a specific moral climate that is more likely to dehumanise and debilitate than positively transform an individual. Articulating the brutal mundaneness of everyday prison life that is so corrosive to human flourishing and wellbeing may also help facilitate a new culture that can assist in making institutionally-structured violence more visible.

2. Challenge existing cultures of violence

Recognising that prisons are institutions grounded in structural violence does not mean that current patterns of interactions and cultural codes cannot be challenged at all. From the very top of the NOMs through to the lowest staff grades every effort should be made to challenge cultures condoning or celebrating physical violence. Prison authorities and prison officers should talk openly about the harmful consequences they see on a daily basis: they, alongside prisoners, can bear witness to the truth of current penal realities and should be allowed to do so without impunity.

3. Alleviate structured deprivations

For abolitionists, whilst it is impossible to change all the structural arrangements of the prison place, there are still contradictions within daily operational practices that can be exploited. Humanitarian changes can be introduced that can mitigate the worst excesses of institutionally-structured violence. Some need deprivations can be easily removed in both policy and practice and many infringements of human dignity can be reduced if not entirely removed. Once again cultural changes can be made to the prison place: a democratic culture providing first a voice to prisoners and then a commitment to listen to that voice with respect and due consideration can enhance recognition. Finding new non-violent ways of dealing with personal conflicts and troubles in prison would also almost certainly reduce the extent of physical violence and would help de-legitimize cultures of violence.

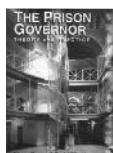
4. An immediate and radical reduction in prison populations

Despite the best of intentions, prisons can never free themselves of violence entirely. They are harm creating institutions steeped in a history of failure. Prisons eat peoples' insides out and whatever the law-breakers social background and whatever wrong they have done, prison is almost certainly going to produce harmful outcomes. Quite simply we cannot use violence as a weapon against violence. The current dialogue about prison organisation should move beyond the public-private sector debate about who can manage prisons better towards instead a closer analysis of *what prison is*. Harms will continue to be systematically generated in prisons, whoever runs them, and therefore we must once again urgently, vigorously and robustly call for a radical reduction in the use of prison. Reducing our reliance on imprisonment in the first instance is undoubtedly the most effective violence reduction strategy at our disposal.



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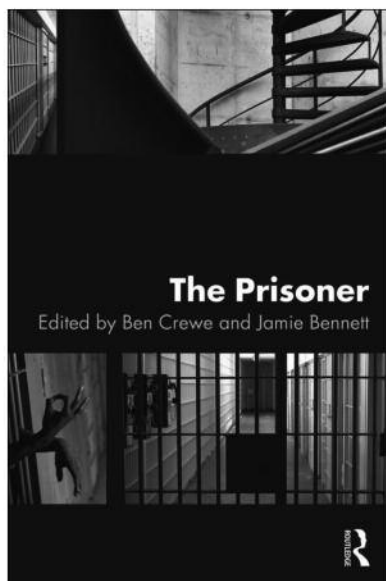
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