

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Editorial Comment

In January 2010, *Prison Service Journal* published a special edition exploring the issue of prison space. This discussed how architecture and place shaped the lives of people, but also that individuals and groups interacted with that, creating, reinterpreting and using space. This is a theme that is again relevant in this edition in Jennifer Sloan's fascinating piece on cleanliness, spaces and male identity in prisons. In this she discusses how cleaning and cleanliness are ways in which prisoners create and maintain their identity and negotiate their daily lives. This is a captivating article which reveals the hidden transcripts that are present in an aspect of prison life which can easily be taken for granted. Themes of space and gender also permeate Barbara Rockell's article on women's imprisonment in the USA. This article dissects the gendered nature of imprisonment and how individuals attempt to adapt and survive.

The edition continues the discussion relating to identity, including gender identity, in further articles. The role of staff culture is particularly important, but often under-explored or misunderstood. In his article, David Scott discusses the notion of 'working personality', which attempts to capture the ways in which individual working practices and attitudes are shaped by the nature and experiences of the working lives as much as their personal characteristics. Scott proposes a typology of prison officers and contextualises this within a critical account of the prison system. His article is challenging in the sense that it confronts practitioners with some difficult issues but also challenging in the sense that it encourages those with humanitarian views to turn that into action. In complimentary but also contrasting piece, Neelama Kumari, Laura Caulfield and Michelle Newberry discuss their research on female staff working in the therapeutic communities at HMP Grendon. This work appears to suggest that the regime at the establishment has positive effects for staff and prisoners, including in breaking down entrenched gender barriers. Staff cultures are also discussed in the book review section, where Bethan Loftus's excellent recent work on police culture is considered.

There are a number of current issues in practice and policy which are then examined. Paul Addicott

publishes his research on the experiences of men serving indeterminate sentences. As this approach is currently being reviewed, it is helpful to include the prisoner voice in this debate. The current Government, advised by former Chief Executive of NOMS Martin Narey, is taking steps to speed up the adoption of children. The cost of failure is highlighted in the work of Hayley Cripps and Amy Summerfield who draw the main findings from an HM Inspectorate of Prisons thematic review of the imprisonment of children who are looked after by local authorities. Keiran McCarten picks up the Government's high profile but contested vision of a 'big society'. McCarten discusses how this might be realised in relation to a controversial issue of criminal justice, in this case the management of sexual offenders in the community.

Closing this edition are three articles which illuminate the issues surrounding the riots of August 2011 in various English cities. Ian Fox-Williams and Ali Malik discuss the causes of the riots and set out various explanations including police misconduct, economic marginalisation and racial discrimination, whilst also recognising that many involved had rational motivations in engaging in looting for gain. Some of the underlying social issues are addressed in an excellent article by Tina Patel, which was researched and written before the riots but provides the background. In this work, Patel, interviewed those involved in car crime and unpicks the complex mix of social and personal factors that led people to get involved. As this research was carried out in one of the areas where riots took place, it has a particular salience. The edition closes with an interview with Professor Tim Newburn of the London School of Economics where he discusses the *Reading the Riots* research project, which has involved interviews with 270 people who participated in the summer disturbances. This provides a unique insight into their motivations, backgrounds and actions. This will be essential reading for anyone with an interest in crime and society.

All of these articles provide a means through which the relationship between prisons and society can be understood. The prison stands as a monument to the world we have created, founded upon our collective values and practices.