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Special Edition

The Transformational Potential of Prison Education

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Editorial Comment

The theme of this special edition of *Prison Service Journal* is 'The transformational potential of prison education'. This is a particularly timely edition given that Dame Sally Coates is completing her review of prison education, a review that aims to place education at the heart of attempts to rehabilitate prisoners and improve the effectiveness of prisons.

The topic of this edition will resonate with many for whom education has been a route through which they have transformed their own life chances or personal identity. The expansion of university education and the increased access to and value placed upon education and training means that this is a means through which people can shape their own future.

In prisons, a similar story is told by many. The Chief Executive of the Prisoners' Education Trust, Rod Clark, offers an overview of prison education and its benefits in his article. Many individuals who have learned to read and write, gained qualifications and even completed degrees in prison will attest to the life changing potential of prison education. There are some particularly strong examples of that in this edition, notably in the article by Jason Warr, who is now a lecturer in criminology but started his university education whilst serving a prison sentence.

There are a number of contributions to this edition which offer examples of innovative education that engages prisoners in new ways, achieving outstanding outcomes. This includes Ruth Armstrong and Amy Ludlow's account of the Learning Together programme, which involves university students and students in prison completing a course together. They argue that this not only provides and enriching educational experience, but transcends social barriers and changes the ways that participants can view themselves and the world around them. A similar argument is also presented by Sacha Darke and Andreas Aresti who are involved in a Learning Together programme in London, but also represent the British Convict Criminology movement, which seeks to actively engage prisoners and others who have an interest in the experience of prisoners in criminological study and research. Other initiatives covered in this edition include the teaching of philosophy, described by Kirstine Szifris, and a horticulture course evaluated by Geraldine Brown, Elizabeth Bos, Geraldine Brady, Moya Kneafsey and Martin Glynn. The work of the Hardman Trust, who fund education and training for individual prisoners, is assessed by Amy Barron, who argues that it is not only

the material support that individuals respond to but it is also that they have succeeded in a competitive process and that the Trust have recognised their value and potential.

The two articles by Shaun McMann and Alison Liebling take a broader approach, exploring the fundamental values represented in prison practice. McMann, who works for the Open University, argues that distance learning can facilitate profound changes in identity and behaviour, this he argues is a true representation of the rehabilitative ideal. Liebling draws upon the theology of the Dalai Lama, suggesting that learning, both individual and organisational should not be solely instrumental in order to increase productivity, but should also be directed towards moral and personal growth.

Although this edition clearly promotes the value of education, it is not blindly evangelical. A number of the contributors are critical of some of the uses and practices of education inside and outside of prisons. It is recognised that social institutions, such as prisons schools and universities, reflect social power and inequality and indeed are a medium through which this can be entrenched and maintained. For example, prisons over-represent those from poorer backgrounds and young black men, while universities over-represent those from privileged backgrounds. Another challenging question that many contributors engage with is about what kind of individual and social transformations is prison education intended to realise? In particular, whether education is concerned with producing effective workers and consumers or whether it is concerned with less instrumental personal growth and enlightenment.

'The Transformational Potential of Prison Education' is therefore both a celebration and a provocation. For individuals and potentially more widely this may be a means for personal growth and self-actualization. It may be a means through which social barriers can be eroded and challenged. However, education does not sit in a vacuum, it is an institution that exists within a social context. It can be a medium through which social divisions and problems can be played out and realised. The aim is for this edition to offer material that will encourage positive practices, without avoiding uncomfortable questions.

How education transforms:

Evidence from the experience of Prisoners' Education Trust on how education supports prisoner journeys¹

Rod Clark, the Chief Executive of Prisoners' Education Trust (PET).

Background on the role and history of PET

PET is a charity (registered charity number: 1084718) that has been operating for over 25 years.² The main service that it provides is as the principal funder of distance learning courses for prisoners in England and Wales. PET has given over 32,000 packages of support (currently over 2,000 a year) to prisoners who apply to study while in prison. PET considers any request for education, subject to Governor approval that the study would not raise any security issue. PET does give advice to prisoners if there is reason to believe that an alternative course would better fit an individual prisoner's aspirations or current level of educational attainment. Subject to that however, PET awards help with a very wide range of distance learning courses, from relatively low level NVQs or non-accredited learning to embarking on degree level study with the Open University. Courses range from those pursued purely for personal interest to academic courses or some aimed very closely at acquiring skills and knowledge for a particular vocational route.

PET also funds applications for arts and hobby materials (up to a maximum of £60 a year) for prisoners to make art or to pursue hobbies while in cell.

More recently, over the last few years, PET has come to realise that, for its approach to be effective, the system supporting education within the prison regime needs to be effective. PET has therefore developed work to champion the case for prisoner learning, advocate the importance of prisoner learner voices and work to influence and change policy and practice in prison education for the better. As part of this, PET has brought together a group of organisations from across the sector to form the Prisoner Learning Alliance to bring prison education issues to the attention of policy makers. PET has also actively engaged to promote, develop and disseminate research evidence on prison education.

PET's experience of impact on prisoners' lives through contact with prisoners

PET has had extensive contact with many prisoner learners over many years. This is evidenced by many hundreds of letters received from prisoners recounting the difference education has made to their lives and to what they have achieved. We know of a number of case studies of ex-prisoner learners who have attributed their success on release to the education that PET has funded.³

For example, one ex-prisoner Francis described the impact of support on his life:

'When I received the letter from PET agreeing to fund me it made me the happiest young man in the prison. It really helped my self-esteem, which had been at an all time low. It felt amazing that somebody was giving me a second chance and not just 'shutting the door' on me and my future. I went on to complete the Open University course that PET funded, before graduating with an Honours Degree in Health and Social Care in 2010, just in time for my release from prison.'

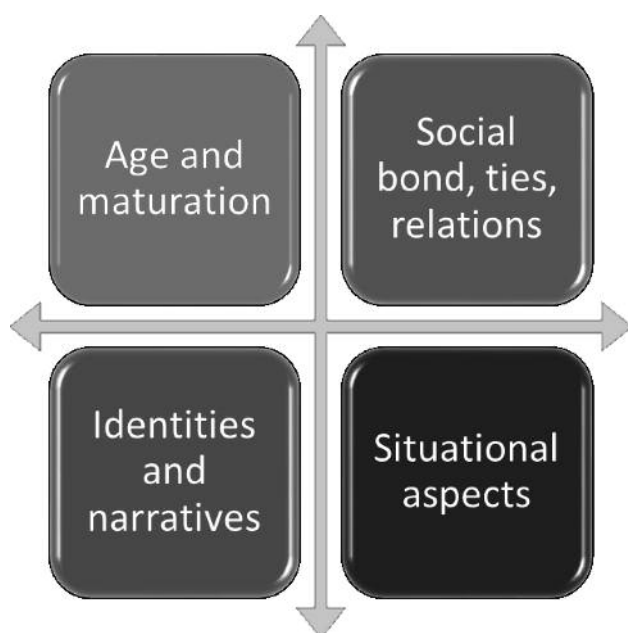
Francis has gone on to develop a successful career as a manager in social care and also look to give back to society having founded a charity to help young people to see a better way of living their lives, to learn from the mistakes he made and to do well at school. This evidence from individual cases is supported by evidence of the theory for how prisoners come to change their lives.

The theoretical basis for impact based on desistance theory

Theoretical models for how people come to desist from crime are generally brought under the heading of

1. This article is based on a presentation by Rod Clark, the Chief Executive of Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) given to prisoners, staff and invited guests at HMP Grendon on 17 July 2015.
2. Further information about Prisoners' Education Trust including its history is available on their website at www.prisonerseducation.org.uk
3. Case studies are available at: <http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/stories>

'desistance theory'.⁴ The diagram below is taken from Professor Fergus McNeill of the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research and one of the leading proponents of desistance theory. It formed part of his presentation to the Prisoner Learning Alliance conference in Milton Keynes on 25 April 2014.



Professor McNeill drew attention to these four factors which have been found to be important in a desistance journey. He made the point that in respect of all of them prison is in itself damaging:

- ❑ although prison of course removes the prisoner from a situation in which there are opportunities to commit many offences, the prison environment itself does not present any positive alternative and simply brings the prisoner into association with others with an offending background;
- ❑ prison tends to make it difficult to maintain the social and family bonds that are known to have a positive desistance impact;
- ❑ although aging does of course continue while in prison, the environment tends to put an individual's life on hold rather than encouraging a process of maturation; and
- ❑ the identities and narratives in prison reinforce a prisoner's criminal identity (the term 'offender', a prison number, the subject of a narrative around risks of offending and its mitigation) rather than promoting any pro-social positive alternatives.

Education represents one of the few environments and opportunities for addressing these issues in a custodial setting:

- ❑ educational and library environments often represent some of the few positive settings for a prisoner in which they can experience a constructive forward looking ethos and the prospect of continuing in educational settings on release has the potential for drawing individuals into positive and away from negative settings associated with criminal activity;
- ❑ the relationships with educators and fellow students has the potential for building positive ties to support an individual constructively; education can also support prisoners in maintaining links with families and children with studying as a shared bond and help develop an individual's empathy and understanding of relationships and how to maintain them;
- ❑ the broadening of experience, empathy and thinking skills associated with education can support a genuine development and maturing of outlook; and, most importantly
- ❑ learning offers a prisoner a positive identity as for example a student, artist, skilled technician with a narrative of hope for the future.

The experience of PET, as by letters from learners would strongly support a belief that these features of education are strongly positive in supporting prisoners in making changes in their lives. This includes some strong messages about how education helps a prisoner acquire a more positive identity. We have collected some first hand evidence on this point for the film 'more than just a prisoner'⁵ which is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALiDrZ1YwmU> includes this quote from one former prisoner:

'I am more than just a prisoner. I am an Oxford Graduate, a professional actor, a screen writer and a teacher.'

In addition to help in forming a positive identity, prisoners report to us a number of other benefits from education that feature in the desistance literature:

- ❑ Agency: the ability to take control of this aspect of their lives when of its nature a prison is an environment in which prisoners

4. See for example: Maruna, S. (2001) *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, Washington DC: APA Books; and McNeill, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C. & Maruna, S. (2012) *How and why people stop offending: discovering desistance*. Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services.

5. Made with the help and support of the Media Trust 2012.

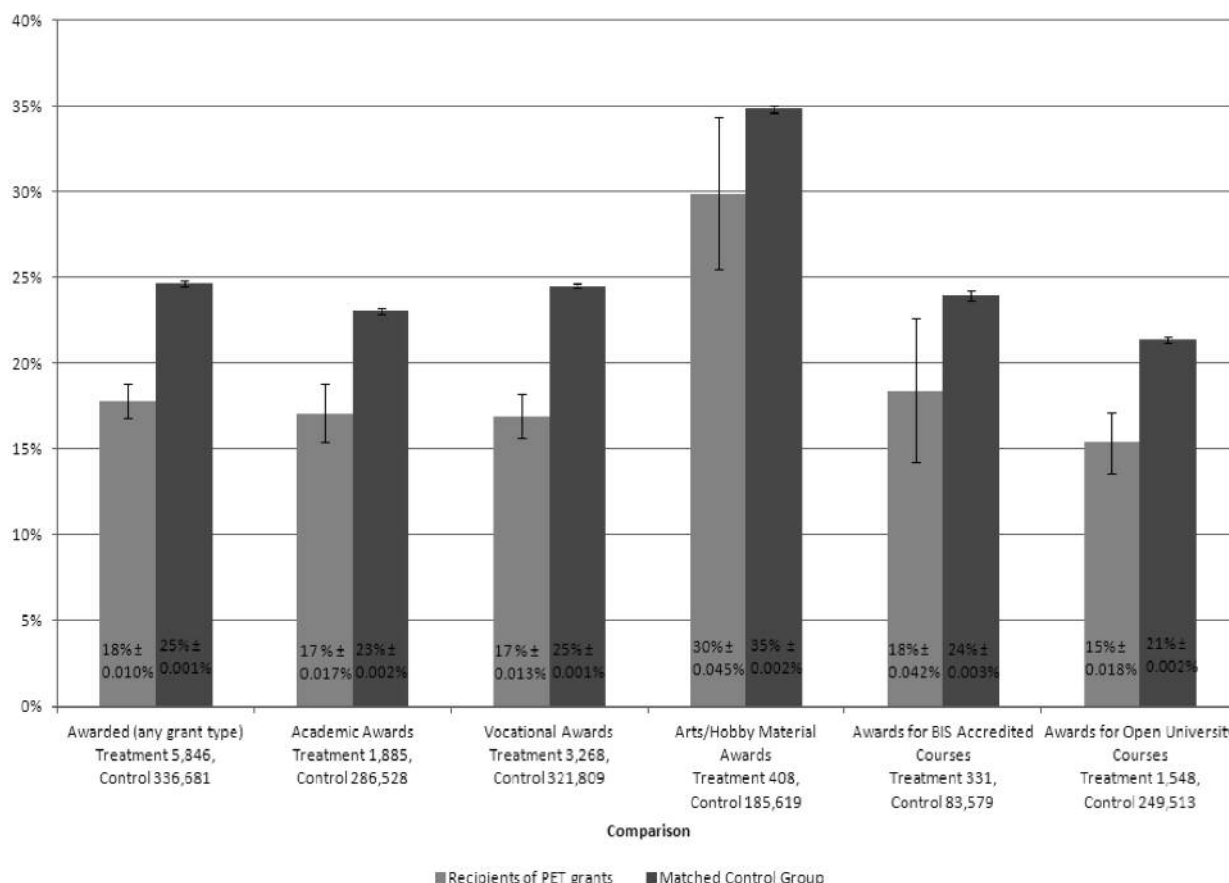
are necessarily disempowered from having authority or control;

- ❑ Resilience: developing the ability to overcome the challenges of the study process;
- ❑ Thinking skills: broadening and developing a way to consider and think about problems and issues;
- ❑ Employability: developing knowledge and skills which may help in securing employment on release which is an important proven pathway for prisoners to succeed in moving away from crime;
- ❑ Mental health and wellbeing: for example in this typical quote from a prisoner's letter, 'Thank you so very much, this means so much to me and have really lifted me up and given me something to look forward to. I've been finding it very hard to cope recently and it has seemed like everything in the world has been going wrong for me, and life had become really quite hard.'

Statistical evidence of impact

Qualitative evidence of the positive effect of prison education is backed by a number of quantitative studies. A longitudinal study of UK prisoners⁶ found that prisoners with a qualification were 15 per cent less likely to be reconvicted. A major meta-analysis of a number of studies in the US⁷ found a 13 per cent reduction in reoffending from educational programmes.

A statistical analysis of those that have applied to PET for support with learning also provides strong evidence of the power of education to influence outcomes for prisoners post release. Details of 5,846 prisoners who had received PET help were submitted to Ministry of Justice statisticians who gathered information on whether they had gone on to reoffend. They compared the outcomes for the PET sample with a sample of prisoners matched on observable characteristics such as age and offence type to provide a control group for comparison purposes. Some key results of the latest analysis from September 2015 are shown in the graph below:⁸



6. Hopkins, K (2012) The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly selected prisoners. Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners. London: Ministry of Justice.
7. Lois M. Davis, Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders, Jeremy N. V. Miles (2013) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults RAND Corporation.
8. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459470/prisoners-education-trust-report.pdf

The results show a statistically significant reduction in the level of offending compared to the matched control group for all the categories of study. The reduction is considerable with levels of reoffending over a quarter lower. The study also looked at applicants who, for various reasons, had not been given support. Their levels of reoffending were also lower than a matched control group suggesting that the aspiration and motivation to take advantage of educational opportunities is important in avoiding a return to crime on release.

Evidence of latent demand from the prisoner population

Given compelling evidence of the positive impact of distance learning there must be a question of whether prisoners are taking these opportunities or whether more could be done to bring out latent demand from prisoners. There is certainly ample evidence that prisoners have high levels of educational disadvantage:⁹

- ❑ 47 per cent of prisoners reported having no qualifications (which compares with 15 per cent of the general adult population);

- ❑ 42 per cent reported having been permanently excluded from school;
- ❑ 21 per cent reported needing help with reading, writing or numeracy.

On the other hand, the same study also showed a significant proportion of prisoners well placed to take advantage of higher levels of education. It showed that around 5 per cent were educated beyond A level and about 3 per cent having a degree (which compares with 16 per cent of the adult working age population). Just as significantly, the survey revealed remarkably positive attitudes towards learning. Only one in ten prisoners identified with the statement, 'learning is not for people like me'.

It is clear that demand for higher levels of learning is being poorly met by the prison Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contracts. The table below contains information on course completions through the OLASS contracts over the academic years 2010/11 to 2013/14 given by the Skills Minister in an answer to a Parliamentary question on 10 February 2015. This shows that learning at level 3 and above (equivalent to beyond GCSE) formed a very small and falling proportion of the education offered (especially considering the scale of the prison population of around 86,000).

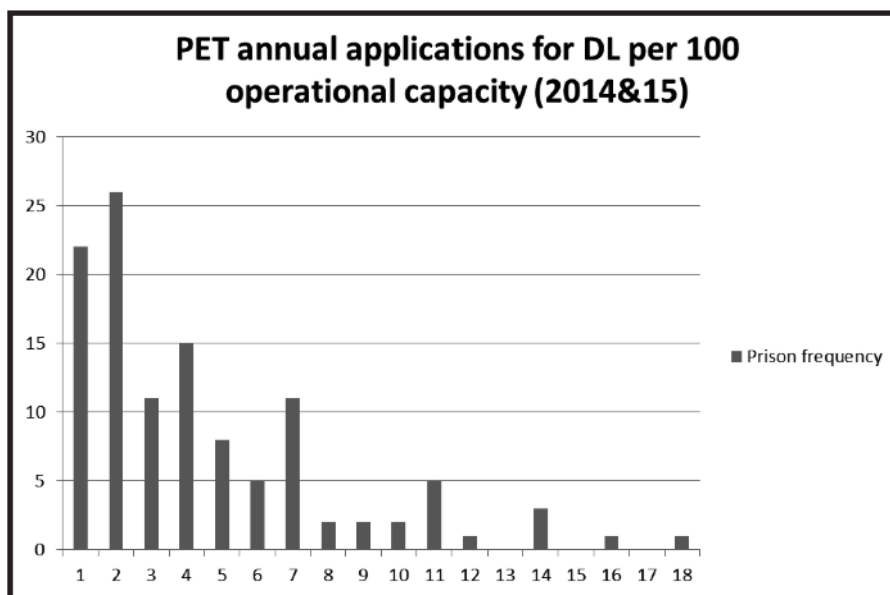
Academic Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Achievements	70,300	71,900	68,400	79,700
of which:				
Level 3	1,200	1,200	1,400	600
A Levels	-	-	-	-
AS Levels	10	-	-	10

This suggests that access to higher levels of learning through Distance Learning and funded not as part of the OLASS contract but via PET represents a very important route for higher level learning in the adult prison system. PET's experience is that demand from prisoners for distance learning is heavily dependent on whether within individual establishments the support exists to encourage and enable the application and study process. In many instances this amounts to there being one passionate and committed member of staff (whether employed by the prison, the education provider the careers service provider or the library). This means that in some establishments a high proportion of the demand for distance learning may be being met,

but in others there may be a significant level of latent unmet demand.

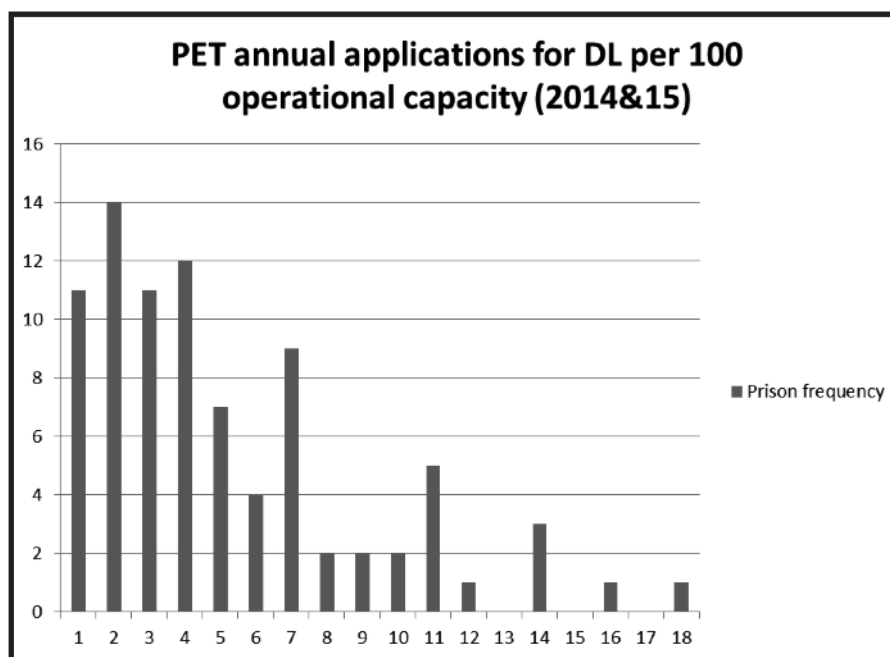
This perception based on operational experience is borne out by an analysis of PET's administrative data. The graphic below shows the distribution of prisons according to the number of applications to PET for distance learning per 100 of operational capacity. The majority of prisons make very few applications for the size of their population — twenty two prisons for example submitted fewer than one application per 100 prisoners. On the other hand there are other establishments where the level of applications are much higher — equating to over ten for every 100 operational capacity.

9. Hopkins, K (2012) The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly selected prisoners. Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners. London: Ministry of Justice.



Of course much of this variation can be explained and expected from the varying population in different prisons. Following a distance learning course requires time and so we would expect there to be more uptake among prisons holding prisoners with longer sentences.

The second graph below addresses this by excluding from the analysis local prisons (as defined by the MoJ prison finder website)¹⁰ that typically have a high churn short-term population:



The effect of excluding the locals does reduce the heavy weighting of the distribution towards lower levels of applications. But it is still striking that some establishments make much more use of distance learning opportunities offered. If all prisons were to submit a level of applications relative to the size of their population at the level of the upper quartile of prisons, there would be considerably higher demand

nationally. When that information is linked with the evidence that shows that prisoners who do pursue such learning have significantly lower levels of reoffending on release, there is a strong case for promoting such opportunities more actively (even though that would set the charitable sector a challenge to fund more courses).

10. <http://www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/prison-finder>

Some suggestions for prison education policy building on the evidence

This article has presented a case for promoting education as a central part of prison regimes. Prison makes successful reintegration to society very hard. Education is one of the few positive things that can be offered over a prison sentence to help. Many prisoners have untapped potential for learning. And purposeful activity is vital for wellbeing in custody.

One argument in support of prison education is that of equity. As for example with standards of healthcare, it is argued that prisoners should have access to the same level of educational opportunities available for adults in wider society. However, there is a strong case for going beyond simple parity. All too often prisoners have failed or been unable to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered earlier in life and, having taken the decision to incarcerate them, it is arguable that society has both an obligation and self interest in looking to mitigate the adverse effects of imprisonment and assist former prisoners to re-enter the community equipped and empowered to contribute fully and constructively to it.

In this context it is unfortunate that, despite many examples of excellent and dedicated good practice, the overall assessment of the quality of prison education from Ofsted is consistently poor. As reported in the 2014/15 Ofsted annual report:

*'Learning and skills and work in prisons have been the worst performing elements of the FE and skills sector for some time, and Ofsted has long been critical of this failure. Last year, there was a small degree of improvement in inspection outcomes. This year, the outcomes are very poor and considerably worse. Of the 50 prisons with inspection reports published this year, fewer than a third (28 per cent) were judged good or outstanding for their learning and skills and work activities. Standards were markedly worse compared with last year.'*¹¹

Against this background PET and the Prisoner Learning Alliance¹² (which PET convenes and supports) argues that improvements to prison education require it to:

- ❑ Be developed and designed towards the fundamental goal of achieving better outcomes for prisoners and their prospects for reintegration back into society:

- ❑ This implies that education needs to be a genuine priority for the prison regime and the culture of establishments — which means a priority for the prison's No1 Governor; and that the way that it is offered should take account of the evidence of desistance theory on how education can promote the development of more positive identities and a sense of personal control and responsibility.
- ❑ Engage prisoners to inspire and motivate them:
 - ❑ Literacy and numeracy are clearly important but the evidence suggests the importance of inspiring aspiration and motivation. This implies that education should look to embed learning on literacy, numeracy and basic ICT skills in other activities, including creative activities, that prisoners are inspired and motivated to take up. And the learning should address deeper personal and social development needs (themselves essential to gaining employment) rather than simply focusing on job skills relating to any specific employment route.
- ❑ Offer routes to positive futures:
 - ❑ This implies, providing access to a ladder of genuine educational progression including connecting with continuing learning opportunities in the community while released on temporary licence or after the end of a prison sentence.
- ❑ Use the opportunities offered by technology:
 - ❑ The prison service has invested heavily in providing an IT platform for learning that is genuinely safe and secure; but current constraints on access for prisoners mean that it is massively underused.
- ❑ Build on all the resources available to support the quality of education. This implies:
 - ❑ using prisoner volunteers — who generally make the most effective advocates and champions for education and listening to the voice of learners about how services can be improved;
 - ❑ using the Voluntary and Community Sector such as the help offered by organisations such as PET and others; and
 - ❑ Building excellence in prison teachers through supporting their development.

11. Para. 117, Ofsted Annual Report 2014/15: Education and Skills, December 2015.

12. See Nina Champion, Smart Rehabilitation: Learning how to get better outcomes, Prisoner Learning Alliance, December 2013 and The Future of Prison Education Contracts: Delivering Better Outcomes, Prisoner Learning Alliance, May 2015.

Educational Partnerships Between Universities and Prisons:

How Learning Together can be Individually, Socially and Institutionally Transformative

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Prisons and universities are both institutions that seek to play a part in being individually and socially transformative. According to HM Prison Service's mission statement, prisons seek to help prisoners 'lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release'. The vision of the National Offender Management Service is to 'work collaboratively with providers and partners to achieve a transformed justice system to make communities safer, prevent victims and cut crime'.² University mission statements also reflect aspirations to be individually transformative by providing spaces within which people can pursue excellence through learning. They seek to contribute to society by making learning opportunities inclusive³ and by producing research that helps us to make sense of the world and how we might shape it for the better. Prisons and universities both seek to capacitate and invest in people, recognising that social transformation is achieved through individual growth.

There is a long British history of people in universities and prisons learning alongside one another. As a field of inquiry, criminology is steeped in the benefits of interactive learning between people actively involved in the criminal justice system and people engaged in the system from an academic perspective. In the 1950s, Professor Max Grunhut, one of the founding fathers of academic criminology, set up and ran a society called 'Crime-a-Challenge'. Among other things, this society regularly brought boys who were serving sentences at Huntercombe Borstal to have tea with boys studying law in Oxford. Professor Nigel Walker organised dialogue groups where he took students from Oxford and, later, from Cambridge into local prisons. These meetings were not used as avenues through which to reform prisoners, but rather as a basis from which Walker and his students could learn *from* and *with* people in prison.⁴ Other similarly oriented initiatives grew from these roots.⁵

While opportunities for learning between criminal justice practitioners and universities have increased,⁶

1. We are grateful for the many conversations with our students and colleagues, both in and out of prison, which have informed our thinking in designing, delivering and understanding Learning Together. Particular thanks are owed to our CRASSH Faculty Research Group Co-Convenors, Jo-Anne Dillabough and Michelle Ellefson, the University of Cambridge's Teaching and Learning Innovation fund, Jamie Bennett, Andy Woodley and Sharon von Holtz of HMP Grendon, and the British Academy for funding to evaluate Learning Together over the next five years.
2. National Offender Management Service Business Plan 2014-15: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/302776/NOMS_Business_Plan_201415.pdf.
3. Although all universities are formally committed to equality of opportunity irrespective of socio-economic background, many universities do not realise their aspirations in practice. See further Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission 'Higher Education: The Fair Access Challenge' (June 2013), p.2: 'This evidence shows that some of our leading universities in particular have a long way to go: they have become more, not less, socially unrepresentative over time. The proportion of students at these institutions from state schools and from disadvantaged backgrounds is lower than it was a decade ago.': https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206994/FINAL_Higher_Education_-_The_Fair_Access_Challenge.pdf. The Government seeks to double university admissions from people from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2020 compared with 2009 and increase BME student admissions by 20%. See further Department for Business Innovation and Skills 'Fulfilling Our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice' (November 2015), p.13: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf.
4. Walker, N. (2003) *A Man Without Loyalties: A Penologist's Afterthoughts*, Barry Rose Law Publishers Ltd: Chichester, p.124.
5. Andrew Rutherford, for example, ran similar initiatives at young offender institutes in the North East of England.
6. Examples of strong learning relationships between criminal justice practitioners and universities include the MST in Applied Penology, Criminology and Management at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, the Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice at the University of Portsmouth and the LLM/MSc in Criminal Justice and Penal Change at the University of Strathclyde. Other organisations, such as the Butler Trust, promote dialogue between criminal justice practitioners and university communities. See, for example, 'Putting Research into Practice': <http://www.butlertrust.org.uk/putting-research-into-practice/>.

opportunities for mutual learning between students (incarcerated and not) are rare. In contrast to the decline in university and prison learning partnerships in the UK, such partnerships have become widespread in the USA. Initiatives in the USA range from opportunities for experiential encounter,⁷ to university accredited learning in prison that continues at university post-release.⁸ In this article we introduce 'Learning Together', an initiative whereby students in universities and prisons learn degree-level material alongside one another in the prison environment. Learning Together is inspired by the diverse forms that university and prison partnerships can take and seeks to build upon the long British history of mutual learning⁹ and participatory methods in prisons research.¹⁰ Learning Together recognises that there are many walls, metaphorical or physical, that can keep us all in quite small worlds. As Paolo Freire argues, education can be the practice of freedom: it is a deeply civic, political and moral practice. However, education can sometimes become the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' when knowledge is delivered in ways that are exclusive, exclusionary and didactic.¹¹ By learning together we can engage with knowledge in ways that are both individually and socially transformative.

In this article we describe Learning Together and the values in which it is grounded. We go on to examine the theoretical basis that underpins the design and delivery of this initiative and finally we outline the findings from the evaluation of the Learning Together pilot, which was a collaboration between the University of Cambridge and HMP Grendon.¹²

Learning Together is inspired by the diverse forms that university and prison partnerships can take and seeks to build upon the long British history of mutual learning.

What is Learning Together?

Learning Together uses learning as a means to connect people who otherwise may be unlikely to meet. It aims to do this through co-creating learning spaces within prison whereby students who are currently imprisoned study alongside students from a local university. It prioritises the interactive and engaging delivery of academically rigorous educational content. It facilitates dialogical and experiential engagement with this educational content and models unconditional positive regard as the basis for all relationships.¹³ The Learning Network is a community of prisons and universities who are working together in learning partnerships that respond to local needs and strengths to grow transformative learning cultures.¹⁴

Each week students read two articles on a given topic, and then engage in an interactive lecture followed by discussion of the lecture and the readings in small groups that are facilitated by volunteer early career academics. Dialogue is open to all and if prison staff want to attend sessions they are welcome to participate.¹⁵ We dedicate one week to a group project where two small groups come together to use their shared knowledge to reimagine one aspect of criminal justice. In order to graduate from the course each student writes a reflective essay that is double blind marked. The graduation ceremony is open to students' family, friends, offender managers and supervisors and other officials from the university and prisons. The ceremony's design draws upon Maruna's work on reentry rituals.¹⁶

7. See for example the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Programme: <http://www.insideoutcenter.org/>
8. Such as such as through the Prison-to-College Pipeline at John Jay College, City University New York. <http://johnjayresearch.org/pri/projects/nys-prison-to-college-pipeline/>.
9. We recognise, in particular, the innovative ways in which the Scottish Prison Service is working with universities to enhance learning between students' of both institutions. For example, Sarah Armstrong of the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research at the University of Glasgow coordinates university level reading groups in partnership with New College Lanarkshire. See similarly in England, Hartley, J. and Turvey, S. (2009) 'Reading Together: the Role of the Reading Group Inside Prison' *Prison Service Journal*, 183, 27-32.
10. For example, many of the prisoners who went to participate in the University of Durham's 'Inside-Out' programme (in HMP Frankland) participated in the groups beforehand in 2013-2014 run by the University of Cambridge.
11. Freire, P. (1973) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd: London.
12. See further www.just-is.org.
13. Rogers, C. (1951) *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*, Houghton Mifflin: Boston.
14. Learning Together partnerships have formed, or are in the process of forming, between, for example, HMP Full Sutton and Leeds Beckett University, HMP Gartree and De Montfort University, the University of Cumbria and HMP Haverigg, Nottingham Trent University and Lowdham Grange, Manchester Metropolitan University and HMP Styal.
15. We are working on a complementary initiative to train staff in prisons and universities about how to interact well with people to promote learning.
16. Maruna, S. (2011), 'Reentry as a rite of passage', *Punishment and Society*, 13(1), 3-28.

Through Learning Together, we seek to curate communities of learning that have the potential to fill gaps or address deficits in current education provision in prison¹⁷ and simultaneously to challenge the exclusivity of the educational experience of many university students. Whilst prisoners have access to basic education, funding for tertiary education is scarce and, where available, is delivered through a distance learning model that provides few opportunities for learning from peers or through discussion. By Learning Together university students also benefit from learning with and alongside people who may have different life experiences but who, just like them, are seeking to expand their horizons and maximise their potential. But Learning Together is not trying to change people. We are learning with, from and through each other. This changes us all. Learning Together provides opportunities to work with people who we might have thought were different from ourselves and to let this shape our understanding of who we are, and what we do in our lives. All of the interactions on the course are underpinned by a belief in everyone's potential; a potential that emerges through relationships and connections¹⁸ and through the cultivation of what Carol Dweck has called a growth mindset.¹⁹

The design of Learning Together is theory led and its delivery is value led. Learning Together has five core underpinning values: equality, diffuse power, a belief in potential, connection through shared activities and the individually and socially transformational power of togetherness. Learning Together seeks to honour these values consistently across all of its practices. Our commitment to equality and diffuse power means that we think of everyone in the Learning Together

Our commitment to
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Learning Together
classroom as a
student.

classroom as a student. Small group facilitators and lecturers are, of course, leaders in the learning space, but they are also learners. We also do not exclude any aspect of a person's identity from the learning space: moments of students' lives of which they are most and least proud are all valid lenses through which to understand and make sense of knowledge.

A further example of our values in practice is that we approach security as everyone's concern: we meet together with all of our students and facilitators at the start of the course to agree upon the rules and practices that will create the kind of learning environment we all want to inhabit. Safety forms part of that discussion, explored dialogically and collaboratively with prison security staff. We all agree to abide by the rules of the prison that houses us. This approach to security is grounded in theories of legitimacy, which suggest that

when power is negotiated in dialogue people experience it as good and fair and are more likely to respect the rules.²⁰ This approach also avoids reinforcing 'scary other' narratives that generate anxiety and compound prejudice. Everyone commits to being open about difficulties which may emerge as we learn together. We also all agree to be responsive to feedback and, given consensus, we make changes to the course immediately wherever possible to ensure that feedback is fed

forward and makes a difference. In this way, each member of the learning community feels empowered to speak and be heard. We see empowerment as crucial within the Learning Together space because people in prison often have had very disempowering experiences of education which arguably prepare them for the powerlessness of prison life.²¹ Learning Together aims to give opportunities for students to take control of their

17. Criticisms of existing prison education provision include a narrow focus on qualification completion that does not capture or draw attention to the broader potential positive impacts of learning, the limited range of qualifications and subjects on offer, especially perhaps for people serving long sentences, too little funding, a focus on employability at the expense of non-vocational learning opportunities, poor quality teaching, and OLAS contractual inflexibility meaning that too little account can be taken of local needs and interests. See further Prisoner Learning Alliance (2015) 'The Future of Prison Education Contracts: Delivering Better Outcomes': <http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/resources/the-future-of-prison-education-contracts-delivering-better-outcomes> and the Prisoner Learning Alliance's evidence to the Coates Review on prison education: <http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/data/PLA/PLA%20response%20to%20Coates%20Review%2019.11.15.pdf>.
18. We are inspired by Christian Smith's work on 'emergent personhood'. In *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (2010), University of Chicago Press: Chicago, Smith argues 'Humans literally cannot develop as persons without other persons with whom they share and sustain their personhood. To be a person is not to be an incommunicable self, distinct from other selves. It is also to be related to, communicating among and in communion with other personal selves.'
19. Dweck, C. (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Random House, New York.
20. Bottoms, A. and Tankebe, J. (2012) 'Beyond procedural justice: a dialogic approach to legitimacy in criminal justice' *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 102(2), 119-170.
21. See e.g. Graham, K. (2014) 'Does school prepare men for prison?' *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy and Action*, 18(6), 824-836.

own learning by becoming co-creators of the course and the learning space.

The Learning Together 'space' does not stop at the prison walls. By valuing and seeking to cultivate inquiring and independent spirits in our students we hope that the experience of Learning Together will inspire and facilitate life-long learning. As with all university students, we welcome our students to stay in touch with us after the course has finished: we write references for them, we are interested to hear about their progress and we continue working together wherever we can to support initiatives that enrich the intellectual and cultural lives of our institutions. We support the intellectual friendships that our students form, encouraging them to keep in touch with one another through institutional addresses, as is consistent with prison rules. We see Learning Together courses as catalysts for ongoing academic relationships with and between our students, and our universities, and we take seriously our ethical and professional responsibilities to create inclusive spaces of learning in universities just as much as in prisons.²² As the Governor of HMP Grendon, Dr Jamie Bennett, put it, Learning Together is not about being 'smash and grab educationalists'. We believe in investing in our graduates as well as our new recruits. Our graduates are offered the opportunity to undertake a bespoke educational mentoring training course.²³ This capacitates graduates to support new Learning Together students through the anxieties of advanced studies in unfamiliar settings and surroundings. We hope it also helps to embed and spread positive learning cultures beyond the institutions in which we work to new prisons and universities.

Why Learn Together?

Margaret Thatcher famously said 'There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women

Where potential is recognised to be malleable and there are opportunities for growth, people are more likely to be able to change in the desired direction.

and there are families.' But in his book, *What is a Person?*, Christian Smith says she was 'dead wrong'.²⁴ He places individual interactions at the heart of becoming, both individually as a person, and more socially, as a community. His explanation of the socially emergent nature of the true potential of individual personhood captures perfectly what we were aiming to achieve in designing Learning Together. The values and practices of Learning Together that were described above grew out of three bodies of literature: educational literature on how people reach their potential, sociological literature on the value of intergroup contact to reducing stigma and prejudice, and criminological literature on how people rebuild their lives to move away from offending. We realised there are striking commonalities between these literatures that emphasise the importance of self-

perception; how self-perception is shaped in connection with others; and how these connections provide avenues for the exercise of agency and the movement into new mindsets and new potential futures. In this section we explain and explore these commonalities.

'Communities of learning' provide opportunities for learning new patterns of behaviour through socialisation, visualisation and imitation.²⁵ Educational research shows how peoples' mindsets influence their capacity to learn and change. Mindsets are, in turn, influenced by surroundings. Where potential is

recognised to be malleable and there are opportunities for growth, people are more likely to be able to change in the desired direction.²⁶ Mindset and community connection are also important to desistance. People have to be able to perceive a different future to move towards that future.²⁷ This may explain why increased perceptions of stigma are associated with persistent criminal behaviour: perceiving stigma limits perceptions of possible alternative futures. Conversely, we know from the literature that people are more likely to desist when they perceive less stigma and are surrounded by people

22. We welcome the work of organisations such as the Longford and Hardman Trusts, who provide financial support for people with criminal convictions who wish to study. The Longford Trust also runs an academic mentoring scheme. We are currently working with Jacob Dunne to explore university admissions policies and processes for people who have criminal convictions.

23. Our mentoring training is delivered by 'No Offence' award winning, Community Led Initiatives: <http://www.communityled.org.uk>.

24. Smith, C. (2010) *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.475.

25. Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. See also Akers, R. (2001) 'Social Learning Theory' in Paternoster, R. and Bachman, R. (eds) *Explaining Criminals and Crime: Essays in Contemporary Criminological Theory*, Roxbury, Los Angeles, pp.192-210.

26. Dweck, C. (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Random House, New York.

27. Shapland, J. and Bottoms, A. (2011) 'Reflections on Social Values, Offending and Desistance Among Young Adult Recidivists' *Punishment and Society*, 13(3), 256-282.

and opportunities that support the adoption and practice of pro-social behaviours.²⁸

Facilitating meaningful contact and interchange²⁹ between social groups, through togetherness, is one way to reduce stigma. If people within and without of prison know one another individually, attitudes towards ex-prisoners in general may soften and this, in turn, has the potential to reduce punitive attitudes and stigma.³⁰ We know from contact theory that where meaningful interchange occurs between people who may hold prejudices against each other in situations that provide opportunities for people to cooperate, as equals, with common goals and the support of social and institutional authorities it can support the formation of friendships and reduce overall prejudice.³¹ This, in turn, supports desistance and the Prison Service's aim to reduce crime.

The coincidences between these literatures persuaded us that there is individually, socially and institutionally transformative potential in growing communities of learning and meaningful interchange between universities and prisons. Our aim for Learning Together was to curate something more than an opportunity for symbolic social inclusion in a place of exclusion. Research tells us that the nature of a space is shaped by behavioural norms³² and that the performance of behavioural norms in social spaces in turn defines individual personas.³³ By explicitly co-creating a community of thought and learning we seek to provide opportunities for the development and exercise of active citizenship. We expect our students to establish, and maintain, classroom social structures that are freeing — that enable them to be themselves and to be with others in ways that they find meaningful. We are not involved in some experiment of social proximity:

We know that positive experiences of education in school and prison are linked to socially beneficial outcomes; increased wellbeing and reduced reoffending.

grounded in Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', we seek to create learning communities within prisons that provide an education that is forged with, not for, students and which recognise, nurture and empower a sense of personhood grounded in connection that transcends difference.

We know that positive experiences of education in school and prison are linked to socially beneficial outcomes; increased wellbeing and reduced reoffending.³⁴ Our theoretical knowledge suggests to us that these benefits are more likely to be reaped when socially inclusive and cohesive learning opportunities are opened up. Co-creating Learning Together has given us the opportunity to put this theory to the test. In the following section of this paper we share some of what we have learned so far about what happens when we learn together and what that might tell us about the power of connectedness to transform individuals, society and institutions.

What Happens When We Learn Together?

To understand the experiences and impacts of Learning Together we held focus group feedback meetings with students throughout the course, designed and administered a questionnaire to all students, conducted individual interviews with all students and held a focus group feedback meeting with the academics who were involved in delivering the course. In this article we draw on the qualitative data from our observations, interviews and focus groups.³⁵

The overarching theme that emerged from analysis of this data was that Learning Together was an enlivening experience for everyone who participated in it — for the University of Cambridge and HMP Grendon

28. LeBel, T. et al (2008) 'The "chicken and egg" of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime' *European Journal of Criminology*, 5(2), 130-158.

29. As opposed to 'mere' encounter. See further Valentine, G. (2008) 'Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter' *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(3), 323-337.

30. Hirschfield, P. and Piquero, A. (2010) 'Normalization and legitimization: modelling stigmatising attitudes towards ex-offenders' *Criminology*, 48(1), 27-55.

31. Pettigrew, T. (1998) 'Intergroup Contact Theory' *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.

32. Cresswell, T. (1996) *In Place / Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota.

33. Elias, N. (1978) *The History of Manners*, Vintage, New York.

34. See e.g. Layard, R., Clark, A. E., Cornaglia, F., Powdthavee, N., & Vernoit, J. (2014). What predicts a successful life? A life course model of well being. *The Economic Journal*, 124 (580), and 'Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education: a meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults', RAND Corporation: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf.

35. We are making use of, and developing, the survey data as part of a five year evaluation of Learning Together funded by the British Academy.

as institutions, venturing into innovative territory, for the academics involved who were accustomed to researching the criminal justice system but not to sharing their research as learning back to participants, and for the students who formed new friendships and understandings in unexpected places and found new meanings and inspiration in their learning. Although we have not yet systematically collected data about the broader cultural impacts of Learning Together, feedback from staff at both the prison and university suggests that the course shaped institutional learning cultures in ways that stretched beyond the impacts described below for those who participated in the course:

'The students are full of enthusiasm and are constantly drawing on their discussions and encounters in Grendon. Learning Together is so good as a supplement to our teaching/discussions on the [Cambridge MPhil] course. So just a big thank you for organising / conceiving.' (Alison, Professor, Institute of Criminology, Cambridge).

'The mentoring training could not have been better timed [...]. We've been struggling to get good quality mentoring in place at Grendon and across most establishments. It is clear we have a lot to develop.' (Andy, Head of Learning and Skills, HMP Grendon and Springhill).

Underpinning the overarching theme of vitality that emerged from the data were new, malleable and inclusive understandings about being, belonging and becoming forged through improbable friendships. Our students described how an expanded sense of belonging through the Learning Together community reshaped their understandings of self and opened up new routes of personal growth and a sense of becoming with newly broadened horizons:

'[Learning Together] broke down my own barriers and the fear that had festered whilst being in prison [...]. It gave me self-esteem and confidence in my own abilities. I felt it was a unified experience that gave prisoners a dialogical concept to connect with society. All education courses in prisons do not provide an opportunity to study with highly educated students from around the world. The open dialogue is a powerful tool to bring everyone

together, it can transform students own experiences and attitudes. Being able to put our past behind us and to do something positive like this has helped our confidence, transforming our lives.' (Zaheer, student, 2015).

Similarly, in the excerpt below Kairo describes how he perceived differences between people from 'his area' and people that would study at Cambridge University. However, he goes on to discuss how, through learning with and alongside these students, he came to realise likenesses:

Q: *'If other people were wondering about doing the Learning Together course what would you tell them about being on the course?'*

A: *'If I phoned someone now from my area [...] and I say to them, 'What would you think about working with some people from Cambridge University?' they'd say, 'What are you talking about?', and probably put the phone down [...] But when you go on the course and you just realise, 'Hold on a minute, these people are just the same as me. They're humans*

just like me. They've read a few more books, writ a few more statements, cited a few people.' [...] and I just think, 'I can do that'. But then it seems quite daunting before you, kind of, put yourself in that [course]. So yes, I think it [...] makes me, and I think it will make other prisoners, see themselves as, you know, better than what they deem themselves to be. I think that's massive. That's not something you can buy or put a price on. That is massive, because one of the worst things we do is kind of tell ourselves we're not good enough, and that just reinforces you saying, 'It doesn't make sense, there's no point doing it because I can't do it anyway, so let's just stay in this seat and not bother going and sitting in that seat over there because it's pointless.' You know, you hope he's going to get up and say, 'Yes, I can do it and I'm going to go and do it. It's going to be difficult, but I can do it.' I think for me that's just one of the biggest things. Obviously there's loads of other things but the main thing for me is just that.'

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Kairo describes how the new sense of commonality generated by the experience of Learning Together cultivated belonging which made him view himself differently and embrace the challenges of growing into new opportunities. After successfully completing the course Kairo decided he would sign up for an Open University degree in criminology, something he had previously thought was beyond him. The correlations between further education in prison and reduced recidivism rates are well known,³⁶ but the mechanisms behind these results have not been well studied. For Kairo, and others on the course, the process involved realising he could be and do something other than that which he had been and had done. He could grow into a new future rather than being fixed in the past. Another of our students, Dean, described his experiences of Learning Together as giving him 'a sort of undercover confidence [...] the one little bit to say I know who I am and I know where I'm going now'.

The students' responses to the questionnaire and the interviews all explained how, through connections formed with others on the course, they had developed new perceptions of themselves, of others, of their possible futures and of the sense that they have a role to play in shaping these futures. These connections formed through the shared vulnerability of embracing new academic content in an unfamiliar context. There was a common project at stake and connections formed through being open and honest about limitations and fears:

'The first thing I asked the other students was 'did you do the readings?' They said 'yes'. I then asked, 'did you understand those big words?', to which they replied 'no'. This was music to my ears.' (Kairo, student, 2015).

Connections were formed through learning together as equals in the room, and through experiencing interactions as humanist, rather than as humanitarian. As one of our students, Aastha, put it, 'No one is saving another, both parties are relying on

each other to work together to finish a common task.' The shared experience of Learning Together with people the students initially perceived as different to them helped everyone to move beyond the stereotypes they had held about each other:

'I was worried about prejudices against myself from people who I deemed to be 'toffs' [...] I thought people like myself don't mix with people like them, a real 'us' and 'them' attitude [...] [Learning Together] assisted me in challenging these views by allowing me to mix and study alongside Cambridge University students.' (Marc, student, 2015).

'For me, I think [Learning Together] has changed my views, my perceptions [...]. They are people, very intelligent, just like ourselves, you know, if you want, and you should treat them like that.' (Zac, student, 2015).

What this data suggests is that Learning Together provided a space for meaningful interchange. The course was more than the sorts of mere encounter that Valentine argues can reinforce prejudices because they are thinly veiled by a 'culture of tolerance'.³⁷ By welcoming difference through accepting

everyone as they are, but also grounding every aspect of the course in the equality of our common humanity, students were empowered to grow in themselves and together, irrespective of their individual starting points.

By connecting with others and connecting with themselves in new ways, students perceived that new and broader social spaces opened up to them. As Christiana (student, 2015) said: 'We live in a small box, and the only view we have of the outside world is through our piles of books, essays, and articles.' Learning Together gave students a 'taste' of what might be possible, which helped them to imagine and begin to live out new becomings, with new conviction:

'[Learning Together] made me realise my world was small. I knew a few people on a

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36. Davis, L. et al (2013) 'Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education: a meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults', RAND Corporation: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf.

37. Valentine, G. (2008) 'Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter' *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(3), 323-337, p.334.

few streets. I thought universities and places like that were spaces I couldn't go to. But now I realise I can go there. I can exist outside of my small world.' (Eugene, student, 2015).

'It teaches you that not all of society has the same perception about criminals — it gives you a sense of hope that when you get out some parts of society might accept you.' (Muddassir, student, 2015).

'Although [before Learning Together] I believed in second chances, now I think I didn't actually believe in second chances, you know? Yes, if you asked me like two years ago, I'd say 'yes, of course, second chances, yay!' But no, now I believe in second chances, because I saw it.' (Christiana, student, 2015).

Farrall and colleagues have identified how risk thinking can shape the spaces and structures within which prisoners and ex-prisoners are able to form and practice their non-criminal identities³⁸ — but what was interesting to us is that this same risk thinking also shapes and limits the spaces and places and ways in which people who are not in prison live and practice their identities. It keeps people and institutions enclosed in our difference in ways that are exclusive, exclusionary and disempowering. This narrows our thinking and inhibits the potential for productive collaborations between people and institutions.

In contrast to this, as our students connected with each other they also connected with spaces and places outside of their previously 'small worlds'. Eugene realised that universities were public spaces in which he could belong, and Christiana realised the limitations of living in 'a small box' of books and articles and engaging with the 'outside world' only through this academic lens. Muddassir expressed how Learning Together gave him hope that there are people in the society from which he is excluded, by virtue of his imprisonment, who might accept him. This expanded sense of being and belonging opened up possibilities

for playing out new identities and for exercising the newfound agency that Farrall and colleagues argue 'risk thinking' closes down.

Conclusion

There is increasing recognition that policies of mass incarceration, exclusion and incapacitation in response to criminally harmful actions have failed.³⁹ Armstrong and Maruna suggest that smaller, more outward focused prisons that are connected with local communities may be better suited to supporting the individual and social transformations that the criminal justice system seeks to achieve. A better way forward may be through more porous prisons that work in partnership with community institutions to support one another in their missions rather than incapacitating people through disconnecting them from society. Instead of approaching people in prison as sites of deficit to be corrected we could see them as sites of talent, experience and potential to be fulfilled, to their individual benefit as well as to the benefit of our communities.

Through the eyes of our students and their experiences on the Learning Together course, this article has described the transformational potential of opportunities for meaningful encounter that create a sense of

There is increasing recognition that policies of mass incarceration, exclusion and incapacitation in response to criminally harmful actions have failed.

individual, social and institutional connectedness and togetherness. By connecting with others through Learning Together, students connected with themselves in new ways and reshaped ideas they previously held about each other and themselves and their roles in society. These connections and realisations opened up a sense of belonging within broadened social spaces in which new futures could be forged. They now felt 'in it together' and that they had a shared responsibility to create the kind of society in which they all wanted to live. Learning Together motivated students to develop new ideas about what it means to be active citizens. For some, this meant that they wanted to become 'visible' within society when before they had always wanted to live 'off grid'. For example, Dean had always avoided being registered on the electoral roll; his experiences of Learning Together prompted a new

38. Farrall, S., Bottoms, A. and Shapland, J. (2010) 'Social structures and desistance from crime' *European Journal of Criminology*, 7(6), 546-570; Farrall, S., Hunter, B., Sharp, G. and Calverley, A. (2014) *Criminal Careers in Transition: The Social Context of Desistance from Crime*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

39. Armstrong, R. and Maruna, S. (2016, forthcoming) 'Examining imprisonment through a social justice lens' in Stephen Farrall, Barry Goldson, Ian Loader and Anita Dockley (eds.) *Justice and Penal Reform: Re-shaping the Penal Landscape*, Routledge, Oxford.

desire to be seen and known through contributing positively to shaping society by voting.

There is currently increased political will for innovation within the criminal justice sector. From the USA to Europe, high incarceration countries have realised the economic and social costs of politically prioritising discredited 'tough on crime' policies. Economic crises have instigated moral reflection on penal policy. In England and Wales there are new moves towards giving prison governors more local autonomy. This may lead, among other things, to prisons being motivated to make greater use of local community resources and increase connections with other social institutions.

This pilot study of Learning Together has highlighted to us the need to understand not only the experiences for individuals involved in Learning Together courses, but also the broader institutional

impacts of collaborative and connected learning cultures. We know that involvement in education is individually transformative for people within the criminal justice system, but it is possible that Paulo Freire's theory of education as a socially transformative practice of freedom could also hold true when institutions, such as prisons and universities, collaborate through dialogically sharing knowledge and working together to achieve their aims. As Learning Together partnerships expand to reach new prisons and universities, our evaluation will seek to capture and explore these intra-institutional dynamics. In addition to understanding what sort of learning environments best support people to reach their potential and how these environments are created, it may also be important to consider how educational services are commissioned, led and managed so as to maximise their individually, socially and institutionally transformative potential.



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Transformative dialogues:

(Re)privileging the informal in prison education

Jason Warr is a Lecturer in Criminology at University of Lincoln.

Prime Minister David Cameron noted in his speech about prison reform¹ that education in prison should be something that it is given priority in terms of penal and rehabilitative practice. Whether or not this welcome rhetoric results in effective change in practice remains to be seen. Nevertheless, in order for education in prison to be effective there are a number of issues that need to be acknowledged and addressed. As such this paper will argue that the delivery of education in prison, beyond the basic provision of Numeracy and Literacy levels 1 and 2, is desirable, essential and necessary. However, I will also argue that in order for prison education to work efficiently and to serve the interests of the prisoners, the institution and the wider public we need to move away from the current disciplinary practices and ideologies that exist within prison education and instead re-privilege those skills that arise when learning occurs for learning's sake. These benefits, or so called 'soft skills' — this assumption shall also be challenged in this article, are often perceived as being secondary outcomes to the more formal and instrumental aspects of learning and teaching — the formal qualification. The paper will conclude that is only when we move beyond these destructive ideologies and simple binary outcomes that we will acquire a prison education system that truly delivers pedagogically informed transformations.

This paper is split into four separate but inter-related sections. The first section of this paper will discuss the importance of prison education. The next will discuss the various problems that beset contemporary prison education. These problems consist of the various, and often competing, disciplinary discourses that haunt any penal activity, positivistic imaginings that constrain the way or the

manner in which prisoners are perceived and, finally, the entrenched new public management practices and the curse of key performance targets which limits and prevents both educational services and hampers innovation in terms of education delivery. The third section of this paper will look back upon the experiences that I have had with prison education and argue how that it is the informal discursive pedagogical practices that enabled me to develop both critical reasoning, reading and analytical skills that have aided me in forging a new and productive life outside of the prison. Finally, this paper will look in summation of how privileging the informal in prison education can lead to transformative circumstances for the prisoner.

Education, and in deed embedded learning, learning in traditionally non-educational activities,² in prison is essential for a number of reasons: firstly, there are the obvious and evident formal benefits which can include: knowledge acquisition, literacy, numeracy, IT skills, qualifications and pragmatic and practical employment skills. However, there are also a wealth of informal benefits that attach to education, and more widely learning, in prisons.³ These informal benefits are often considered erroneously as 'soft skills' and as such are rarely if ever considered or counted when prison education is considered at a policy level.⁴ These informal benefits or skills can include such diverse factors as the development of greater wellbeing as well as critical reasoning skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, changed perspectives and, in specific circumstances, narrative change (which we know from the work of researchers such as Maruna,⁵ McNeil,⁶ Healey⁷ and Weaver⁸ can aid the desistance process). There are also wider pedagogical influences such as the understanding of the interaction between the individual and educational processes, the development of metacognition (understanding one's own thought processes), developing specific or specified learning styles and preferences, developing and, more

1. <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2016/02/08/cameron-prison-reform-speech-in-full>
2. Eraut, M (2004), 'Informal Learning in the Workplace', *Studies in Continuing Education*, Vol. 26(2), pps. 247-273.
3. Bayliss, P and Hughes, S (2008), 'Teachers and Instructors in Prisons', in J Bennett, B Crewe and A Wahidin (eds), *Understanding Prison Staff*, Willan Publishing.
4. Hughes, E (2012), *Education in Prison: Studying Through Distance Learning*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
5. Maruna, S (2001), *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives*, American Psychological Association.
6. McNeil, F (2006), 'A Desistance Paradigm for Offender Management', *Criminology & Criminal Justice: An International Journal*, Vol. 6(1), pps. 39-62.
7. Healy, D (2013), 'Changing Fate? Agency and the Desistance Process', *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 17(4), pps. 557-574.
8. Weaver, B (2015), 'Being Imprisoned: Punishment, Adaptation and Desistance', *European Journal of Probation*, Vol. 7(3), pps. 263-264.

importantly, cementing critical thinking skills and the development of emotional intelligence.⁹

Education and Emotional Geography

Before moving on to discuss the wider issues of prison education it is important to recognise the role that emotional geography¹⁰ can play in terms of prison education. Emotional geography can be thought of as the resulting emotional contours evinced when people space and environments interact. Many environments are designed with specific interactions in mind, it is that artifice, conjoined with the people who inhabit those spaces, which invokes specific types of emotional experience. If you think in terms of the prison: different penal environments, or spaces within the prison, are designed to have very different and specific functions and, correspondingly, are designed to evoke and provoke specific types of reaction and emotion. If one considers segregation units, residential wings, healthcare units, the library, the chapel and even the gym all are designed as very specific interactional arenas which produce quite distinct social spaces¹¹ and, in which, interactions impact and reflect the emotional timbre evoked therein.

In all prison spaces, regardless of the designed interactivity, there is an inherent power ladenness, informed by the varying disciplinary discourses that permeate the prison.¹² As argued elsewhere¹³ education departments, like the gym and chaplaincy, are quite rare emotional spaces within the prison. These spaces whilst still heavily permeated by discourses of discipline and power (security for instance) can also be thought of as nexuses of welfare — spaces in which the central concern is one of care not control, where interactions are predicated upon

learning, mutual respect, creativity and personal development rather than surveillance and constraint (I shall return to this point later). In these terms prison education departments, as with the other spaces mentioned, *can* also operate as power-mitigating, and thus emotionally safe, spaces where these humane and normalised interactions can produce very different emotional contours to that possible elsewhere in the prison; which can aid the production of outcomes for individuals that go beyond the purely penal-centric.

Problems in Contemporary Prison Education

I shall now move on to discuss some of the problems that beset contemporary prison education. The first problem revolves around the issue of disciplinary discourses and ideations of control. Echoing and reflecting wider societal concerns highlighted by Beck¹⁴ the contemporary prison has become increasingly formulated, concerned and perhaps obsessed with negative conceptions of risk — where future prisoner orientated outcomes are no longer of neutral value but are instead considered future dangers which determine specific notions of, and demand particular practices of, risk management. Conjoined to this backdrop of risk obsession is the ‘what works’ ideology¹⁵ which

has influenced, and continues to influence, the very fabric of contemporary penal policy and practice.

We have also seen an increasing medicalisation of wider society whereby societal ills, such as criminality, began to be reconceptualised and pathologised.¹⁶ Here crime and deviance became reframed in positivistic terms with the inherent belief in, and subsequent development of, mechanisms of intervention designed to cure these ills (i.e. the entrenchment of Cognitive

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9. Burton, D (2007), ‘Psycho-pedagogy and personalised learning’, *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, Vol. 33(1) pps 5-17.

10. Crewe, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P. and Smith, A. (2014), ‘The Emotional Geography of Prison Life’, *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 18:1 (pps. 56-74).

11. Lefebvre, H (1991), *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing.

12. Follis, L (2015), ‘Power in Motion: Tracking Time, Space and Movement in the British Penal Estate’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 33(5), pps. 945-962.

13. See 9.

14. Beck, U (1992), *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications.

15. Cullen, F T (2013), ‘Rehabilitation: Beyond Nothing Works’, *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 42(1), pps. 299-376.

16. Conrad, P (2007), *The Medicalisation of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*, John Hopkins University Press.

Behavioural Therapy practices/interventions).¹⁷ Here we see the perceived malignant behaviours of prisoners being tackled in an episodic and programme focused manner in order to instil reasoned and rational (i.e. non-criminal) forms of thinking. This positivistic encroachment gave rise in the 1990s to what can be thought of as the treatment paradigms, or pejoratively — ‘programme fetishism’,¹⁸ which became extant within the prisons of England and Wales in this period and was anchored by the development of the Offending Behaviour Units.¹⁹ As argued elsewhere²⁰ the rehabilitative ideals that prisoners are expected to adhere to are more often designed, as with the assorted abasements and mortifications²¹ to which they are subject, to reformulate the prisoner’s identity into a more compliant institutional one. It is here that we see notions of rehabilitation being both conflated with and consumed by interests of penal control²² and, as a consequence, of becoming a disciplinary discourse in and of itself — no longer with the interests of the individual at its heart but rather with those of the institution and the criminal justice system. In such systems benefits for the prisoner, though given rhetorical primacy, are unfortunately relegated to collateral outcomes.

Resulting from this combination of factors, along with the system wide adoption of New Public Management ideals in the mid-1990s,²³ prisoners have become to be seen as transformative risk subjects²⁴

As such most contemporary penal practice, including rehabilitation and education, have evolved as processes of control which serve the interests of the institution and the wider public over that of the prisoner.

whereby there is a conflation of the needs and risks of prisoners at the same time as structural needs, such as poverty or inequality, are divorced from notions of their riskiness. What this complex morass of policy, practice and social trends have resulted in is generalised discourses that are concerned with control, discipline and management which influence and permeate most, if not all, aspects of the contemporary prison. As such most contemporary penal practice, including rehabilitation and education,²⁵ have evolved as processes of control which serve the interests of the institution and the wider public over that of the prisoner. In fact in much criminal justice procedure the prisoner comes very low on the hierarchy of stakeholders.

The second problem derives from issues highlighted by Carlen²⁶ and Sim²⁷ who argue that in contemporary penal systems prisoners become imagined entities (or simulacra) perceived as a combination of their offender label, the imposed risk identity and their administrative/bureaucratic representations. Crewe²⁸ highlighted the manner in which the bureaucratic representation of a prisoner can have both powerful and long-term impacts on the carceral life course of a prisoner. This imagined conception of the prisoner, when coupled with the positivistic

notions and practices mentioned above, results in prisoners being perceived as having criminogenic deficits and, as Sim²⁹ argues, rehabilitation in this sense

17. Adler, J. R. (2004), ‘Forensic Psychology: Concepts, Debates and Practice’, in J. R. Adler (ed.), *Forensic Psychology: Concepts, Debates and Practice*, Willan Publishing.
18. Crighton, D A and Towl, G (2008), *Psychology in Prisons 2nd Edn*, BPS Blackwell (pp. 98).
19. Towl, G. J. (2004), ‘Applied psychological services in prisons and probation’, in J. Adler (ed.), *Forensic Psychology: Concepts, Debates and Practice*, Cullompton: Willan.
20. Warr, J (forthcoming), ‘The Prisoner: Inside and Out’, in Y Jewkes, B Crewe and J Bennett (eds), *The Handbook on Prisons* (2nd Edn), London: Routledge.
21. Goffman, E. (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.
22. Mathiesen, T (2006), *Prison on Trial*, (3rd Edn), Waterside Press.
23. Liebling, A. (2004), *Prisons and Their Moral Performance*, Oxford University Press.
24. Hannah-Moffatt, K. (2005) ‘Criminogenic Needs and the Transformative Risk Subject: Hybridizations of Risk/Need in Penalty’, *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 7(1), pps. 29–51.
25. Collins, M (1988), ‘Prison Education: A substantial metaphor for adult educational practice’, *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 38(2), pp. 103.
26. Carlen, P (2008) ‘Imaginary Penalties and Risk-Crazed Governance’, in P. Carlen (ed), *Imaginary Penalties*, Willan Publishing, (pps. 1–25).
27. Sim, J (2008), ‘Pain and Punishment: the real and the imaginary in penal institutions’ in P. Carlen (ed), *Imaginary Penalties*, Willan Publishing, (pps. 135–156).
28. Crewe, B. (2009) *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison*, Clarendon Studies in Criminology, Oxford University Press.
29. See 27.

is predicated on correcting these deficits and normalising the prisoner. This is a problem in the modern penal context as poor educational attainment is perceived in the same positivistic light and therefore it becomes necessary for this to be treated or excised. Given this understanding prison education is reformulated as an intervention concerned with correcting a prisoner's offending behaviour rather the imparting of skills and knowledge aimed at personal growth, future development and successful reintegration.

Prison education thus becomes reformulated as a process of rehabilitation and thus is perceived as an intervention in the same way as a cognitive skills programme would be. Education therefore is no longer utilised as a long term strategy for personal development and narrative change, enabling the prisoner to perceive themselves beyond their offender status — a status which the prison is designed to entrench. Rather, education is now utilised as a short term intervention to fix a particular criminogenic problem — poor numeracy or literacy skills. We see this perpetuated in the limited teaching hours that can be provided under OLASS 4 contracts even for remedial learning. It is in this shift that we see the real malignancy of rehabilitative ideologies as they currently exist in, and influence, the penal settings of England and Wales — including in prison education.

As with any policy the entrenchment of new public management ideals had both good and bad consequences: for instance it resulted in improved financial regulation and bought a degree of equilibrium to penal governance; however, on the other hand staff and prisoner interactions and relationships became increasingly characterised by bureaucratised mechanisms which resulted in a breakdown of the lubricating interactions of everyday life.³⁰ This bureaucratisation resulted in three core issues which has negatively impacted on education and learning within prisons: the first was a wholesale adoption of a contractual model of education delivery in the mid to

late 1990s which devolved, to a degree, responsibility for education away from the prison governor to education providers. This led to prison education becoming a for profit enterprise which shifted education from general learning with localised, establishment specific, curricula to a more standardised and profitable one-size-fits-all model which became based upon the delivery of discrete (and cheap) remedial education or basic skills courses.³¹ A consequence of this was that significant proportions of the prisoner population were no longer being catered for in terms of educational provision as courses were no longer offered at varying levels.³² A second issue was the implementation of prison education key

performance targets which resulted in the prioritising of formal accredited basic skills courses that could be easily audited and evidenced which, unfortunately, led in some quarters to practices which prioritised quantity of courses delivered over the quality of prisoner educational experience. The final issue here was with the development of OLASS 4 and the constrained and austere prison whereby educational, and other, budgets were both reduced and constricted in such ways as to almost guarantee that educational provision became limited, generalised and insufficient to meet the needs of many prisons or prisoners. This has hampered the innovation of

educational staff as it has reduced their freedom to deliver quality learning experiences — learning which could go beyond the instrumental aims of remedial certificate attainment. Interestingly, David Cameron in his speech on prison reform³³ highlighted this very situation as a failing of contemporary practice and has indicated a move back to giving prison governors more direct control of the education provision in their prisons so that they can match need to supply.

A further problem attaches to the actual utility of the education provision currently being offered within the modern prison. Much of the rhetoric around prison education and the justification for the current status quo is that education needs to be tied to employability

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30. Warr, J (2008), 'Personal reflections on prison staff', in J Bennett, B Crewe and A Wahidin (eds), *Understanding Prison Staff*, Willan Publishing, 17-29.

31. Clements, P (2004), 'The Rehabilitative Role of Arts Education in Prison: Accommodation or Enlightenment?', *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, Vol. 23(2), pps. 169-178.

32. Prisoners Education Trust (2013), *Brain Cells: Listening to Prisoner Learners*, (3rd Edn), London: PET.

33. See 1.

— hence numeracy, literacy and IT. However, much of the education provided, being remedial in nature, has little utility beyond the walls of the prison. Whilst there are benefits of staying occupied and of achievement for prisoners who have previously no educational attainment there is a danger that this can set those prisoners up to fail when they realise that, beyond that attainment and beyond the wall, those basic certificates are largely meaningless. Discrimination against those with criminal records in the job market is rife — it is incredibly difficult to convince employers to even interview a person with a criminal record and most job applications require that you do in fact declare. Furthermore, in a strained employment market (such as we currently have) where having a degree is no guarantee of success, having qualifications that are not equitable with even a high GCSE is insufficient to make a former prisoner's CV attractive let alone to mitigate the stigmata of their incarceration.

Perhaps the most blatant example of this is when it comes to technology and IT systems. Nearly every profession now requires, if not expertise then certainly familiarity with, differing computer based platforms/programmes. However, access to such platforms and systems is entirely hampered throughout the prison estate of England and Wales. What access prisoners do have is limited and remedial and often outdated (as is the technology that prison staff and management are forced to utilise and are plagued by). This has already resulted in a situation where, as Jewkes and Johnston³⁴ argue, prisoners are rendered caveman-esque in terms of the forms and nature of technology that even primary school children can now, and are expected to, utilise. Even where computer suites are present in prisons they can often lie dormant because of the double constraint of teaching hours under OLASS 4 and the glacial progress in the establishment and adoption of an online campus. In two different prisons that I happened to work in between 2011 and 2014 — the computer suite in one establishment was so unused that it was used by wing staff to store broken furniture and in the other, a prison holding over 600, it was open to a group of 8 students one morning session a week. Such situations render the

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education of prisoners, in this sense, useless as there is no utility to it when it comes to employability. Instead education becomes a means of keeping prisoners occupied under the guise of preparation for release. What compounds this is the degree of denial which can exist on this issue when it comes to both prison managers and education providers — whereas it can be a constant source of frustration for prisoners and teachers alike.³⁵

Once Upon a Time ... Prison Education in the Past

The situation described above was not always the case. The state of prison education has, with interference and artifice, evolved into the enervated entity that we currently see. Once upon a time prison education was different, it wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination but it did involve more pedagogical aims. For instance, in the mid-1990s when I was located in a long-term young offenders institution the Head of Education Department ran a non-accredited General Studies course which was concerned with looking at contemporary news stories, films, articles, music and any interests of prisoners and involved discussing and deconstructing these media in an informal but yet critical way. The purpose of this class was to develop discussion between

prisoners and the tutor around issues that went beyond the prison wall. As noted the class was not accredited but was designed to complement other qualification based courses that prisoners as learners would undertake. In many ways the purpose of this class was to supplement, cement, entrench and expand upon the learning that prisoners as students engaged in. For instance, it was the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau so in one class she showed everyone a photograph that was believed to have been taken in the extermination camp. It showed a pit filled with the gaunt and gelid bodies of slain Jews and Romanis. Standing on the rim of the pit is a young SS Blockfuhrer uniformed soldier, smoking, whilst staring into the pit. The image is a famous one. The tutor posed the scenario that one of the people in the pit is still alive and hiding under the bodies of their

34. Jewkes, Y and Johnston, H (2009), 'Cavemen in an Era of Speed-of-Light Technology: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Communication within Prisons', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 48(2), pps. 132-143.

35. See 20.

compatriots and then asked the class to discuss how the two figures, the SS soldier and the man in the pit, feel at the time of the photo. The purpose was to empathise, understand and explain the emotion of the two contrasted individuals. The class had no auditable merit in the traditional sense — but as a learning experience it was one of the most powerful I have ever experienced. The evocation of emotion, coupled with the learning of the death camp and the following discussion between prisoner learners which lasted well beyond the class was learning at its best.

In HMP Gartree from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s (and perhaps beyond) there existed a flamboyantly didactic tutor who would enthusiastically engage prisoners in wide-ranging unstructured, critical and evocative discussions on subjects as diverse as military history, classical and contemporary literature, drama and poetry as well as politics and current affairs. Again these discussions were not formal or predicated upon the achievement of qualifications but instead designed to challenge and encourage deeper reading, thinking and discussion of issues beyond the prisoner and their direct circumstance. Though he taught on a range of accredited courses it was the free ranging and discursive lessons that stuck most firmly. One example was in the middle of discussing social norms in a Sociology class, when

a prisoner understood a particular point, this tutor made a throw away comment about feeling like Octavius after the battle of Actium. This inevitably led to the questions of who was Octavius and what was the battle of Actium, upon which the teacher launched into a detailed and spontaneous lecture on classical politics in Rome after the fall of Julius Caesar and a detailed explanation of the battle itself. This led to further discussion and informal lessons on famous battles and the role they played in the political landscapes of the nations in which they occurred. On one occasion we arrived in class to discover that the tutor had bought in an exhaustive and minutely accurate model recreation of the battle at Gettysburg which we, as a class, would play in dice determined role-play. All along accompanied by a running commentary on what political importance the battle had for the civil war and the US ever since. Once again this learning was not proscribed by accredited measures and nor did it appear on the curricula but it was nevertheless an engaging, evocative and profound (as

well as fun) learning experience that enabled all those there to expand their imaginations and knowledge beyond the stultifying walls of the main lifer centre.

Finally, in HMP Wellingborough there was a philosophy class taught by Alan Smith³⁶ where both the great philosophical topics and central thinkers were discussed in an open, critical, challenging, exploratory and reinforcing way. Again these classes were not accredited and did not result in any formal outcome, neither were they remedial in nature. The topics of metaphysics, ethics and epistemology went beyond basic skill and challenged the intellectual levels of all concerned. However, the class was also open to all regardless of literacy skill or educational ability. Prisoners engaged in these philosophical debates in ways that were supportive of each other, respectful towards one another, that enabled close examination of

one another's perspectives and lines of reasoning and that allowed, in a very safe space, prisoners to be both vulnerable in admitting their ignorance on issues and empowered by challenging and overcoming that ignorance.

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Prison Education as Transformative Process

What characterises all three of these examples is not only the complementary pedagogical practices evidenced but also the

fact that in these classes learning for learning's sake was privileged, embraced and celebrated. It was the joy of learning, of expanding one's parameters beyond the stultification and psychological decortication that typically marks the prison experience. Though these classes had benefits and purposes beyond this fact the simple reality was that they were based in notions that informal, discursive and critical discussions could have wide-ranging and significant impact on personal, educational, cognitive and emotional development — the so called 'soft skills'. The tutors were also free to develop and innovate in ways that made these classes worthwhile. They could pursue the interests of their class and structure learning around the knowledge and experience of their students. They could return to those very pedagogical aims of personal development or growth that makes the process enjoyable for tutors, worthwhile for prisoner learners and efficacious in achieving long term impact. In fact such learning can go far more towards developing and entrenching positive cognitive skills than any of the best taught

36. Smith, A (2013), *Her Majesty's Philosophers*, Waterside Press.

Thinking Skills Programmes. The sad truth is that such learning and tutoring is proscribed under the current contractual system in prison education and has, as a result, become a rarity, if not a distant memory, in most prison education departments.

A further point to be considered here is concerned with the emotional geographies that was mentioned earlier. We know that even in the most progressive and supportive learning environments historically bad experiences of education can impact on student learning.³⁷ Impositional and didactic teaching, reminiscent of that which takes place in mainstream school education, can evince negative emotional responses in even University students and is something that lecturing staff are increasingly having to mitigate against in contemporary Higher and Adult Education.³⁸ One mechanism by which this is being achieved is the encouragement of student as producer — whereby students play an active part in the development of their learning and the classroom moves from an impositional to a collaborative space.³⁹ This breaks the formal barrier in the class and makes the space one where development and growth is the primary aim — not instrumental outcomes⁴⁰ — though of course this still has relevance. This fundamentally changes the interaction in the fixed space and thus changes the emotional timbre evinced therein.

Evidence highlights that poor educational experience, as opposed to attainment, is very high in prisoner populations.⁴¹ As such, in order to mitigate these negative experiences and make student learning in prison different from that previously experienced tutors need to move away from more formal processes of teaching and actually further encourage prisoners to be actively involved in the development of their own learning. This is what informal and discursive learning allows — it provides a means of learning that can be

efficacious for the individual (and beyond) in ways that formal, remedial and instrumental education cannot. It also allows for inclusive and critical engagement which enables the student learner to develop the ability to perceive not only their own perspectives and positionality but also that of others. This also builds empathy, in unempathetical circumstances,⁴² and teaches prisoners to work collaboratively and respectfully with each other and their tutor in circumstances that is often designed to isolate and singularise the prisoner. When education departments achieve this they can alter the emotional contours of their department in such ways to make the environment a developmental one rather than utility focused one. This in turn can impact on the overall emotional geography of the prison education department, — from a disciplinary and constrained environment to a pedagogical and transformative one — to the benefit of all.

Further to this point Freire⁴³ notes that formal and formulaic education, such as that which is often found in prisons, which he refers to as 'banking' or depository education, turn people not into productive, thinking learners but rather 'receiving objects' who remain constrained by, and reliant upon, the oppressive apparatuses to which they are subject. The parallels with extant prison education here are obvious —

prisoners are not taught to be learners who can escape their offender narratives (as they are required to do) but are rather chained into educational processes that reproduce, reaffirm and reconstitute the prisoner's reified identity in terms of the disciplinary discourses thus far outlined. In order for education to escape its oppressive (and disciplinary) tendencies and for it to produce active learners Freire⁴⁴ argues that it needs to be reconstructed as a problem-posing enterprise which demystifies reality and aids the oppressed (prisoners in

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- 37. Zepke, N and Leach L (2010), 'Improving Student Engagement: Ten proposals for action', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, Vol. 11(3), (pps. 167-177).
 - 38. Race P (2014), *Making Learning Happen: A Guide for Post Compulsory Education*, 3rd Edn, London: Sage.
 - 39. Healey, M, Bovill, C and Jenkins, A (2015), 'Students as Partners in Learning', in J Lea (ed), *Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Engaging with the Dimensions of Practice*, Open University Press.
 - 40. Neary, M and Thody, A (2009), 'Learning Landscapes: Designing a Classroom of the Future', in L Bell, H Stevenson and M Neary (eds), *The Future of Higher Education: Policy, Pedagogy and the Student Experience*, Continuum International Publishing Group.
 - 41. Graham, K (2014), 'Does School Prepare Men for Prison?', *City: Analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*, Vol. 18(6), pps. 824-836.
 - 42. See 20.
 - 43. Freire, P (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, The Continuum Publishing Company.
 - 44. See 45.

this sense) in gaining the ability to critically perceive the world, their placement in it at present and in the future. This critical ability enables them to not only take charge of their learning, making it more efficacious, but to also change their placement and narrative by understanding what it means to be human in human society. This is what allows the learner, and by extension education, to become truly transformative. Looking back at the three examples given this is what each of those tutors were engaged in — they were, by encouraging critical, free, non-judgemental discussion on given topics allowing prisoner learners to interact with themselves, the tutors and the formal spaces in ways that mitigated not only the power ladenness of the environment but also negative previous experiences of education whilst at the same time instilling within their classes those pedagogical aims of metacognition, thinking skills and emotional intelligence — elements which could facilitate true transformative narrative change from prisoner to member of society. This is the goal of transformative education — it enables people, including prisoners, to change the way they think about the world and, more importantly, themselves. As Smith notes when discussing the purpose of education in prison: ‘What, after all, does education offer to people if not a greater sense of being human?’⁴⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion this paper has argued that there are a number of problems that beset prison education today. These problems range from the fact that the prison is formulated around discourses of control and discipline (and this, unfortunately, includes ideation’s

and practices of rehabilitation), that the contemporary prisoner is reified as a simulacra — a risk laden offender who primarily exists as a bureaucratic entity to be managed; that prison education has been forced to move from general pedagogical aims to ones based in cultures of auditing and intervention which has resulted in a frustrated and constrained prison education that often fails/struggles to reconcile its worthwhile aims with its corporeal practices. This failure/struggle means that education is often frustrating for those staff working within it and largely fails the prisoner learners with whom it is concerned. It is only when prison education is divorced from the disciplinary discourses that haunt the wider prison and when prison education is established in environments that represent nexuses of care and welfare can it be affective. It is also only when prison education is designed around personal, emotional, cognitive and educational development rather than numbers of participants, when prison education is aimed at the individual and their needs rather than some imagined generalised entity and when prison education is designed around learning for learning’s sake as opposed to auditable measures will it be effective. Finally, it is only when prison education is designed to instil the necessary critical skills which challenge and demystify the prisoner’s reality rather than the gaining of meaningless basic qualifications that have little or no real-world value and when prison education recognises and privileges the benefits of such informal learning processes can it be truly transformative. It is then and only then that education in prison will serve the interests of the prisoner, the prison and the public. Then, and only then will prison education be truly fit for purpose.

45. http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/apr/08/prison-philosophy-classes?CMP=share_btn_tw

Connecting Prisons and Universities through Higher Education

Dr Sacha Darke and Dr Andreas Aresti, both Department of History, Sociology and Criminology, University of Westminster, and two of the three founding members of British Convict Criminology.

Things are never straightforward for prisoners pursuing higher education. Prisons are far from conducive environments for study, but this is compounded by bureaucracy and poor organisation on the part of administrative staff which I know — on anecdotal evidence — prisoners find extremely distracting and stressful when all they want is to get on with their studies. (Personal communication, prisoner studying LLB Law, 11 June 2015)

At [the first prison] I was made to feel as though my distance learning requirements were disrupting the education department. They were very difficult in recommending computer time and education admin staff made it clear that my use of a computer meant their company... lost out in valuable qualifications... Studying criminology was also a big concern and required all sorts of application and vetting processes... In [the second prison] staff were eager to provide support and even officers tried to help, but... studying resources were minimal. Printing work and contacting Open University tutors was a lengthy process and visits from Open University tutors on occasion were disrupted. (Personal communication, prisoner studying BA Criminology, 11 June 2015)

Convict Criminology

These extracts are taken from two of hundreds of letters British Convict Criminology (BCC) has received since it first advertised its services to prisoners studying in higher education in August 2012, in this case letters written in the knowledge that the current authors were soon to present the first draft of this paper at the seminar at HMP Grendon to which this special edition is dedicated. Readers of the Prison Service Journal will hardly be surprised to hear that many of these letters are likewise characterised by frustration and anger directed at the particular challenges faced by those

wanting to study higher education inside prison. More mundane, but just as important, prisoners in higher education also frequently write to us with requests for basic academic information what they can study, what they should read, how to reference and so on questions which any university teacher is used to hearing from their personal tutees. Except, of course, in prison students do not usually have personal tutors. The Open University, which delivers the majority of prison higher education in the United Kingdom, provides useful support through its regional learning support teams. However, currently only students taking an access module are allocated a personal tutor. Further, the role of Open University regional learning support teams is restricted to advising on study choices, careers options, fees and funding.¹

There is a desperate shortage of educated prisoner and former prisoner voices within the discipline of criminology. This is the starting point for Convict Criminology (CC), a critical perspective that we utilise throughout our research, engagement and writings on prison education, including this article. As a concept, CC emerged in North America in discussions between 'ex-con' and 'non-con' academics in the 1990s. The North American Convict Criminology group was officially launched in 1997 by Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards, and following the organising of panels at each of the following annual conferences of the American Society of Criminology, made its first major contribution to the discipline of criminology with the publication of the book *Convict Criminology* in 2003.² With Rod Earle, Open University, the current authors have been leading figures in developing the CC perspective in the United Kingdom since the beginning of 2012 under the guise of BCC. We have written in detail on BCC and its relationship to the original CC movement with North American and British colleagues in three recent articles,³ one of which published in this journal. Briefly, CC is concerned with developing

1. Open University (2014) *Make a New Start Studying with the Open University: A Guide for Learners in Prison 2014/2015*, Milton Keynes: Open University.
2. Ross, J.I. and Richards, S.C. (eds.) (2003) *Convict Criminology*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
3. Aresti, A. and Darke, S. (in press) 'Practicing Convict Criminology: Lessons learned from British academic activism', *Critical Criminology: An International Journal* (special edition, *Critical Criminology as Criminological Activism: On Praxis and Pedagogy*); Aresti, A., Darke, S. and Manlow, D. (2016) 'Bridging the gap: Giving public voice to prisoners and former prisoners through research activism', *Prison Service Journal*, 224: 3-13; Ross, J.I., Darke, S., Aresti, A., Newbold, G. and Earle, R. (2014) 'Developing convict criminology beyond North America', *International Criminal Justice Review*, 24(2): 121-133.

critical, insider perspectives in prisons research and prison reform.⁴ It starts from the specific observation that the voices of prisoners and former prisoners are largely absent in the discipline of criminology; and it aims to bridge the gap between the so-called 'expert knower' and the lived experience of prison through the prisoner becoming researcher, either through working in collaboration with established criminologists or through training to become criminologists themselves. BCC now has close to 100 active members. These include more than 40 prisoners or former prisoners studying or working towards studying undergraduate or master's degrees in criminology and its cognate disciplines (for instance, Law, Sociology, Psychology and Politics), and around 50 academic or former-academics and Ph.D. students, almost a dozen of who also have prison experience. Each of this latter group of BCC members is involved in mentoring prisoners through higher education (our academic mentoring scheme that we outline later) and/or utilises the CC perspective in their research.⁵

Higher education in prison

Like our colleagues that introduced and laid the foundations for CC in North America, our vision is therefore of a research activist movement that is underpinned by the experience of prison.⁶ Within this framework, prison higher education is a central concern for CC for two reasons. First, whether our prisoner/former prisoner members have sufficient academic training to theorise, articulate and objectively analyse their experiences of incarceration and/or form research partnerships with established academics, non-con or otherwise, it is essential to our interpretation of the CC perspective that prisons research is not premised in a dichotomy of researcher and research participant but instead insists on treating academics and prisoners as co-producers of

knowledge.⁷ Naturally, the better educated a prisoner or former prisoner, the more they will be able to work with established academics on equal terms.

Second, prison higher education also has a lot to offer to prisoners. It has proven to be instrumental to many in helping them both to survive prison,⁸ and to desist from crime.⁹ As activists utilising the CC perspective, we view prison higher education as warranting particular attention in this regard both because its transformative potential is established in academic theories and verified in recent studies of prison practice, and because it is not only established academics but also educated prisoners that say so. Important to us here is the fact that academic and prison service interest in prison higher education has in part, if not in the main arisen and been maintained at the insistence of prisoners. Founder and editor in chief of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prison*, Justin Piché,

writes, many prisoners cite education, 'as the only positive experience one may encounter while incarcerated.'¹⁰ The letters we receive from prisoners likewise emphasise both the instrumental and therapeutic qualities of higher education.

We analyse the value of higher education to prisoners in relation to desisting from crime in the next section. We then turn attention to the obstacles the prisoner students we are in contact have faced in their efforts

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to complete, even start university degrees. Pulled together, the correspondence we have had with prisoners studying in higher education provides a wealth of data from which a number of major themes emerge. We focus most attention on the results of a consultation exercise that we carried out in 2014, completed by 20 BBC members in prison, we also cite opinions and experiences from a number of letters we received previously and have received since. As researchers utilising a CC perspective, our view is that

4. Ross and Richards (2003), see n.2.

5. Aresti and Darke (in press), see n.3.

6. Aresti, A. (2014) 'Contraction in an age of expansion: A convict perspective', *Prison Service Journal*, 211: 19-24.

7. Aresti et al. (2016), see n.3.

8. Behan, C. (2014) 'Learning to escape: Prison education, rehabilitation and the potential for transformation', *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*, 1(1): 20-31. Citing the work of American convict criminologists, Richards and Jones, Behan writes (at p.26), 'when an individual is committed to prison s/he descends... For some students education is part of the process of/or towards ascent. It gives them an opportunity to participate in an environment based on a different culture than that which pervades in many prisons.'

9. Ross, J.I., Tewksbury, R. and Zaldivar, M. (2015) 'Analyzing for-profit colleges and universities that offer bachelors, masters, and doctorates to inmates incarcerated in American correctional facilities', *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 54: 585-598. Ross, Tewksbury and Zaldivar write (at p.586), 'Correctional education has long been recognized as one of the few, if not the only, jail and prison program to consistently show an association with reduced recidivism.'

10. Piché, J. (2008) 'Barriers to studying inside: Education in prisons and education on prisons', *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 17(1): 4-17, p.4. See also, Ross, J.I., Tewksbury, R. and Zaldivar, M. (2015) 'Analyzing for-profit colleges and universities that offer bachelors, masters, and doctorates to inmates incarcerated in American correctional facilities', *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 54: 585-598.

the unsolicited nature of much of our contact with prisoners does not make the content of these letters invalid sources of knowledge. Indeed, some of the earlier letters prisoners sent us identified a number of issues that we might not otherwise have given sufficient weight in the questions we took into the consultation.

In the concluding section, we outline two measures BCC has developed over the past four years: an academic mentoring scheme for prisoners studying degrees in criminology and cognate disciplines such as psychology, politics and law that we launched in July 2013; and, more recently, a partnership between our university and HMP Pentonville, which has involved us taking a small group of University of Westminster students once a week in the prison library to study an Introduction to Prison Studies course with inmates. This latter initiative ran for the first time from January to March this year. In developing these initiatives, we have two major objectives. Most obvious perhaps, we aim to support prisoners studying in higher education. More specifically, we have also designed the initiatives as vehicles for, as previously noted, breaking down what for us are artificial barriers between expert opinion and insider knowledge. Some might argue that the first named author, who has never been a prisoner, does not have the requisite experience to research within the CC perspective. Yet it is an epistemological fallacy to make such a clear distinction between those that have experienced prison, for however long or short a period, and those that have not.¹¹ Besides, CC is ultimately concerned with challenging hierarchies of knowledge, not creating new hierarchies of knowledge. First hand experiences can be utilised, sometimes better utilised through collaborative research and study. Our academic mentors and University of Westminster students are not just committed to helping prisoners. Universities benefit from researching and studying with

prisoners as much as prisoners benefit from researching and studying with universities.

Education, 'rehabilitation' and desistance

The transformative power of education, and in particular higher education, has been documented in a growing body of academic work.¹² In essence, this work typically attempts to understand and identify the complex processes underlying the relationship between education/higher education and desistance. Mirroring the broader desistance landscape, it is becoming increasingly clear that the influential role education/higher education plays in desistance, includes a complex interaction of individual, social and environmental processes and factors. Specifically, this involves a shift in one's sense of self, and the emergence of a pro-social identity and pro-social worldview (a shift in attitudes, values and belief systems). Accompanying this is an investment in, and attachment to conventional roles and law abiding behaviours.¹³ To avoid theoretical repetition here, we will briefly discuss this relationship through the lens of our own observations; our experiential insights, projects and other work. Through such observations it is becoming increasingly clear that higher education is perceived (by prisoners and former prisoners)

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as a vehicle for change, thus reinforcing the work of others. The transformative potential that higher education provides is immense, and whilst it would be naïve to consider this potential in isolation to other important factors, including meaningful relationships, significant ties to family and/or 'significant others' and employment,¹⁴ higher education has the potential to open up a range of opportunities and pro-social life choices. Importantly, higher education is a form of collateral that can be used as currency to negotiate the stigma commonly experienced by former prisoners in

11. Aresti and Darke (in press), see n.3.

12. E.g. Behan (2014), see n.8; Hughes, E. (2009) 'Thinking inside the box: Prisoner education, learning identities, and the possibility for change', in Veysey, B.M., Christian, J. and Martinez, D.J. (eds.) *How Offenders Transform their Lives*, Cullompton: Willan; Runell, L.L. (2015) 'Identifying desistance pathways in a higher education program for formerly incarcerated individuals', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, DOI: 10.1177/0306624X15608374.

13. Kazemian, L. (2007) 'Desistance from crime: Theoretical, empirical, methodological, and policy considerations', *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 23(1): 5-27; Laub, J.H. and Sampson, R.J. (2001) 'Understanding desistance from crime', *Crime and Justice*, 28: 1-69; Maruna, S. (2001) *Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; McNeil, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C. and Maruna, S. (2012) *How and Why People Stop Offending: Discovering Desistance*, Glasgow: Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services; Uggen, C., Manza, J. and Behrens, A. (2004) 'Less than the average citizen: Stigma, role transition, and the civic reintegration of convicted felons', in Maruna, S. and Burnett, R. (eds.) *After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration*, Cullompton, Willan.

14. Laub and Sampson (2001), see n.13; McNeil et al. (2012), see n.13.

the 'conventional world'. This is evident in the second named author's experiences as a (former) prisoner, and our conversations with other BCC ex-con members. Other colleagues who have also studied in higher education and are currently working in third sector organisations within the criminal justice field typically reinforce this view. Runell (2015) concurs, stating that, 'engagement in higher education [can] help to lessen the social burdens and stigma typically encountered by ex-felons in the pursuit of traditional goals and aspirations.'¹⁵

For many former prisoners higher education is the gateway to the 'conventional world', a way back into 'conventional society' and a means of developing social capital. Relative to this, and equally important, higher education has provided an alternative way of 'being', giving new meaning and value to the lives of prisoners and former prisoners. For most of these men and women, life has not only become much more meaningful, it has had significant implications for their psychological well-being. This is evident in research the second named author has conducted,¹⁶ but has also been articulated to us through personal communications with good friends and/or colleagues on the 'ex-offender' circuit. Importantly, for those of us further down the desistance trajectory, that is those of us that have carved out successful academic careers or are on the way to achieving this, a critical factor in desisting from crime is our attachment to and investment in our 'new lives' or 'self-projects'. These attachments and investments play a significant role in deterring potential 'transgressions' to past behaviours conducive with our 'old lifestyles'. As Laub and Sampson articulate, those that have invested in desistance have a 'stake in conformity'.¹⁷ Considering the important role higher education can play in desistance, it is necessary to understand and identify the barriers and obstacles prisoners experience when studying higher education in prison.

Barriers to studying inside

While some research has been conducted in this area, we believe that there is still much to learn about the transformative potential of higher education. However, arguably this is becoming increasingly difficult

in the prison estate as opportunities to engage in higher education, and/or to continue with higher education, are becoming increasingly limited. From our understanding gained through personal communications with prisoner students, this is due to a variety of barriers, including restrictive and risk adverse prison regimes, and because of a lack of resources and available opportunities.

Some of the typical issues experienced by the prisoner students we have consulted or otherwise been contacted by are outlined below. Unsurprisingly most of their comments are as negative as the ones quoted in the introduction, although this is to be expected given the current climate within the prison estate. We are aware that many of the issues and barriers identified are common knowledge for those working in the field, although we feel compelled to highlight these issues.

Three main themes are identified.

For many former prisoners higher education is the gateway to the 'conventional world', a way back into 'conventional society'...

Access to and availability of higher education level courses

A number of prisoner students have commented to us that there is a lack of higher-level educational courses in prison, in particular degree programmes. They state that the courses available to them were not conducive with their level of education. In some instances educational service providers have tried to encourage or even

pressure them to take on lower level educational courses that are not suitable or below their educational level. They perceive this lack of support and lack of interest in their educational goals as a self-serving bias. That is, they believe the service provider would not benefit financially or in terms of their organisational targets by assisting them with their higher-level educational needs and goals. According to these students, most of the courses available in prison are low-level educational courses or vocational courses. In terms of academic support, whilst a few have told us there are some tutors and prison staff who are willing to help and support them, most students complain about limited academic support, particularly in terms of tutorials. Related to this, many also complain there is little advice and information available on higher education level courses, and in cases where they have identified a course, little if any assistance or advice with the applications process or grant applications. For those

15. Runell (2015), p.3, see n.12.

16. E.g. Aresti, A., Eatough, V., and Brooks-Gordon, B. (2010) 'Doing time after time: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of reformed ex-prisoners' experiences of self-change, identity and career opportunities, *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 16(3): 169-190.

17. Laub and Sampson (2001), see n.13.

that have not identified a funding source, there is little advice available, and for others who are interested in post-graduate study, funding restrictions apply. Specifically, these latter prisoners have commented that they have been unable to apply for a student loan for a master's degree and so are unable to continue with their education. Others that wanted to do a degree were unable to secure a student loan because they would only be eligible for a student loan when they were within six years of their earliest date of release. Yet, even if funding for a degree was secured there was also the issue of degree options. A few have commented that there is a limit on the type of degree they could study. The general view is that the range of available degree programmes has decreased over time.

IT facilities/other resources

Some respondents reported that IT facilities were limited or out-dated. This had an number of implications for studying, for example coursework had to be handwritten, which was particularly problematic as some of the modules on the degree programmes they were studying required computer based work. For those that did have access to suitable computers, access to these was often limited. However, one of the biggest issues was the lack of internet access, which was a particular problem for prisoners doing degrees, as the internet is critical for research based activities. Lack of internet access was also considered an issue because of an increasing trend towards online delivery of courses and tutorials, especially long distance courses. This limited the courses they could do or the support they could get.

Other issues identified included limited classroom or educational spaces, and a lack of study material and academic resources, which of course is related to the issues with internet access. The participants also reported limited availability of photocopying and printing resources, as well as a lack of educational DVDs/CDs. For a few, access to basic materials such as paper and pens was also limited.

Structural barriers

Finally, some prisoner students have reported security restrictions on the types of courses they can do, which has meant being forced to take an Open Degree, which they feel has less value. Relative to this, some prisons permit these types of courses, whilst other prisons do not. If they had been or were to be

transferred to these prisons, they were or would therefore be unable to continue with their studies. Other structural barriers reported to us by prisoner students include limitations on the type of learning resources they were allowed to take back to their cells, and more generally, negative attitudes towards prisoners studying higher-level education courses among some prison staff.

Given the importance of prison higher education for desistance as well as the development of CC, as previously outlined, we believe that these barriers have two grave implications. First, in terms of the psychological impact on those prisoners who have decided to use higher education as a vehicle for change, that is a means of changing their lives.

Specifically, such barriers could prevent these individuals from engaging with desistance. Second, it limits our opportunity to understand the processes underlying the relationship between higher education and desistance, which of course is critical if we are going to facilitate the desistance process. It is particularly important to understand the processes underlying the early phases of this transitional relationship, that is when prisoners make the decision to go into, and begin to engage in higher education. It is equally important to understand and map prisoners'

developmental trajectory, identifying the complex cognitive/psychological transformations these individuals go through, as well as how feelings of competency, confidence and mastery develop (self-efficacy) as they develop new identities as students. Equally important, we need to understand the external processes and support networks/systems that facilitate these subjective changes and encourage pro-social behavioural transitions.

Making links

For the current authors, prison and post-prison higher education has always been the challenge for CC, and more so in the United Kingdom, where we know of just seven former prisoner criminologists in permanent academic positions, and another three prison reform activists that are former prisoners and also former social scientists. All but three of these ten academics or former academics have signed up to BCC. When we first met and began exploring the merits of combining academic training with insider knowledge in 2004,

... one of the biggest issues was the lack of internet access, which was a particular problem for prisoners doing degrees, as the internet is critical for research based activities.

neither of the current authors knew much about CC. As we have heard from so many students since, for all the second named author knew, he was the only prisoner or former prisoner studying criminology. We soon came to the conclusion that, unlike our North American colleagues, who defined CC as a collaboration between PhD qualified ex-con and non-con academics,¹⁸ in the United Kingdom we needed to connect established academics with prisoner and former prisoner criminology students. Since we launched BCC with Rod Earle in 2012, we have directed most of our activism towards developing and supporting academic support networks for prisoner and former prisoner students, including sharing the platform with ex-con PhD students at academic criminology conferences. Outside prison, several of our undergraduate student members have gone on to study masters degrees. A few of our former prisoner members are now studying or have recently completed doctorates. One has secured a full-time lectureship. Another teaches criminology part time. In the past twelve months alone, early career former prisoner BCC members have published more than half a dozen single or co-authored peer-reviewed book chapters, articles or edited collections in criminology journals.

Even more important to BCC, and the focus of this special journal edition, is the work we have put in to developing links between university students studying inside and outside prison, the latter of who we have explained face particular challenges that make them far less likely to complete their degrees to the standard they might otherwise be capable of achieving. No doubt many potentially good future academic criminologists have failed to make the grade due to their experiences of undergraduate prison education, or have otherwise been put off from advancing beyond undergraduate level before or after release, or (from hearing about others' experiences) starting in higher education in the first place. As previously noted, our efforts to bridge the gap between universities and prisons have centred on an academic mentoring scheme, which we have coordinated since July 2013, and a higher education course at HMP Pentonville involving University of Westminster as well as

Pentonville students, which we taught for the first time this winter.

In the three years we have been running the academic mentoring scheme we have matched a total of 21 prisoner undergraduate students with 15 academics. Some academics are mentoring or have mentored two, in one case three prison-based students at a time, but the enthusiasm and needs of many of our mentees has convinced us that one to one mentoring should be the norm. Mentors are expected to send additional materials to those provided by their mentee's university (usually the Open University), much of which is increasingly available only through the internet, and to comment on draft coursework.¹⁹ The usefulness of the scheme to our student members is

... our mentees also place value on the role academic mentoring has played in helping them overcome anxieties related to their studies, and giving them more hope for their post-prison lives.

highlighted in a survey completed by four BCC mentors and six BCC mentees in 2014, and a reflective exercise on their experiences of mentoring completed by four BCC mentors in 2015, as well as the many communications the first named author has had with mentors and mentees while coordinating the scheme. In addition to providing prison-based students with access to study material and feedback on coursework, our mentors and mentees emphasise the value of providing/receiving advice on matters such as what to study, applying for funding, and which additional readings to focus most attention. As distance learners,

our mentees also stress the value of having someone with whom to discuss the academic material they have read, and someone they can ask to liaise with their university when, for instance, study materials have not arrived or when they are transferred to another prison.

Yet many mentors naturally go further than this and, like any good, empathetic university personal tutor, find themselves providing emotional as well as academic support. Similar to the transformative potential of prison higher education more generally, our mentees also place value on the role academic mentoring has played in helping them overcome anxieties related to their studies, and giving them more hope for their post-prison lives. Finally, and of particular interest to BCC, our mentors and mentees are both fully aware of the potential that the scheme holds for helping to create the next generation of former prisoner criminologists. A number of BCC

18. Ross and Richards (2003), see n.2.

19. British Convict Criminology (2013) *Guidelines and Expectations for BCC Mentoring*, unpublished.

mentors emphasise the role they have played in encouraging mentees to reflect on and analyse their prison experiences, as well as supporting their mentees to publish insider accounts.²⁰ Mentees put particular emphasis on how the scheme has helped break down barriers between students and teachers, and as one mentee put it, giving voice to, 'pro social and pro democratic inmates [that want] to make a difference.'²¹

Our second initiative focuses on connecting undergraduate students studying inside (HMP Pentonville) and outside (University of Westminster) prison. At the time of writing, BCCs Making Links programme, as we have temporarily named the initiative,²² has been running as a pilot project for six weeks. It is being coordinated by the current authors along with José Aguiar, an educational consultant working at HMP Pentonville. Similar to other prison-university higher education programmes that have emerged since Temple University commenced its Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program in 1997 in the United States,²³ we aim to provide a learning environment in which prisoners and undergraduate (or in some programmes, postgraduate) students study on equal terms, as Lori Pomper, founder of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program puts it, 'to provide a community-based learning opportunity, through which everyone

involved is seen as having something vital to offer in the learning process.'²⁴ We share with other prison-university higher education programmes an underlying concern to promote the transformative potential of collaborative learning. Beyond this common starting point, each project naturally varies in its underlying aims and objectives. As an initiative premised in the CC perspective, the primary aim of the Pentonville-Westminster project is to develop insider standpoints and knowledge in the discipline of criminology. Like the Prison to College Pipeline initiative run by John Jay College in the United States,²⁵ which promotes prison higher education in a number of different disciplines, we hope to inspire and support some of our Pentonville students to start university courses during and after prison. With our specific focus on criminology, and education as a means of transforming criminology, we also hope some of our Westminster students will be inspired to continue studying criminology to PhD level, and critically, to continue to study collaboratively with prisoners and former prisoners. Finally, and related to both these objectives, it is essential that our programme is designed and delivered (even named) by people with inside knowledge, gained through their own experiences of incarceration or through researching and studying with people that have prison experience.

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20. BCC prisoner members have published two articles, with the support of their mentors, in the prison journal *Inside Time*: Alexander, M. (2015) 'Innocence projects: A way forward', *Inside Time*, April; Leick, J. (2014) 'Finding my way through Grayling's maze: A prisoner's struggle to get a book', *Inside Time*, July.
 21. Personal communication, 5 June 2014.
 22. The final name for the programme will be chosen in collaboration with our Westminster and Pentonville students in the final session of the course.
 23. The first major prison-university higher education initiative in United Kingdom started in 2014, when the University of Durham teamed up with HMP Durham to establish an Inside-Out accredited programme. The university expanded its programme to HMP Frankland in 2015, and will soon expand further to HMP Low Newton. Similarly, University of Kent set up an Inside Out Programme at HMP Swaleside in January 2016. University of Cambridge started taking criminology students to HMP Grendon study in 2015 under its Learning Together programme. Leeds Beckett University is also in the process of establishing its own programme at HMP Full Sutton.
 24. Pomper, L. (2013) 'One brick at a time: Power and possibility of dialogue across the prison wall', *Prison Journal*, 93(2): 127-134, p.129. Pomper was writing as part of a special edition of the *Prison Journal* on the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. See also Davis, S.W. and Roswell, B.S. (eds.) (2013) *Turning Teaching Inside Out*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
 25. See <http://johnjayresearch.org/pri/projects/nys-prison-to-college-pipeline/> (accessed 22 February 2016).

Philosophy in Prisons:

Opening Minds and Broadening Perspectives through philosophical dialogue

Kirstine Szifris, Research Associate at the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, MMU.

This paper discusses the implementation and outcomes of delivering 'An Introduction to Philosophy' class in HMP Grendon, Oxfordshire. Part of a wider investigation into the relevance of philosophical education to the lives of prisoners, this research constitutes a systematic investigation into philosophical education in prisons. In this paper I discuss the role of philosophy in broadening perspectives of prisoners arguing that, by engaging participants in philosophical dialogue, prisoners are given the opportunity to explore their morals and opinions in a safe, non-adversarial environment. I conclude that engaging in philosophical conversation leads participants to a better understanding of themselves; they are more open to hearing others views and more willing to interrogate their own. Furthermore, by starting from the point of a person in society, as opposed to an offender with deficits to be addressed, philosophical dialogue complements the therapeutic work of Grendon, and allows the individual to see themselves, and their place in the world, from a different perspective.

This paper focuses on philosophy education based on the principles of a Socratic dialogue.¹ Such an approach involves establishing a 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CoPI) which, in practice, is a group of individuals who discuss philosophical questions in an exploratory, non-adversarial manner.² A facilitator begins the session by presenting a stimulus³ which can be based around a particular topic (e.g. a 'just' society, personal identity), a specific philosopher (e.g. Kant, Socrates, Descartes) or a school of philosophy (e.g. the Stoics, utilitarianism). The facilitator acts as one of the members of the community whilst also guiding conversation and maintaining focus. The aim of the philosophy sessions is to get participants thinking and talking about questions

that they may never have considered or, if they have, may never have discussed in a structured environment.

Philosophy 'as an activity...is a way of think[ing] about certain sorts of questions.' (Warburton 2004). It is about investigating the 'big questions' of truth, reason, morality and the good life; questions that people naturally wonder about in their everyday lives.⁴ Engaging in philosophical thinking encourages processing of thoughts⁵ with 'the purpose of discussion [being] not to get agreement...but to let the discussion of the issues spur you on to thinking about them for yourself.'⁶ Some have used philosophy to help them cope in extreme circumstances (see for example, Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy*)⁷ whilst others have drawn on it as an aid to living a more fulfilled and happy life (see Jules Evans, *Philosophy for Life*).⁸

This paper discusses some of the findings of an exploratory piece of research that involved delivery of a 12-week philosophy course in HMP Grendon. In total, twelve participants completed the course and engaged in the research. I interviewed all twelve participants before and after participation and they provided written feedback throughout delivery. The aim of the research was to investigate the role philosophy education might be able to play in the lives of prisoners and within a prison regime. To do this I both delivered the course and undertook the research, drawing upon my own experience and observations (recorded in fieldwork notes) as well as the feedback and interview data provided by the participants.

The research presented here is part of a wider investigation into philosophy in prisons. It builds on pilot work conducted in Low Moss Prison, Glasgow⁹ and HMP High Down, Surrey.¹⁰ The final stage of the research involved delivering the course in HMP Full Sutton, York. Although analysis is in the early stages, findings from Full Sutton are touched upon towards the end of this paper.

1. Barrow, W. (2010) Dialogic, participation and the potential for Philosophy for Children. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*. 5; pp.61-69.
2. Lien, C. (2007) Making Sense of Evaluation of P4C. *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*. 17; pp. 36-48.
3. Lipman, M., Sharp, A. M., & Oscanyan, F. S. (1980) *Philosophy in the Classroom*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
4. Blackburn, S. (1999) *Think: A compelling introduction to philosophy*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
5. Hospers, J. (1990) *An introduction to philosophical analysis*. (3rd edn). London: Routledge.
6. p.6 *Ibid*.
7. Boethius A, M. S. (6th century/trans.1897) *Consolations of Philosophy*, trans. H. R. James, London: E. Stock.
8. Evans, J., (2013) *Philosophy for Life And Other Dangerous Situations*. Ebury publishing, Random House.
9. Szifris, K. (2013, unpublished) *Philosophy in Low Moss Prison: Evaluating the impact and relevance of teaching philosophy in prisons*, report to New College North Lanarkshire and Scottish Prison Service.
10. Szifris, K. (2011, unpublished) *Evaluating the benefits of providing a forum for philosophical inquiry*. MPhil Dissertation.

The data from Grendon and Full Sutton will comprise the bulk of my PhD work, supervised and supported by Professor Alison Liebbling.¹¹

This paper explains the research conducted at HMP Grendon, and the relevance of philosophy to prisoners engaged in various kinds of extensive therapy. The following section draws in the similarities and differences between therapeutic dialogue and philosophical dialogue, and also the consequent impact of the classes on the participants as they describe it for themselves. Crucially, I argue that providing philosophical dialogue in a therapeutic environment serves to engage participants in Socratic dialogue from a different perspective to that which therapy involves. Providing this alternative way of thinking about issues such as morality, personal identity and society serves to open minds and broaden perspectives.

All quotes provided are from participants of a philosophy course I delivered to prisoners at HMP Grendon between September and December 2014. Real names are substituted for pseudonyms to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality. All participants were informed of the research and given clear guidance on use of data and findings and their right to withdraw at any point.

Philosophy in Grendon

Participants stated that philosophy '*fits in well with the ethos of what we are trying to do here*' (Charlie, Grendon). The overarching aim of a therapeutic community (TC) is to provide an environment in which individuals are able to '*explore and challenge one another's behaviour*'.¹² In Grendon, members of the community engage in weekly whole-community meetings and regular small-group therapy sessions where they are subject to methods of Socratic questioning as part of their therapy.¹³ As with Philosophy, this involves '*co-operative exploration*'¹⁴ via systematic questioning in order to facilitate independent thinking. As such, it was a relatively straightforward process to establish a CoPI in Grendon (especially when

Crucially, I argue that providing philosophical dialogue in a therapeutic environment serves to engage participants in Socratic dialogue from a different perspective to that which therapy involves.

comparing it to the difficulties of maintaining positive, non-adversarial dialogue amongst mainstream prisoners in Full Sutton). Participants were skilled in group dialogue, willing and able to question each other and disagree, and were practiced in expressing themselves. Due to the therapeutic process, participants were '*very used to getting in touch with personal issues, with their past, with their actions, why they behave the way they do.*' (Tom, Grendon). These factors served as a good foundation in the skills required to engage in philosophical dialogue.

However, a key distinction between therapy and philosophy is the focus of the dialogue. Therapy often '*entails the exploration and expression of painful material and disturbing emotions*'.¹⁵ In contrast, philosophical discussions were abstract and centred around the ideas of a particular philosopher or philosophy. Participants understood that the purpose of the sessions was primarily '*to exercise your brain*' (Samir, feedback form) and '*to discuss theories and perceptions*' (Charlie, feedback form). This meant the atmosphere in a philosophical dialogue was 'light' in comparison to that of a therapy session where the focus for participants is often on *their past, their crimes and their problems*.

This relates to the second key distinction, the purpose of engaging in philosophical dialogue. In therapy, the purpose is to address participants' criminogenic needs¹⁶ by helping them to understand themselves and their personal relationships with others.¹⁷ As such, in therapy, the fact that participants are in prison underpins the dialogue; although the discussions may not always focus on criminal behaviours, there is an underlying understanding that the aim of therapy is to reduce criminal tendencies. As a result, therapy starts from the standpoint of helping an offender with criminogenic tendencies and anti-social behaviours that require addressing. In philosophy, participants enter the dialogue as people, members of

11. Funded by the Economic Social Research Council UK.

12. Shuker, R. & Shine, J., (2010) The role of therapeutic communities in forensic settings: developments, research and adaptations in Harvey, J. & Smedley, K. (eds.) *Psychological Therapy in Prisons and Other Secure Settings*, Willan: Abingdon.

13. Kazantzis, N., Fairburn, C. G., Padesky, C. A., Reinecke, M. & Teesson, M. (2014) Unresolved issues regarding research and practice of a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: The case of guided discovery using Socratic questioning. *Behaviour Change*. 31, pp. 1-17.

14. p. 67, Overholser, J. C. (1993). 'Elements of the Socratic Method: I Systematic Questioning' *Psychotherapy*. 30:1, pp. 67-74.

15. p. 48, Greenwood, L. (2001). Psychotherapy in prison: the ultimate container? in Saunders, J. W. (eds.) *Life within hidden walls: psychotherapy in prisons*. London: H. Karnac (books) Ltd.

16. Shuker, R. & Shine, J., (2010) The role of therapeutic communities in forensic settings: developments, research and adaptations in Harvey, J. & Smedley, K. (eds.) *Psychological Therapy in Prisons and Other Secure Settings*. Abingdon: Willan.

17. Genders, E. & Player, E. (1995). *Grendon: A study of a therapeutic prison*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

society ready and willing to discuss what that means to them. By starting from this different perspective, participants are able to reflect on themselves as ‘whole’ persons without needing to reflect directly or exclusively on their offending behaviour.

This subtle distinction turned out to be of key importance in this research. To be clear, I am arguing that philosophy could act *alongside* therapy. Throughout the research, participants were unambiguous in stating that the extensive and long-term therapeutic process was the primary influence in their lives at the point of the research. However, in coming from a different perspective and focusing on the general rather than the personal, philosophy offered a distinct way of thinking about the world that participants felt complemented the therapeutic process. The following section expands on this point and discusses how philosophical dialogue might achieve this.

Broadening minds and developing perspectives

...the philosophical point of view is to stay open minded, to look at both ends of an argument, to look at both sides of a coin and try and work out what is the best outcome, if there is a best outcome.

(Charlie, Grendon)

‘[Philosophy is] looking at why I’m thinking the way I am and being able to realise that I am able to change me mind.’ (Phil, Grendon)

During post-participation interviews, participants referred to ‘becoming more flexible in the way I think’ (Samir, Grendon), ‘opening my eyes’ (Phil, Grendon) and ‘thinking more openly’ (Michael, Grendon). Here ‘being open-minded’ refers to a mindset in which the individual is prepared to have their views challenged, is able to defend their own position without animosity and is willing to understand and consider other perspectives previously discounted or unconsidered. In practice, this means being open to new ideas and willing to change your mind, being willing to listen to other people’s point of view, and taking account of the society/community in which you live.

Relevant to this, participants learned that ‘there are a lot of options to things rather than just one solution; there are many dimensions or facets’ (Charlie, Grendon). Participants developed an understanding of complex issues and became confident in their abilities to tackle them;

When we actually discussed it, although I realised how complex it is, at the same time I realised you could get your head round it in a way. (Samir Grendon).

Exposed to a variety of opinions, participants learned the value of considering different points of view. They recognised that the purpose of the dialogue was to ‘...try and build on other people’s arguments...instead of dismissing theirs, it’s about seeing what they’re saying and seeing if I can add to it.’ (Michael, Grendon). As a result, participants become more aware of their influence on society in a broad sense;

...if [philosophy] broadens people’s thinking, then people might be able to understand their behaviour; how they interact with society...to be aware more.

Philosophical discussion allows participants to engage in dialogue on topics that are of interest to all people wishing to develop understanding and knowledge.

A lot of people, from what I see, their thought don’t usually extend beyond one, two, three people. If you go moving out from the centre — a bit like a chess player, just as a casual player will only think one or two moves ahead, a good chess player ten, twelve moves ahead — a thoughtful person will think more moves ahead in life and probably have an awareness of their behaviour and the impact it has on other people. (Phil, Grendon)

...What’s that sort of angle kind of, what is this argument they are coming at and it allows me to ask more questions — why do you think that? Is it because of this? (Michael, Grendon)

Philosophical discussion allows participants to engage in dialogue on topics that are of interest to all people wishing to develop understanding and knowledge. As such, philosophy often focuses on topics that are abstract and impersonal. The sessions in Grendon encouraged participants to ‘explore philosophical theory’ (John, Grendon) and to ‘openly discuss the topic of a philosopher’ (Peter, Grendon).

Importantly, philosophy is not about offending behaviour. For Neil, this was a new experience in prison;

...prior to this philosophy course, all my understandings and enquiries have been an ‘offender’ in various environments. Now I can see some of my decisions being selfish, not

taking other people into consideration, and actually linking it in with philosophy. (Neil, Grendon)

As Tom points out, in therapy you are ‘looking at how you respond to things on a day to day basis, to this event, that event’ whilst in philosophy, you are encouraged to consider ‘*what about your philosophy of life has led you to behave in certain ways throughout your life?*’ (Tom, Grendon). In philosophy, participants are encouraged to reflect on their philosophies of life, rather than specific situations.

Many of the participants were confident that philosophy ‘*can reinforce or back up what we’re already doing here*’ (Matt, Grendon). Despite the similarities, the participants make a clear distinction between the dialogue in therapy and the dialogue in the philosophy classes. Again, Tom sums this up succinctly;

Whilst in philosophy you’re standing back a bit more and looking at how you’re behaviour fits in with other people’s behaviour and how it fits in structurally rather than tactically. It gives you a sense of perspective that you wouldn’t get from anything. In the group discussions we have, things are very intense and personal, whereas in the philosophy you tend not to bring in the personal as such, you tend to look at it from a much more constructive way, a much more distant way than you would in the discussion groups. It complements, I think it does complement it, I think it helps to give it perspective. (Tom, Grendon).

This focus — on the general rather than the particular, on the person as a member of a society rather than the offender who needs to be corrected, on principles of moral action as opposed to how to behave in a given circumstance — is what *provides* the broader perspective. By looking at the world through a philosophical lens, participants developed attitudes that are more open. The following section discusses this in more detail.

Philosophical dialogue — how does it work?

‘I understood that I am expected to put my point of view across in a way that allows me to get involved with the discussion’ (Matt, feedback, session unknown)

Interview data and fieldwork notes suggest that both the *structure* of the classes and the *content* of the discussions were contributing factors.

In delivering course content, each session had a specific purpose. Some of the sessions would focus on a specific philosopher’s work illustrating how philosophers build arguments. Others focussed on a topic and introduced different philosophical points of view introducing arguments and counter-arguments to illustrate the complexity of philosophical conversation as well as providing mechanisms to allow participants to express their own philosophies.

As an example, one of the sessions focussed on Plato’s Republic, the principle of specialisation and the question of a ‘just’ society. Taking inspiration from Peter Worley’s the ‘IF’ Machine, participants were asked to imagine that they, along with a small group of other people, had been stranded on a desert island.¹⁸ They were then asked ‘What do you need to do to survive?’,

‘Who will do what?’ and ‘How will you make decisions?’ This scenario led to in-depth and complex discussions around the necessary attributes of a good leader; societal structure; democracy and the need for representation; power and the difficulties of organising work in a fair way.

Participants also discussed the need to evaluate survivors’ skills and apportion necessary tasks accordingly. This led onto the second stage which introduced the notion of specialisation — an idea discussed by Plato that states individuals should do what they are most naturally capable of doing and not interfere with others. The final stage of the session outlined Plato’s theory of ‘just’ society, which involves segregating the population into three classes — Producers, Warriors, and Rulers.¹⁹

The structure of the discussion allowed participants time to formulate, discuss and develop their own views first. Then they were introduced to Plato’s ideas and were able to compare their own standpoint with that of Plato’s and interrogate their opinions in light of the new ideas introduced. As the session progressed, participants’ views became more refined and sophisticated and they became more confident in providing explanation for their point of view.

Other sessions covered topics including knowledge and identity (Descartes, Hume, Arendt and Baginni), morality (Kant, Bentham and Mill) and the ‘good life’ (Socrates, Russell). Some sessions were paired to ensure opposing philosophies could be explored. For example,

18. Worley, P. (2011) *The if machine: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*. London: Continuum.

19. The irony of Plato arguing that a just society would be ruled by an elite group of ‘philosopher kings’ was not lost on the participants.

covering Kant one week (deontology, the notion that actions are morally right because they adhere to a moral rule) and Bentham and Mill another (utilitarianism which focuses purely on the consequences of actions in assessing whether something is morally 'right') meant participants were encouraged to consider the fundamental principles upon which to base a moral framework for actions. For the participants, these philosophical ideas raised a multitude of questions; is it our intentions or our emotions that make something a moral act? Or is it the act itself that is inherently moral? Does morality depend primarily on consequences? At the end of each of these sessions there was a buzz, or an energy in the room, and I felt the weight of heavy intellectual discussion.

Philosophy sessions led participants through different philosophical ideas, introducing counter arguments and further developments in stages. This meant participants reassessed earlier statements in light of new information, became comfortable with changing their minds, and were able to appreciate the nuanced arguments;

...nothing's just black and white, nothing's just straight forward, you have to ...analyse it to some degree to get a better understanding of it.' (Charlie, Grendon)

...the way you were putting things together. You were bringing in something which someone said which made sense to an extent. Then we had a discussion — some agreed, some didn't. And then you brought in another thing that says the opposite thing to that or came from a different angle... So it kind of made you think, even if you agree with one thing, you end up disagreeing with another thing. (Samir)

Participants changed their minds in light of what they heard; turned over ideas; considered them from different angles and took account of a variety of factors and perspectives.

There were a few times when I was sitting and listening to people put their argument forward, when I thought it makes a lot more sense than what I was thinking. (Simon, Grendon)

This provided participants with access to ideas that they could use and implement in everyday life or simply

to develop an opinion on how *they* think things ought to be. In discussing the session on the Stoics, Matt says;

I thought the world would be such a better place if we was, we all took that stance and love your neighbour like.

This is a key part of the philosophical process. Although participants do reflect on their own opinions, beliefs and ideas, they are asked to do so in the context of the 'ought' — what should we all be doing to make society work, how should we, as members of a community and a society, behave?

The structure of the sessions meant participants had time to understand each stage, developing their own opinion, before moving onto the next. In so doing, their opinions would sometimes be exposed as being unsound, forcing them to reflect and reassess their standpoint. Through this, participants developed more nuanced opinions, became more open to hearing the ideas of others and began to think more broadly — beyond themselves and their immediate environment.

Conclusion

For the purposes of this discussion, I defined an 'open mind' as a mindset where a person is able and willing to listen to new

ideas, change their mind in light of new information and consider alternative ways of thinking (see above). It has been demonstrated in this paper that engaging in philosophical dialogue is relevant to developing an open mind. Although there are clear similarities between therapeutic dialogue and philosophical dialogue, philosophy invites participants to think in a different way. By providing a space for personal exploration, for being a person rather than offender, we can develop the whole person — or more accurately, allow them to do it for themselves.

...with philosophy you can bring out your own ideas and then, through the group you can rework it, remodel it change it look at it to get to somewhere so its your part in building that and I suppose its more empowering in that sense because you are doing it yourself. (Michael, Grendon).

Within the community of philosophical inquiry, there is little to distinguish between a dialogue in a pub, a church, a school or a prison. The perspective, purpose

... participants were encouraged to consider the fundamental principles upon which to base a moral framework for actions.

and focus is the same; to further our understanding of philosophical ideas, and therefore our own opinions.

In Grendon, participating in the philosophical classes was an intellectual choice. Participants attended for the sake of attending — not to get time off their sentences, or to gain a qualification. In some cases, bringing people together in such discussion served to breakdown stereotypes; in others it served as a means of equalising participants. Despite different backgrounds and educational standards, participants across all groups were able to develop a level of respect for one another.

A note on Full Sutton

As discussed above, the course was also delivered in HMP Full Sutton over the summer of 2015. Delivering a dialogue course in a maximum security prison was a difficult, but ultimately rewarding experience. Participants in Full Sutton were not as comfortable with open, group discussion as those in Grendon. The mainstream prisoners were more boisterous, lively, and challenging and came with more underlying prejudices against each other and me. The vulnerable population were guarded and careful in their interactions with me and both groups took time to accept me into their environment. With support from my supervisor, Professor Alison Liebling, and the education staff at HMP Full Sutton, I was able to achieve a good level of philosophical dialogue among participants.

Over time, the philosophy class built trust and respect both among participants and between participants and me. By the end of the course, both classes were able to have in-depth, intellectual dialogue on a range of issues and I was able to challenge and explore the statements, opinions and, sometimes, prejudices of the participants.

Analysis of data from Full Sutton is in the early stages but indications are promising. Over time, both groups made significant progress and there is evidence to suggest that philosophy is relevant to participants' well-being, the development of a sense of community, the promotion of positive pro-social interactions and to self-reflection and personal development.

Desistance, rehabilitation and the prison regime

Current analysis of data in this project indicates that developing more open minds and broadening the perspectives of prisoners is relevant to the desistance process and to rehabilitation. Philosophical dialogue provides an opportunity to reflect on personal actions — their consequences and meaning — in the wider context of societal structure and moral frameworks. Prisoners are then able to develop an understanding of who they are and their place in the world. Current theories of desistance highlight the need for prisoners to develop a new identity²⁰ in order to leave their criminal pasts behind. Such dialogue can be a positive part of this process.

Within the context of the prison environment, philosophical dialogue is also relevant to prisoners' interactions, both with each other and with prison staff. There are promising indications from Full Sutton data that providing a space for philosophical dialogue could have a real effect on prisoners' relationships, attitudes and engagement with opportunities for self-improvement.

Next steps?

Sample sizes in this research have been small with a focus on male prisoners serving long sentences. Further research will be required to establish the relationship between philosophy and prisoner attitudes among all groups of male prisoners as well as its relevance for women, young offenders and prisoners serving short-term sentences. However, this research provides clear indications of the relevance of philosophical dialogue to the lives of prisoners and, potentially, those who work with them.

Finally, participants *enjoyed* the course. This might seem a trivial observation. However, the value of this in the context of a prison should not be overlooked. In Grendon participants are engaged in difficult, complex and heavy therapeutic work, whilst in Full Sutton participants lived in a difficult, often adversarial, environment with little intellectual stimulation. To provide a space in which prisoners, in either circumstance, can engage in philosophical dialogue that is light-hearted, interesting and enjoyable, provides an important break in these contexts.

20. See for example, Giordano, P. C., Cernkovitch, S. A. & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). Gender, Crime and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation, *American Journal of Sociology*. 107:4, pp. 990-1064; or Maruna, S. (2001). *Making Good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Ticket to Re-entry:

Understanding the journey of the Hardman Trust

Award Winners

Amy J. Barron, Trustee, Hardman Trust, January 2016.

The Hardman Trust,¹ a registered charity, awards financial grants to long serving prisoners as they approach release. A clear example of social investment, the Hardman Trust aims to support desistance — that is, a move away from criminal activities — and civic reintegration, before and after release. Established in 1994, by a prison chaplain working at HMP Parkhurst, the Trust offers grants of up to £600 to long-term prisoners as they approach release. On average, between 60 and 100 awards are made each year. Although still administratively based in the Isle of Wight, most Open prisons have engaged with the charity to identify suitable candidates. To be eligible, male prisoners have to be serving a sentence of ten years or more, while female prisoners, where the average sentence length is shorter, need to be serving a sentence of at least seven years. The most common crimes of applicants are murder, serious aggravated assault, death by dangerous driving, armed robbery and importation of drugs with the aim of supply.

The Hardman Trust is the only prison-based charity that interviews all applicants rather than responding to written applications. Informal, 'strength-based' interviewing, examining both the past successes and future goals of the applicant, is undertaken by regional volunteers. Assessors report on four dimensions of the interview: the character and attitude of the applicant, his or her achievements while in prison, the appropriateness of the award and an overall gut feeling about the individual. The Trust only invests in the top scoring candidates. Successful applicants, along with their families, are invited to participate in an award

ceremony where their achievements are publicly endorsed by the Charity, Prison Service staff and the local community. When receiving awards, the winners often share their hopes for the future with the wider audience, in emotional ways. Many award winners remain in contact with the Trust and return to future award ceremonies to share details about their progress. Two previous award winners are Trustees. The work of the Hardman Trust provides an opportunity at a critical stage of the offender's journey and therefore merits examination within the context of the wider policy framework for prisoners re-entering the community at the ends of their sentences.

As desistance theory develops, and gains salience amongst practitioners, there is growing evidence of success in reducing re-offending on release through adopting more positive approaches to re-entry. Strength based approaches both identify opportunities and open doors for prisoners on release allowing them to break away from the cycle of crime. Outcomes are maximised if there is multidisciplinary involvement and community endorsement.² The successful reintegration of released prisoners becomes nigh on impossible if public opinion results in these individuals feeling stigmatised and marginalized on the periphery of communities.³ In response to this, there is growing interest by practitioners and academics around the development of community re-entry rituals and 'positive signalling' as specific tools to aid former prisoner reintegration.⁴ Examples of informal justice, which welcomes and accepts individuals who are committed to changing their lives, such as the Hardman Trust, are strong examples of 'social capital',⁵ where involvement with people and the wider community can

1. Hardman Trust, Registered Charity 1042715, hardmantrust.org.uk
2. Maruna, S. & Immerglieu, R., 2004. After Crime and Punishment, Cullompton: Willan Publishing; McNeill, F. et al., 2011. What works; een stimulans voor "desistance?" Justitiële verkenningen, 37(5), pp.80–101; King, A. & Maruna, S., 2009. Once a Criminal, Always a Criminal?: "Redeemability" and the Psychology of Punitive Public Attitudes. European Journal of Criminal Policy, 15, pp.7–24; Travis, J., 2000. But They All Come Back: Rethinking Prisoner Reentry. Sentencing and Corrections, (7), pp.1–11; Burnet, R. & Maruna, S., 2006. The Kindness of Prisoners, Strength Based Resettlement in Theory and in Action. Crime and Criminal Justice, 6(1), pp.83–106.
3. Braithwaite, J., 1999. Crime, Shame and reintegration, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Chiricos, T., Barrick, K. & Bales, W., 2007. The Labelling of Convicted Felons and Its Consequences for Recidivism. Criminology, 45(3), pp.547–581; Gove, W., 1980. The Labelling of Deviance 2nd ed., Beverley Hills: Sage; Plummer, K., 2009. Misunderstanding labelling perspectives. In T. Newburn, ed. Key Readings in Criminology. Cullompton: Willan Publishing, pp. 220–227.
4. Braithwaite, J. & Mugford, S., 1994. Conditions of Successful Reintegration Ceremonies. British Journal of Criminology, 34(2), pp.139–171; Maruna, S., 2003. Welcome Home? Examining the "Reentry Court" from a strength based perspective. Western Criminology Review, 4(2), pp.91–107; Maruna, S., 2012. Elements of successful desistance signaling. Criminology and Public Policy, 11(1), pp.73–86.
5. Coleman, J., 1988. Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. The American Journal of Sociology, 94(Suppliment), pp.S95–S120.

often lead to far greater gains than those achieved by the individual alone, yet there remain few academic studies documenting such processes and outcomes.

Methods

The methodology for the study⁶ was both inductive and adaptive in approach, aiming to explore a new area by gaining deep understanding of the individual experience of award winners. Fourteen life narrative interviews took place with twelve men and two women. All the applicants had been released, with the length of time since gaining the award varying from a few months to fourteen years. The analysis was based on the examination and coding of each transcript to highlight common themes, with these codes deriving from both existing literature and emerging themes. Six main themes were identified: financial investment; opening doors; turning points in life; positive signalling, emergence of true identity and community reintegration. These will now be discussed in turn.

Financial Investment

The Trust's awards gave financial support for long serving prisoners to achieve their goals on release. Grants awarded included contribution to study fees, essential trade tools, transport licenses and business start up costs. All interviewees agreed that a significant grant, such as one given them by the Hardman Trust, was a necessity to succeed when leaving prison by providing an alternative to slipping back into crime in order to survive.

It's a lot of money and other charities are offering like, I got twenty pounds and sixty pounds and stuff, you can't do a hell of a lot with that, can hardly buy a book. Whereas six hundred pounds, you are on your way, you know, it's changing things for you. (Zara)

Interviewees repeatedly described the wide array of pressures, including financial, as they approached release.⁷ Applicants identified a lack of options for financial support:

Interviewees repeatedly described the wide array of pressures, including financial, as they approached release.

Yeah, the running costs, because going to Uni, it ain't about just like paying your fees and what not, but you got your meals, ain't ya, like what are you supposed to do for food? You need a pen, you need a brush, you need a tin of paint, you need this, you need that. There's all them odds and sods that keep adding up — kerching, kerching kerching [noise of a shop till]. (Leo)

Award winners saw the award as an 'investment, rather than charity, because you're not like feeling you have to beg.' (Archie). Integral to each interview was the requirement to produce business plans and evidence of costs. Success was achieved by individuals who convincingly outlined what they could deliver in the future, using past achievements as their evidence:

The Hardman have given me the money and invested in my idea of what I wanted to do. (Mike)

Despite there being no obligation to do so, all the award winners interviewed stressed their intentions to repay their 'investment' to the Hardman Trust;

Once I sort myself out, I want to donate something towards the Hardman Trust, even if it's to pay back the six hundred pounds they awarded me, then it can be awarded to somebody else. (Ron)

Opening Doors

The financial award itself led to further doors opening. The experience of winning an award extended far beyond the intended financial benefit:

It's not just getting the money, not getting the certificate, it's the mental state of mind that it puts you in, the positive. (Jim)

The simple act of providing start up capital operated as a catalyst for change, or door opener, often leading to further financial investment through matched funding from other charities and institutions; 'It was like lighting the blue touch paper.' (Archie).

6. Submitted in full as part of MSt Applied Criminology, University of Cambridge.

7. Shammass, V.L., 2014. The pains of freedom: Assessing the ambiguity of Scandinavian penal exceptionalism on Norway's Prison Island. *Punishment & Society*, 16(1), pp.104–123.

Archie managed to use his success in funding from the Hardman Trust to gain further funding from other charities to finance fully his undergraduate and master degrees.

Applicants were quick to point out that the initial grant actually understated the overall contribution made by the Hardman Trust:

When I received the money, I just spent it on tools. The business has rapidly grown. I mean, next year, we're looking to turn over a million pound in a year and that's on it's third year. I mean, you look at eight hundred pound in that respect. (Peter)

The Hardman gave me a computer, but you know without that I wouldn't have a law degree (Jason)

As the awards were tailored to individual employment or educational needs on release, the winners felt better equipped to access to the job market and often secured employment within weeks of release, as they had 'the upper hand' (Zara) and a 'realistic chance' (John). Financial support, reinforced by accessing employment, eased the financial pressures experienced on release; 'it was one less thing to worry about' (Mike). The interviewees felt that the process of rebuilding relationships with friends and family, that had been damaged whilst in prison, could as a result be expedited. When talking about the impact of the grant, Pat, illustrated the benefits by describing what would have happened on release if he had not won the award:

To get me job but I would have used all my savings on the tools I desperately needed and that means that I wouldn't have been able to do my bit and help the kids out and all that, because I haven't seen them for, since they were at school. Now they are grown ups.

A Turning Point in Life

Award winners found the selection and grant giving process a rewarding and positive experience, which they directly contrasted with their experiences within prison. Descriptions of prison life were generally negative. In contrast, experiences in relation to the Trust

were positive, with interviewees appreciative that they had been listened to, supported, and seen as individuals:

You can have a risk assessment when you are not there and they [Prison Service] give you a letter saying refused.... But on paper, cause I do have quite a lot of history going back to when I was a young kid and mental health and all sorts, I do sound quite mental, but I'd been doing talks at school and loads of other stuff but nobody had updated the reports They [Hardman Trust Assessor] came in person and seeing what I had done, they were quite surprised. (Jim)

The over-riding focus of the application process remained strengths based and forward looking, focussing on successes and future potential rather than documented failings.

The over-riding focus of the application process remained strengths based and forward looking, focussing on successes and future potential rather than documented failings. Applicants appreciated the informal approachability of interviewers and as a result felt empowered to maximise the opportunity.

I gave her a list of all the different stuff that I'd done and you know, so, Yeah I felt, a little bit -, quite proud, quite proud really, you know..... as you're saying to this person, who has the means to help you achieve something, you're

trying to demonstrate them, to them, that, you know, she's -, you're excited about it. Do you know what I mean, so rather than sitting in the interview and say well that's my application, I felt I wanna go that extra bit further and that's why I invited her to walk down to the farm, even through all the mess and stuff and the manure and that and I took her to the yard and then, you know, showed her what the job was She never mentioned, she never even said can I go down there and stuff. I just, I actually invited her. (Bob)

All interviewees showed self-motivation and described being granted an award as a significant event or turning point in their lives. Having a strengths-based approach to the interview, which Chris described as 'an emotional experience', 'gives you a chance to show them face to face' (Zara). Being successful and gaining

an award, applicants suggested, marked the start of a new, positive stage of their lives:

... getting this Award, was like amazing, it was, and the staff they were proud of me as well. I remember the staff saying, you know, mate, not many people get The Hardman Trust Award. (Pete)

Only top scoring applicants win financial backing from the Hardman Trust. Winning an award within this competitive process clearly meant a lot to each applicant:

You know it is not an easy award to get and so that's what makes it more valuable to me. (Bob)

Some interviewees obsessed about the success rates:

How many people get turned down, Amy? Do a lot of people get turned down? (Archie)

Winning an award provided reassurance to the applicant that they had risen above and outperformed the larger prison population. A simple certificate evidenced to the wider world the award winner's motivation to improve and was extremely important to them. Over half the study's participants brought their certificates to the research interview. Field notes recorded that the interview was used as a further opportunity to reaffirm their success. Certificates had also been presented as evidence of progress at Parole Hearings and often remained framed on the walls of successful applicants, in public view, years after release. Bob described the parole board's response to seeing his Hardman Award Certificate:

Yeah and they were like, buzzing, the judge or whoever he was. He was like 'yeah that is fantastic' and he was asking me about the Award and how I'd done, what I had been doing and yeah, it was brilliant.

Participants in the study recounted the empowering effect of winning an award. Recognition by an outside body strengthened their self belief, making them more sure that they would succeed on release. This external endorsement and investment by

the Hardman Trust, increased the feeling of responsibility for all to lead a crime free life as a result:

To not succeed would be letting down the Hardman Trust, the people who had faith in you. (Ron)

If I had then come out and carried on committing crime, it would have been a bit of a joke, wouldn't it, after you had been given all of that help. (Jim)

Labelling, stigmatization and positive signalling

Only five applicants recounted a feeling of labelling or stigmatization after release. These applicants shared examples of barriers to employment, arising from the declaration of a criminal past. In order to circumvent these perceived barriers, they often used their Hardman Trust grants to set up their own businesses, thus negating the need for criminal record checks.

In contrast, all other applicants argued that labelling arose as much from the individual's perceptions rather than actual actions by others.

They don't want to mix because they think everybody knows about them.... Nobody knows There is no stamp on your forehead! (Pat)

Nine of the interviewees illustrated how they managed to rise above being labelled, implying that they were stronger and more motivated than the average prisoner:

It was hostile, but I persevered and in the end, good things come out of it, but I wouldn't allow it, I demanded to be treated as an equal. (Mo)

Overall, eleven participants had actively pursued careers in which the impact of labelling would be minimised, often making use of previous contacts or entering self-employment. Four had chosen to work in an environment that supported or aided serving or released prisoners, thus turning what could have been seen by a wider community as a negative label into a positive attribute. A past criminal record allowed them

Recognition by an
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to be experts in their work, thus gaining respect from outsiders.

The Hardman Trust Award process provided an opportunity for offenders to be de-labelled on release, rather than stigmatised due to their history. Rather than adopting a mentoring approach, a framework of celebration has been developed to provide an opportunity for individuals released from prison to feel legitimatised within the wider community. Application forms and interviews focussing on strengths and achievements provided positive opportunities for successful candidates. By following this through with an award ceremony attended by peers, family and the wider community, the Trust facilitated an opportunity both for redemption and reintegration back into society. Award winners who attended the ceremony felt de-stigmatised and like a 'normal' person again or as Bob described it, simply 'me, a man in a suit'. Academics describe this as '*desistance signalling*', and have been vocal in calling for a move away from the traditional risk assessment and an over dependency on rehabilitation programmes.⁸ Research has shown that positive signalling, like that achieved by the Hardman Trust, comes at a relatively small cost but with significant potential: increased access to employment; acceptance in the local community and buy in from the local community.

Life Narratives and True Identities

Over the longer term, winning the Hardman Award helped to frame the development of a new life narrative which placed applicants' crimes firmly in the past, allowing their '*true identities*' to emerge and allowing them to give back to society. Like the generative script identified by Maruna,⁹ all of the interviewees talked frequently about the need to repay society and 'make good'. Evidence of this significant change in their lives, was used by Award Winners to reaffirm that there would be no turning back to the life of crime as they now at too much as individual to lose.

At the most simple level, all applicants identified not committing further crime as the most visible example that they had successfully transformed into a better person who was contributing to society:

I think every day that I don't offend I'm giving something back. Every day I stay out of the dark side of life, I'm giving something back.
(Leo)

Rebuilding relationships and providing for families legitimately was equally important to all those interviewed. For example:

I'm a family man, my kids don't think I am an ass anymore. (Pat)

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achieved by the
Hardman Trust,
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with significant
potential...

Seven of the interviewees identified the wish to lead a simple, trouble free life, one that Appleton¹⁰ describes as an 'ordinary life' in her study of released lifers:

I don't want a flash car, I only want a reliable car, what's the point in having two cars, I used to have a motorbike, fantastic but yeah, it's kind of like, they're material things I no longer need and it's kind of try to be a family man and a provider, do as much as I can, By doing the training

[funded by Hardman Trust] that can give me a better wage packet for that. (Ron)

Four of the successful applicants illustrated the transformation in their lives from prisoner to employment within the criminal justice sector while Three others were completing education or developing their careers with the hope of giving back to society in the future.

Community Reintegration and the 'Ready Brek' Glow

The journey of a Hardman Trust Award Winner allowed the creation of strong relationships and an enduring community. Award winners felt invited into a

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8. Bushway, S. & Apel, R., 2012. A Signalling Perspective on Employment Based Reentry Programming. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 11(1), pp.21–46; Maruna, S., 2011. Reentry as a right of passage. *Punishment and Society*, 13(1), pp.3–28; Maruna, S., 2012. Elements of successful desistance signaling. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 11(1), pp.73–86.
9. Maruna, S., 2010. *Making Good* 6th ed., Washington: American Psychological Association.
10. Appleton, C., 2010. *Life after Life Imprisonment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

safe and supportive environment that recognised their achievements. Community friendships¹¹ grew between the applicant and charity personnel. Award Winners repeatedly interacted with the Trust from initial application through to returning as the 'expert' to subsequent award ceremonies. This allowed friendships to grow between individuals who would not necessarily have been brought together otherwise and remained significant in the minds of applicants.

There is something about somebody else, who you don't see twenty four seven, who says yes... People from the outside, who could have been influenced by the media, the Daily Mail, but they have seen that you are special. People don't realise what the effect is of somebody from totally outside and saying yes to a prisoner. They don't realise the effect that has. Part of the reason why I am getting to where I am today is because that confidence stays with you always, at award ceremonies, at meetings, in college.... (Judy)

In fact, even the Hardman Trust, itself, developed its own unique, and special, personality in the minds of the applicants. When asked to describe their experiences with the Hardman Trust, the interviewees gave the Trust: a distinct persona:

It's alive, it really is. (Jason)

I was kinda fighting on my own to do this thing that I wanted and then, like, all of a sudden, I've got an ally standing next to me. Do you know what I mean? The Hardman Trust was next to me, like, backing me up as well. (Archie)

The visible endorsement received by Award Winners had an extremely positive effect that endured beyond the initial award ceremony. It appeared to strengthen confidence further and thus motivate themselves to step out each day and pursue their dreams.

It gives you belief. It gives you trust that people do believe in you, to have someone that you feel was behind you ... it gives you trust that people do believe you and someone actually looks at you and says, yeah, I think this person is right for change now. (John)

This phenomenon felt like a kind of 'Ready Brek' glow: In the same way that the child in the 1970's television advertisement is set up for the day by being given a nourishing warm breakfast, an award winner of the Hardman Trust can face the world with increased resilience and protection from the elements.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that gaining an award from the Hardman Trust, delivers far more than the initial financial expectations. Receiving an award provides an enabling environment for prisoner re-entry, where positive achievement and individual potential are recognised and formally celebrated. The Hardman Trust provides an opportunity, through interaction, for the building of relationships in a welcoming community allowing community friendships and the emergence, in Award Winners, of a greater sense of self-belief, resilience and determination (the Ready Brek 'glow').

There is relatively little research on the charities, such as the Hardman Trust, and their impact on prisoner re-entry to the community on release. While this study was relatively small-scale, the findings from this case study illustrate the ways that social investment can, through community involvement and commitment, bridge existing criminal justice silos and structure a future away from crime for individuals leaving prison. The Hardman Trust seems to exemplify good practice, illustrating how supportive, positive interactions with an outside agency engaging in community friendship can lead to successful reintegration and desistance from crime.

11. Armstrong, R. & Ludlow, A., forthcoming, *Educational partnerships between universities and prisons: How learning together can be individually, institutionally and socially transformative*. Prison Service Journal.

An Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme at HMP Rye Hill:

A Horticultural Intervention with Substance Misusing Offenders

Geraldine Brown, Elizabeth Bos, Geraldine Brady and Moya Kneafsey are based at Coventry University, and Martin Glynn is from Birmingham City University.

Introduction

Prisons are increasingly looking for localised, innovative and collaborative approaches to address rehabilitation and full recovery from substance misuse.¹ This article presents the findings from an evaluation of the Master Gardener (MG) programme, a gardening intervention with substance misuse offenders at HMP Rye Hill.² Whilst the extension of the MG programme to a prison setting recognises a range of positive outcomes associated with the role of horticulture in supporting wellbeing, it also reflects Rye Hill's move towards the development of a dedicated Recovery Unit, offering a suite of interventions to support substance misusing offenders. The MG programme at Rye Hill demonstrates an innovative and successful partnership, working with the charity Garden Organic,³ Public Health Northamptonshire and the Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team (DART), using horticulture as a means to address recovery. This paper sets out the evaluation's aims and objectives, methodological approach, key findings and conclusions which include a number of recommendations. The approach taken has allowed for an examination of the process and experiences from multiple perspectives of the MG programme within a prison setting. As well as focusing on the impacts of the programme, the article reflects on gardening as an embodied practice and the garden as a space that promotes humanisation and self-worth, community, a connection to nature and a longer term, holistic approach to recovery.

Background and context

The Master Gardener Programme (MG programme) at HMP Rye Hill is funded by Public Health England (Northamptonshire) and forms a successful partnership

between the charity Garden Organic and HMP Rye Hill's Drug and Alcohol Recovery Team (DART) (formally the Substance Misuse (SMS) team). The programme is a targeted horticultural intervention situated within the DART services and works with substance misusing offenders.

The Master Gardener Programme at HMP Rye Hill builds on the core Master Gardener Programme. The core Master Gardener programme is a community based mentoring model whereby volunteers are trained by Garden Organic to become 'Master Gardeners' who provide free food growing advice to registered 'households' (local community groups, school and individuals). The evaluation⁴ of the programme demonstrated a number of positive impacts on both volunteers and households participating in the programme. These multidimensional impacts identified are in the (interconnected) areas of 'health and wellbeing'; 'skills base and employability'; 'community life'; 'food eating and buying'; and 'recycling and composting'. The programme, through its personalised mentoring approach offers an additional dimension to the benefits associated with gardening in general.⁵ The MG model has been tailored for delivery at HMP Rye Hill, through a partnership approach in recognition of the benefits associated with food growing and engagement in the programme. Furthermore, it is identified that some core aspects of the model are aligned to components of the Drug Strategy around person-centred approaches, the importance of peer support, and recognising people's personal journeys for example; the strategy also emphasises holistic and person-centred approaches to recovery, based on effective local level action and partnership working.⁶

Horticulture in a prison setting

Despite an ongoing tradition of using horticulture as a form of activity in secure settings, such as prisons, there is limited research evidence documenting its potential benefits and value. Whilst limited, existing research has

1. HM Government (2010) Drug Strategy 2010 Reducing Demand, Restricting Support, Building Recovery: Supporting People to Live a Drug Free Life. London: Home Office.
2. Brown, G., Bos, E., Brady, G., Kneafsey, M., and Glynn, M. (2015) 'An Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme at Rye Hill Prison: A Gardening Intervention with Substance Misusing Offenders', Coventry University.
3. Garden Organic (2015) Garden Organic (Online) Available from <www.gardenorganic.co.uk> [Accessed on 22nd June 2015].
4. Bos, E. and M. Kneafsey (2014). Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme, Coventry University, UK.
5. See Davies, G., Devereaux, M., Lennartsson, M., Schmutz, U., and Williams, S. (2014) The benefits of gardening and growing food for health and wellbeing, Garden Organic and Sustain, UK.
6. HM Government (2010) Drug Strategy 2010 Reducing Demand, Restricting Support, Building Recovery: Supporting People to Live a Drug Free Life. London: Home Office.

identified that horticulture plays an important role in the lives of participants and leads to a range of educational, occupational and rehabilitative benefits. Furthermore, engagement facilitates an improvement in relationships between participants and the wider community, leads to the development of life skills and creates a sense of ownership, being outside is found to be a factor in improvements in individual's physical health.⁷ International research provides some additional insights about the use of a similar Master Gardener Programme in a US prison setting. Such benefits include providing: a therapeutic effect; sense of accomplishment; intellectual stimulation; improved communication with fellow offenders; opportunities for learning; increased self-esteem; increased self-control and improved life satisfaction amongst offenders.⁸ This growing body of evidence recognises the type and range of effects this type of programme has in a community and prison setting; it is against this backdrop that the evaluation of the MG programme with substance misusing offenders at HMP Rye Hill is located. Our research provides a unique insight into the delivery of the programme at Rye Hill prison and strong evidence around the outcomes of engagement in horticultural activities.

HMP Rye Hill

HMP Rye Hill is a private G4S training prison, located in Rugby.

At the start of the evaluation the prison was designated as a category 'B' training prison holding 664 sentenced male adults. At the mid-point of the evaluation, Rye Hill was designated as one of eight prisons in England and Wales to undertake a re-roll of its population, a significant change to the prison system under the coalition government. Rye Hill remains a training prison and since spring 2014 acts as a national resource for sentenced male adults who have been convicted of a current or previous sex offence(s) and who have been sentenced to over 4 years and have at least 12 months left to serve on their sentence.⁹

At the start of our evaluation Rye Hill was in the process of introducing a new approach to supporting offenders with substance misuse issues; a key part of this included the development of a recovery wing alongside a wider suite of substance misuse programmes, as part of a

dedicated Recovery Unit. The Recovery Unit aims to provide a safe, secure unit where offenders receive appropriate care from the DART team, who provide psychosocial interventions and support. Moreover, the unit aims to support offenders in developing skills, becoming productive members of society and to ultimately move away from misusing substances. In order to be recruited on to the programme (throughout both phases of the evaluation) offenders were required to pass security clearances, located on the recovery wing, and open and willing to access support.

Methodology

Adopting a mixed method approach drawing on a range of qualitative tools is in recognition that human behaviour is complex and fluid, and there are factors that are often overlooked in research that primarily focuses on uncovering fixed patterns alone. The diversity of offenders in terms of demographic data as well as offences and drugs used informed a flexible approach to appropriately understand the relationship between the MG programme and its impact. As such, the evaluation design focussed on the process, capturing small scale situations, stresses, diversity and variability in terms of the range of perspectives held by participants engaging in the programme and key stakeholders

involved. The evaluation was also informed by a survey administered to staff working at the prison but who had no direct input to the gardening intervention; data was also collected from participant's families in survey form. The inclusion of open ended questions provided valuable complementary data in qualitative form. In addition, the research team carried out an analysis of selected data that is routinely collected by the prison regime (adjudications, earned privilege level, and security categorisation) as well as demographic data collected from participants via a short survey.

Data Collected

The evaluation took place between August 2013 and December 2014, following a two phased approach (Phase 1 and Phase 2). Over the two phases,

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occupational and
rehabilitative
benefits.

7. Grimshaw, R. and King, J. (2003) Horticulture in Secure Settings, Reading: Thrive.

8. Polmoski, R.F, Johnson, K. M., Anderson, J. C., (1997) Prison Inmates Became Master Gardeners, HortTechnology, October- December 7(4): 360-362.

9. HMP Rye Hill (2015) About Rye Hill (Online) Available from www.hmpryehill.org.uk [Accessed on 22nd June 2015].

the team collected a range of data from programme participants and programme related personnel. In total, the team:

- ❑ Spent around 152 hours conducting participant observations
- ❑ Facilitated 3 focus groups
- ❑ Conducted 7 staff interviews
- ❑ Collected 50 completed staff feedback forms
- ❑ Gathered 58 completed reflective diaries, 46 completed circles of change, 25 demographic surveys
- ❑ Analysed 3 portfolios
- ❑ Collected 4 family surveys.

The data collected in Phase 1 and Phase 2 used the same methods which yielded similar amounts of data. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the research, and the team spoke at length to participants about the study and written consent was obtained from all participants.

Evaluation participants

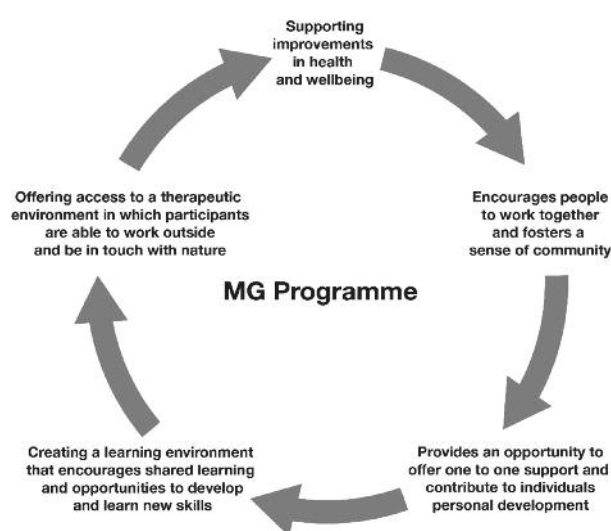
As the decision to 're-roll' the population at Rye Hill took place six months into the evaluation, Phase 1 was conducted with offenders from the general population and Phase 2 (after the re-roll) with the new prison population. Equally, the evaluation engaged with each of the groups for a period of 6 months. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire containing questions about certain socio-economic characteristics. In total, 11 participants in Phase 1 completed the questionnaire and 14 participants in Phase 2, generating demographic data from 25 participants overall. Phase 1 participants were a diverse group in terms of age; from the time spent with participants, we can also see that the group differed in terms of offence committed, number of times they had been imprisoned, length of sentence and type of sentence. Phase 1 participants all reported having substance misusing issues and were not deemed to have committed a sexual offence. Whilst this varied, participants in Phase 2 were all imprisoned for having committed a sexual related offence. Similarly to the offenders in Phase 1, there were variations in this group related to age, offence, substance misused, and length of service; however there was more diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion. A noticeable difference with Phase 2 participants was the increased number who reported having a mental health need. At the time of conducting the field work in Phase 2 at least three participants were being monitored by staff as they were perceived to be at risk of 'self-harming' or suicide.

Data analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken using a system of coding informed by the key aims of the project. Themes from the empirical data were generated using a grounded theory 'style'.^{10,11} The analytical software tool 'NVivo10' was used to organise and analyse all of the qualitative data, accessed by two of the research team. Quantitative data that is routinely collected as part of the prison management regime, and survey data collected from staff and participant's families was analysed using the quantitative analytical package SPSS (v22).

Key Findings

The following sections demonstrate the multiple ways in which the MG programme is understood as having an impact on participants and the delivery of the programme in a prison setting. The data is organised under five key areas: an environment that supports recovery, health and wellbeing, a recovery community, opportunities for learning and moving the programme to a prison setting. It is important not to ignore the inter connection between each of these areas and how they are all implicated in creating an environment amenable to supporting offenders with a substance misuse issue on their recovery journey.



Building an environment that supports recovery

A key finding from the evaluation is the relationship between the environment and recovery. Overwhelmingly, the data identifies the significance of working in the garden to participants' recovery journey. Participants reported that having access to a space in which they feel

10. Glaser, B., and Strauss, A. (1967) The discovery of grounded theory. Chicago: Aldine.

11. Strauss A.C., and Corbin, J.M., (1990) Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques, London: Sage.

a sense of freedom and autonomy and able to access support is important.

I find the whole experience extremely positive and helpful in lots of ways. The most prominent factor is the freedom. It's fantastic for me to get off the wing; it feels to me as though I'm working outside of jail. (Phase 1).

Being outside gives participants an opportunity to engage in purposeful activity. Participants shared information related to all stages of the growing process such as; decisions about selection of seeds for planting, germinating, replanting and tendering and cultivating. What was also of importance to participants was that having carried out all this work, they were allowed to harvest and eat the fruits and vegetables:

I was at a dark point the other week, killing myself was the only thing if I didn't have the garden and my mates. It's not the garden [that's the issue], it's the wing. (Phase 2).

Capturing the extent to which MG programme has led to a reduction in substance misuse is complex and reflects the diversity associated with the participants. A common feeling reported was how being in the garden has led participants to make changes to their substance misusing behaviour. As participants tend to be at different stages of their recovery it is important to view recovery as an iterative rather than a linear journey. Participants reported being abstinent and drug free, those who had made adjustment and reduced the quantity of drugs taken, (this was both prescribed medication like methadone or illegal substances), replaced a substance they abused with something they viewed to be less addictive and/ or harmful or who were at the very early stages and still misusing drugs but accessing support; being on the garden was perceived as a first step on the recovery journey. Participants spoke in various ways about the impact of the MG programme on substance misuse behaviour.

Since I joined the garden project it has led to me getting clean from drugs. (Phase 1).

The garden is looking a bit better; there is a change in myself where I'm not taking nowhere near as much drugs as I was. (Phase 2).

Completing consecutive drug — free tests which has benefited on my health. (Phase 1).

Often wanting to use drugs but stay calm on a day to day basis. (Phase 1).

Building Health and Wellbeing

A key theme identified in the data related to how engagement in the MG programme has a positive impact on participants' health and subjective sense of wellbeing. This encompasses a range of factors which include issues associated with health care provision, ill health, health experiences and issues specifically related to substance misuse. Recurring themes were apparent in relation to physical health related to issues associated with sleep, diet, fitness. Participants identified how engaging in the MG programme offered an opportunity to get involved in work requiring varying amounts of physical activity. Engaging in this physical activity contributed to participants reporting improvement in their appetite and health benefits from an improvement in their daily diet:

Improvement in my eating habit. (Phase 1).

Healthy and putting on weight. (Phase 1).

Participants reported how from the start of their time on the programme, they noticed the positive impacts on their mental health and sense of wellbeing. Their time in the garden as demonstrated in the next section gave them access to a therapeutic environment, conducive to their recovery.

It's a great emotional journey for me as someone who has a number of underlying mental health issues its had a great impact on me this week so far has been no exception with some new issues going on its helped me not to explode. (Phase 2).

Since I've been on the gardens I feel better in myself and have been a lot happier. (Phase 1).

Asking for advice instead of bottling it up — more relaxed confident, stress free. More

A key theme identified in the data related to how engagement in the MG programme has a positive impact on participants' health and subjective sense of wellbeing.

myself, I open up a lot more about how I feel.
(Phase 2).

Staff also reported the MG programme as having a positive impact on participants' health and mental wellbeing.

The prisoners are quieter than they were — calmer and less rowdy or boisterous. One prisoner has demonstrated improved communication skills. Some have even apologised for their behaviour, demonstrating reflection and remorse which was not apparent before. One person has really 'come out of his shell'. One prisoner is talking more now instead of bottling things up and hurting himself. He's working hard and sleeping. (Phase 1).

Overwhelmingly, participants spoke about how the MG programme creates opportunities for them to engage in physical activity, mental relaxation and stimulation leading to positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

Building a recovery Master Gardener community

Bringing people together to share a vision and goal around development of the garden offers an opportunity to gain a sense of purpose. Our data shows a relationship between development of the garden and participant's self-perception, confidence and motivation.

I have more self-confidence. I know I have something to lose...it gives me something to talk about on visits with my family. (Phase 1).

Getting positive feedback — told that I am doing a good job. People listen. Our complaints being acknowledged. (Phase 2).

The MG programme encouraged participants to work together, support each other and to share ideas, views and experiences (in the widest sense). Building a sense of community was not solely amongst the participants but also extended to staff working on the programme.

Everyone has been turning up so a lot more work has been done and the garden is starting to take shape. (Phase 1).

I'm gradually getting used to working with others, I would not have done this before as I'm very much a loner. (Phase 2).

The project helps us to integrate more with others, always someone to talk to. (Phase 2).

Building Opportunities for learning

Engagement in the MG programme allows participants to gain new skills or develop and apply existing skills. In doing so, this promotes opportunities for informal peer learning, peer support and mentoring. The ethos of the garden project is fundamental in creating the positive space. Sharing responsibility of developing the garden at all stages was important in motivating participants to engage with the programme and to sustain their interest. The garden staff actively encouraging participants to take ownership of the garden facilitated their engagement and led to them initiating ideas for developing the space, utilising various skills (including planning, designing, costing, learning about the material needed) and how to carry out relevant tasks. The aspect of group working is emphasised and the ability to see progression and development is a key strength of this type of activity, not only contributing towards motivation but also an interactive and evolving environment.

the whole experience of designing our garden and seeing the progression we are making.
(Phase 1).

Working as a team, mainly with [name] as since working with him, we've actually achieved quite a bit together. (Phase 1).

This is alongside skills that can be transferred to the world of work on release from prison.

I know when I get out, I know I can take a patch of garden or I can go to an allotment and make myself a nice garden, and I can do it with my daughter. (Phase 1).

Engagement in the programme allows for the development of a constructive environment by allowing participants to gain new skills or develop and put to use existing skills. The type of activity also promotes the opportunity for informal peer mentoring in terms of hard and soft skills, and to use the activity to aid their recovery, including thinking about their release. Most of the participants could see an opportunity to be able to use the skills they had learnt on the garden in the future. The creation of common values, group working, and a shared responsibility helps in fostering a therapeutic and supporting environment and encourages the development of skills and mentoring as well as a sense of achievement.

Moving the MG programme to a prison setting

The journey to recovery by participants is not without its challenges. The vision for the DART at HMP Rye Hill

involves developing a comprehensive and holistic support mechanism that wraps around individual offenders. Consequently the wider context in which the MG programme takes place is important; we indicate key factors to be considered when locating a community project in this secure setting. It is important to recognise how the MG programme is impacted by working practices and decisions taken outside the direct control of Garden Organic and as such the following factors are essential to the delivery of the programme:

- ❑ Partnership working
- ❑ Setting up
- ❑ Recruitment of participants
- ❑ Working with offenders in a prison setting
- ❑ Moving forward

Partnership working

The importance of partnership working within the criminal justice system is long established in policy. This reflects recognition that offenders face complex and multiple needs that require a multi-agency response. The expansion of court ordered drug treatment sanctions and a renewed focus on recovery and rehabilitation underlines the continued need for partnership across statutory and third sector agencies. Moreover, this is reiterated in the current Drug Strategy which calls for 'an 'integrated approach' to substance misuse treatment and better continuity of case management between prison and community.¹²

There are specific issues that need to be considered in relation to positive partnership working specifically in circumstances in which the partnership arrangements are across sectors where partners bring different organisational cultures, priorities, and resources to the partnership. This is not to suggest that such partnerships cannot work effectively, but acknowledging the effort, time and adaptability required to establish and sustain strong partnership working is of particular importance in a prison setting, which often presents challenging circumstances.

Setting up

The iterative evaluation process supported on-going learning and a space for reflective learning, which helped

to facilitate positive developments in partnership working. Learning from the evaluation can be summarised by the following points:

- ❑ Time is required for establishing parameters of partnership working
- ❑ Understanding rules, regulation and constraints encountered when working in a prison setting
- ❑ Communicating with key personnel within the prison, but also sharing plans widely with prison staff about the programme
- ❑ Time to ensure staff go through security procedures
- ❑ Ensuring resources are in place
- ❑ Importance of a shared responsibility for the programme

❑ Consideration of how to ensure the MG programme is integrated into the wider prison strategy for substance misuse

❑ Management of partnership processes

❑ Training opportunities for all Substance Misuse Staff which includes time set aside outside of the work environment for team building and sharing of ideas

❑ Promoting the MG programme with potential participants

Recruitment of participants

Having a clear, transparent and robust recruitment process is important for both participants and staff. Factors such as environment, sense of community, individuals' willingness to engage,

access support and provide support to others all contribute to individuals' recovery journey. As such, it is essential that participants recruited to the MG programme are clear about the aim and objectives of the programme, expectations of staff and their peers already on the programme and, more importantly, have made a conscious decision to embark on a recovery journey.

Working with offenders in a prison setting

Offenders represent one of the most socially excluded groups and there are often a number of challenges encountered in terms of encouraging their access and engagement with services and initiatives.¹³ There is increasing interest in improving the 'quality' of the relationship between the therapist and substance misusing 'client' as a key method of ensuring

The expansion of
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statutory and third
sector agencies.

12. Kirby, A., McSweeney, T., Turnbull, T., and Bhardwa, B., Engaging substance misusing offenders: A rapid review of the substance misuse treatment literature (2011), London: Institute for Criminal Policy Research.
13. Improving Access to Psychology Therapies (IAPT) (2013) Offenders, Positive Practice Guide, NHS.

engagement and sustaining retention in treatment long enough for the client to derive benefit and facilitate behaviour change. It is acknowledged that there is a lack of research on effective strategies for sustaining relationships beyond the initial engagement stage. Whilst recognising that staff delivering the programme are not professional therapists, it is possible to view their relationships with participants as a 'therapeutic alliance' which are based on a relationship of trust and mutual respect in which participants are willing to share their experiences and talk about their substance misusing behaviour alongside other health and wellbeing issues'.¹⁴ As such, the importance of positive working relationships between staff and participants is also an important aspect of participants' recovery journey. Motivation and readiness to change are factors that need to be considered in relation to the quality of the relationship between staff and participants.

Moving forward with the Master Gardener Programme

The changes to the MG programme over the period of the evaluation were in response to a number of factors; adapting the MG programme to a prison environment; practicalities associated with delivering a gardening intervention; responding to the needs of participants; staff introducing or adapting activities in light of learning uncovered, and staff delivering the programme seeking new ways to move the programme forward. There is much potential to innovate and extend the parameters of the MG programme. Moving forward and widening the activities has created new learning opportunities for participants, the prospect of expanding the activities, and introducing new and innovative ideas. The possibility of the programme to generate an income that supports its delivery may be important for its future development and sustainability. In moving forward what has become clear is how the MG programme sits readily within the wider strategic goal to address substance misuse at Rye Hill prison and increasingly forms an important part of the wider work planned and being delivered as part of establishing a recovery unit. What is evident in the data is the willingness of all parties — Garden Organic, DART team and G4S to build on the unique approach the MG programme offers to working with this prison population.

Adopting a multi-method approach and conducting the evaluation over a 12 month period generated a wealth of data that enabled a valuable insight about the multi-dimensional experiences of engaging with the MG programme. Participants were keen to be part of the evaluation and candidly shared their views and experiences about the MG programme with the research team. Overwhelmingly, participants reported a range of positive factors about their engagement in the MG programme and a myriad of ways they perceive the programme as contributing to their recovery journey and wanting to make wider behavioural changes both in and outside prison. As such, this contributes towards meeting a range of outcomes in the drug strategy around improved relationships, improvement in mental and physical health and wellbeing, reducing dependence on substances and a reduction in crime and re-offending. Reflecting on the importance of the Master Gardener community at Rye Hill illustrates the longer-term approach to recovery and the importance placed on peer interactions in motivating and supporting individual's recovery.¹⁵

The data also draws attention to the relationship between delivering an intervention in a prison context and participants' experiences; this highlights a number of factors to be taken into consideration at an operational and delivery level. Consequently, of importance is the need to recognise that there are challenges encountered in transferring the MG programme from a community to a prison setting, as such, there is a need for a shared vision and / or goal. This necessitates time and resources to build effective working relationships between all partners which rests on good channels of communication, shared values, an understanding of each organisational culture, constraints and priorities, opportunities for shared learning and a willingness to respond to practicalities associated with delivering an intervention in a prison. Building on international and national research exploring the use of horticulture in secure settings our research offers further evidence to demonstrate how such factors are prerequisites in creating an environment that is conducive to substance misuse recovery and an effective recovery journey.

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14. Kirby, A., McSweeney, Turnbull, T., and Bhardwa, B., *Engaging substance misusing offenders: A rapid review of the substance misuse treatment literature* (2011), London: Institute for Criminal Policy Research.
 15. HM Government (2010) *Drug Strategy 2010 Reducing Demand, Restricting Support, Building Recovery: Supporting People to Live a Drug Free Life*. London: Home Office.

Rethinking 'Rehabilitation'

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Introduction

The way a society treats outsiders reveals a great deal about its moral and ethical basis. There seems to be no clearer example of this than how a society deals with its prisoners. Obviously, there are many groups of people that are othered, but once a person is imprisoned, the experience of social exclusion can be almost absolute. In view of this, there are few better ways to measure the kind of society that a person lives in than to see how it treats its prisoners. Indeed, as Richard Sparks has suggested, 'the conditions of a society's penal institutions provides a measure of its magnanimity or meanness, its self assurance or anxiety'.¹ Interestingly, this echoes a similar sentiment expressed by Winston Churchill in July 1910, during his time as Home Secretary. As Churchill saw it;

*the mood and temper of the public to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilisation of the country.*²

One of the implications of Sparks' and Churchill's respective comments is that the experience of being in prison is socially determined. The treatment meted out to the imprisoned is a direct reflection of the way in which the prison system itself is imagined by politicians and the general public. As such, prisons and imprisonment can only be properly understood if they are placed within a broad social context. In essence, attitudes to imprisonment are a touchstone for societal attitudes more generally. It is therefore noteworthy that during the last two decades there has been a steep rise in the prison population in England and Wales. Even though this number has stabilised recently, it seems that this penal era can be characterised by an over-emphasis on the political and social desire to imprison people. On a more positive note, it is widely felt that once a person is imprisoned the principal objective should be rehabilitation. Although this is one of the key ideas that underpins the contemporary prison system, it is a complex and problematic notion which is used in a wide variety of different and sometimes contradictory ways. In view of all of these issues, what

follows is an assessment of what prison should be trying to achieve, and whether the much used term 'rehabilitation' has lost its meaning.

What Is Prison For?

When Tony Blair became Prime Minister on 2nd May 1997 there were 66,457 prisoners in England and Wales. By the time he left office, ten years later, the prison population had risen to 80,948. Despite increasing institutional concern about the social legitimacy of imprisoning such large numbers of people, Gordon Brown's subsequent tenure also saw year-on-year increases in incarceration rates. We are now more than six months into David Cameron's second term in office and even though the numbers have stabilised, the most recent National Offender Management Service's (NOMS) briefing statistics show that there are 81,832 adult males and 3,804 adult females behind bars in England and Wales.³ This means that approximately 0.2 per cent of the adult population of these two countries is in prison. On the surface, this sounds like quite a small figure. However, if one considers this in a slightly different way, we can see that approximately one in every four-hundred-and-fifty English and Welsh adult citizens is currently behind bars. Moreover, the MoJ has predicted that the prison population is set to rise above 90,000 before the end of 2020.⁴

There are two schools of thought that can help show the significance of this data. First, there are those who believe that the entire system of incarceration is not a legitimate or successful way to punish people who break the law. Indeed, David Wilson, himself a former Prison Governor, has argued;

*we know that prison fails by almost every measure that it sets for itself; we know that prison is a useless, outdated, bloated Victorian institution that is well past its sell-by-date.*⁵

These are strong words, but it is arguable that the continued increase in the prison population suggests that imprisonment does not deter criminal behaviour or reduce recidivism. Countering Wilson's scepticism, however, many of those on the right and in the center of

1. Sparks, R (2007) 'The Politics Of Imprisonment' in Jewkes, Y [Ed] *Handbook On Prisons* Cullompton: Willan Publishing p 75.
2. Wilson, D (2006) 'Prisons And How To Get Rid Of Them' p 3 Available: http://rethinking.catalystdemo.net.nz/eserv/rcp:743/Prisons_and_How_to_Get_Rid_of_Them.pdf.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2016> [Accessed 21st February 2016]
4. See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380586/prison-population-projections-2014-2020.pdf.
5. Wilson, D (2006) see n. 2 p. 2.

British politics present an entirely different argument. These people are very much in favour of imprisonment as a means of deterrence, protection and rehabilitation. Probably the most famous advocate of this position was Michael Howard. At the 1993 Conservative Party Conference, Howard suggested that 'prison works'. Even though this has been described as 'stark, but evidence light',⁶ the political and social desire to imprison people does seem to be the dominant hegemonic position. Moreover, it is unlikely that this will change in the foreseeable future.

Regardless of one's position in the debate, the history of imprisonment inevitably maps directly onto the ideological trends of successive governments and their electorate. Of increasing significance is not so much that political ideas about the role of imprisonment are then turned into policy, but rather that these ideas have an impact that reaches much further than the judicial system. The undeniable contemporary fascination with crime, criminals and imprisonment suggests that the momentum of the debate has been gathering for several years. One outcome of this increased interest is that popular opinion can affect legislative and judicial policy. For example, when Anne Owers was Chief Inspector of Prisons she argued that sentencing practice is 'not only driven by legislation but also by sentencers' response to what they perceive the public want'.⁷ Moreover, as David Howells has observed;

*those in the best position to change or influence public opinion want to believe that 'prison works' because the alternative requires some radical, unpopular—possibly vote-losing—changes in policy and practice.*⁸

What this means is that the general public seem to have a direct influence on the creation and implementation of sentencing policy. At first glance this appears to be democracy at work, but questions must be asked in relation to whether the general public really is qualified to have such an important role within governmental decision-making. It is also questionable whether short-term electoral concerns, such as those that seem to be the driving force behind this key aspect of the legislative process, are the basis for the development and maintenance of a coherent, equitable and fair judicial system. Nevertheless, this is how things have developed

since the late 1990s, and as a direct result English and Welsh prisons are very nearly full.

Despite these concerns relating to the causes and extent of imprisonment, there is a need to face up to the situation and to work out what is to be done about it. One of the key issues within this is how people are treated once they have been sentenced. Ostensibly there are four main ideas that have long underpinned the establishing and running of the prison system in England and Wales; protection, deterrence, proportionality and rehabilitation. In relation to the first of these, the general idea is that law-breakers should be imprisoned to protect the law-abiding population and, to a certain extent, themselves. Secondly, the threat of going to prison, alongside the potential treatment once inside, should act as a deterrent to would-be criminals. Thirdly, sentences should be proportionate to the crimes committed. Finally, once someone is in prison there should be some emphasis on

One of the key issues within this is how people are treated once they have been sentenced.

rehabilitation. It is interesting that even though a succession of government-appointed committees has made recommendations that the contours of the prison regime should be altered, these adjustments have largely left this overall model intact. Having said this, it is notable that since NOMS was established in 2004 it has adopted a slightly different approach to the traditional quartet by identifying four other bases for

running the prison service. The main thrust is that people in prison should be:

1. Kept safe
2. Shown respect
3. Engaged in purposeful activity
4. Resettled once they have served their sentence

This new formulation is interesting because it potentially focuses on the well-being of people in prison. In other words, it appears to mark a shift away from structural issues, towards a more person-centred approach to incarceration. This is potentially a very good development. Despite the problematic nature of imprisonment, this model seems to emphasise the protection and enabling of those members of society that have transgressed and subsequently become further marginalised.

Even though all four of NOMS' criteria are significant for prisoners, it is arguable that the most important thing that a prison can do is to act as a facilitator. What this means in practice is that prisons' main aim should be to

6. Jupe, R (2006) 'Prison Matters: Reflections On Prisons And How To Get Rid Of Them' in *PMPA Review* Vol 33 May 2006, p 5.

7. Owers, A (2007) 'Imprisonment In The Twenty-First Century: A View From The Inspectorate' in Jewkes, Y [Ed] *Handbook On Prisons* 1-21 Cullompton: Willan Publishing p 1.

8. Howells, D (2006) 'The Case For Penal Abolition In England And Wales' in *PMPA Review* Vol 33 May 2006, pp 6-7.

put their residents in a position where they do not *want* or *have* to re-offend after they are liberated. This clearly does not mean that people in prison should be the passive recipients of a supposed penal experience based on popular consensus. Rather, a far preferable route would be to help empower the hitherto socially powerless. The issues to be overcome have been very neatly crystallised in a Ministry Of Justice (MoJ) survey, which used an opportunity sample of 1457 newly sentenced people. Of these, 15 per cent were homeless and nearly 50 per cent were unemployed in the time immediately before being taken into custody. The same survey also found that within this sample, 13 per cent had never had a job, 58 per cent had regularly been truants and 46 per cent had no formal qualifications.⁹ It is therefore imperative that if people are going to be sent to prison, their time inside should be spent in ways that address their previous social situation. Pivotal in this, therefore, is the role and definition of two key issues; rehabilitation and purposeful activity. Even though these two functions of the prison system are intimately interwoven, it is nevertheless necessary to tease them apart in order to identify and evaluate what they actually mean in practice.

Rehabilitation: The Term and The Concept

In the most general terms, the verb 'to rehabilitate' refers to a process of reinstatement or of returning someone or something back to a good condition. It is also a medical term that describes a recovery to full health. However, according to the 1974 Rehabilitation Of Offenders Act, it is also an automatic consequence of certain kinds of imprisonment. Although Section 5 (1) of the Act contains a number of caveats, rehabilitation is entirely dependent on the length of a prisoner's sentence. When the Act was first established, the maximum period that someone could serve and then be rehabilitated was 30 months. However, in 2012 this was extended to 48 months.¹⁰ In other words, if someone is now sentenced to more than 4 years in prison they cannot technically be rehabilitated, no matter how they behave whilst in custody. This legal definition clearly raises some problematic issues. The first, and probably most important, is that it is purely quantitative. In essence, 'all cautions and convictions may

eventually become spent, with the exception of prison sentences ... of over four years and all public protection sentences regardless of the length of sentence'.¹¹ Moreover both Acts allow:

*convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings in respect of certain offences to be considered 'spent' after a specified period. Once 'spent', the person is considered rehabilitated and the Act treats the person as if they had never committed the offence.*¹²

Crucially therefore, it is the time spent in prison, rather than the crime and its aftermath, which leads to the possibility or otherwise of the person being rehabilitated.

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This leads on to a second problem. There is no consideration of the prisoner him- or herself within the rehabilitative process. In law, it appears that rehabilitation is specifically a structural issue. That is to say, it is a top-down process that is 'done to' seemingly passive recipients. So, the possibility of rehabilitation after sentencing is entirely independent of the individual concerned. In both of the legal senses — rehabilitation as a *quantitative* and a *structural* issue — the process places no emphasis whatsoever on the criminal act, nor does it refer to deterrence, contrition or self-

improvement. Therefore, the legal term 'rehabilitation' seems to stand in direct opposition to the way in which this concept is used by most people.

In a more everyday context, rehabilitation tends to mean something quite different from its legal definition. Generally speaking, most people who work in prisons or who are interested in the role and function of prison — from all political persuasions — tend to use 'rehabilitation' as a shorthand term that describes a number of changes to the individual concerned. It is therefore an ontological or existential concept that denotes a fundamental psychological and behavioural shift. However, this version of rehabilitation itself contains a number of vagaries and different ways of thinking. For some, this more commonsense version of rehabilitation is about desistance. For others, it relates to facing up to one's criminal past, showing remorse and contrition, and then

9. See <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04334/SN04334.pdf>.

10. See http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/pdfs/ukpga_20120010_en.pdf.

11. See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299916/rehabilitation-of-offenders-guidance.pdf p 3.

12. 'Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974: A Nacro Guide (2014)' p 1. Available: <https://www.nacro.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/rehabilitation-of-offenders-act-1974-guide.pdf>.

making some fundamental personal changes. It appears that beyond the very precise legal definition, rehabilitation means different things to different people. Arguably, this disjunction has taken a fundamental prison-related process and turned it into a catch-all term that has somehow lost its meaning. In short, the legal term 'rehabilitation' and the general concept 'rehabilitation' seem to be at odds with each other.¹³ In view of this, as *the term* has a very specific legal meaning, perhaps there is a need to find another way of describing *the concept*. A good starting point would be to think of *the term* as a structural approach and *the concept* is an agency-based issue. Moreover, as *the concept* emphasises personal change, it should not use the same terminology as an entirely structurally-determined process that is principally designed to avoid employers 'prejudicing [an ex-prisoner] in any way in any occupation or employment'.¹⁴

The concept of rehabilitation, as an internal, intrapsychic process, is not at all quantitative. Rather, it is based on the quality of the person's experience both inside and after prison. For many people working with prisoners, rehabilitation is a guiding principle. However, as *the concept* is used to refer to a whole series of experiential issues, its use in this context arguably dilutes its true, legal meaning. There is, it seems, a need to replace it with something that suggests the facilitation of life chances, rather than a legal status routinely bestowed by the government and the prison authorities. Equally, this new formulation should be predicated on the notion that it forms the basis for the individual's active reintegration back into society. Developing a more coherent way of referring to this process is clearly easier said than done. However, perhaps the way forward is to think of NOMS' notion 'purposeful activity' as the starting point for reassessing this agency-based way of helping prisoners to become citizens.

Purposeful Activity¹⁵

According to the MoJ, 'purposeful activity' includes vocational training, workshop/industry employment, drug treatment programmes and education. These activities make up a prisoner's core day and are rewarded by a token wage that is paid by the prison. Part of the rationale for this system is to avoid the often-reported situation when prisoners are locked in their cells for up to 23 hours a day. Taking this a stage further, the MoJ have expressed a desire for prisons to become:

*places of hard work and industry, instead of enforced idleness Hard work for offenders is at the heart of our plans to make punishments more rigorous ... Prisons should not allow offenders to simply mark their time in a purposeless fashion. Rather, prisons should be seen as places where increasing numbers of prisoners are engaged in challenging and meaningful work.*¹⁶

It seems therefore that above all else the emphasis is on work as the primary vehicle for what is commonly seen as part of *the concept* rehabilitation.

The idea of work programmes in prisons is not new, and they are popular with policymakers, governors and the public alike. As well as potentially going some way towards offsetting the cost of their imprisonment, work for people in prison avoids idleness. There are also security benefits for a prison if its residents are kept occupied. As prisoners address their addictions, anger and other issues through treatment programmes, they also potentially develop a positive attitude towards structured work. Indeed, as Hawkins has suggested, a 'constructive member of a community is, by definition, a working member Successful offender reintegration into society, therefore, requires that he or she must not only possess but illustrate a good work ethic'.¹⁷ However, no matter how hard a prisoner works, and how much he or she wants a job after being released, it is still very difficult to find satisfying employment when you have a criminal record that cannot be spent. Therefore, it seems self-evident that work programmes that form the basis of *the concept* rehabilitation cannot realistically be expected to deliver what they set out to.

There are also clear statistical indications that work programmes don't work. This is particularly apparent when one reflects again on the high reconviction rates in England and Wales. In short, work-based purposeful activity doesn't lead to appreciable levels of desistance. Despite significant government spending on Offender Management over the last decade, reconviction rates have barely changed and almost half of those released from prison go on to commit crimes within twelve months.¹⁸ Clearly, this is an unacceptable situation and, as such, there is governmental acknowledgment of the need to reduce reoffending. There is also a similarly pressing requirement to reduce the number of victims of crime and the cost of incarceration.

13. For the rest of this article, the legal definition will be referred to as *the term* rehabilitation, whereas the more usual way in which it is used will be referred to as *the concept* rehabilitation.

14. Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) p 5 [my addition]. Available: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/53/pdfs/ukpga_19740053_en.

15. I am very grateful to Stephen Akpabio-Klementowski for his help in producing this section.

16. Ministry Of Justice (2010) 'Breaking The Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation And Sentencing Of Offenders' pp 1 – 15. Available: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120119200607/http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/docs/breaking-the-cyclepdf>.

17. Hawkins, GJ (1976) *The Prison: Policy And Practice* Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press p. 115.

18. See Prison Reform Trust (2015) *Prison: The Facts [Bromley Briefings Summer 2015]* Available: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Prison%20the%20facts%20May%202015.pdf>.

Finally, work programmes can be exploitative, particularly as they use prisoners' labour without paying anywhere near the work's market value. Whilst members of wider society may see the benefit of this way of spending time inside, it potentially exacerbates an already enormously difficult situation by leading to some prisoners feeling resentful. So, rather than improving life chances and helping the person to move towards reintegration, it can lead to exactly the opposite. When society incarcerates an individual, it deprives him or her of most normal opportunities and much of the motivation for self-improvement. In these circumstances, the idea of attempting to 'rehabilitate' prisoners is both intuitive and a form of enlightened social self-interest. However, this process should be based on human decency and morality, rather than exploitation. Therefore, by mainly emphasising paid employment, it is arguable that purposeful activity will always fail to have the desired impact on reoffending rates.

There is compelling evidence that prison education can resolve many of these issues. More particularly, Justice Data Lab findings strongly suggest that people in prison should be given every encouragement and opportunity to take part in Distance Learning (DL) during their incarceration.¹⁹ The key difference between conventional classroom learning and that which is delivered at distance is the need for the student to manage their time effectively and to develop the reflexive ability to become an independent learner. So, even though Wilson quite rightly notes that 'prison is costly, counterproductive and except in a few cases in no one's interests',²⁰ it may be possible for some people in prison to be able to make the best of their time behind bars. Perhaps, the greatest failure of the focus on work programmes is that it is all too often foregrounded and therefore makes educational opportunities seem less significant, even though there is clear evidence that DL is one of *the* primary bases for significant life changes and a new way forward for people who have been incarcerated.

... prison education
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Educationally-Based 'Rehabilitation'

According to Michel Foucault:

*the education of the prisoner is for the authorities both an indispensable precaution in the interests of society and an obligation to the prisoner.*²¹

In this spirit, *the concept* rehabilitation should refer to a process in which a prisoner is occupied by activities that actually have long-term individual and social benefits. As already argued, one key part of any meaningful approach to purposeful activity is that people should be able to receive an education during their incarceration. Purposeful activity should ideally involve a whole variety of forms of education including key skills, vocational skills, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). Even with the best will in the world, however, a prison education department is only as strong as its resources. Like most aspects of the public sector, prison education departments are at the mercy of the political ideology of the day. For example, if one looks back to the days of Michael Howard's occupancy of the Home Office, his desire to see 'decent but austere' prisons mitigated against certain types of learning.²² Equally, the 'treatment and training' ideology that emerges from time to time

also gives rise to an entirely different and unsatisfactory set of educational opportunities. In both instances there are questions regarding whether prison education is primarily based on engaging people in prison in purposeful activity as a form of *occupation* or as a basis for *significant life changes*. In other words, prison education is either a way of serving/passing time or it has a far more socially and individually useful role to play. This issue is particularly significant at the current time because the provision is moving further and further away from HE to focus much more on key skills and basic forms of educational training.

Using the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), prisons assess a student's capabilities. If necessary, they begin with Entry Levels 1 — 3 in which basic key skills such as literacy and numeracy are taught. It is quite

19. See Ministry Of Justice (2014) *Justice Data Lab Re-Offending Analysis: Prisoners Education Trust*. Available: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270084/prisoners-education-trust-report.pdf.

20. Wilson, D (2006) see n. 2 p. 5.

21. Foucault, M (1977) *Discipline And Punish: The Birth Of The Prison* London: Penguin Books p 270.

22. This ideological approach found its most recent expression when Christopher Grayling, the then Secretary of State for Justice, introduced restrictions on prisoners' access to books. Thankfully, his successor, Michael Gove, appears to have a much more progressive approach to prison education.

understandable, and perhaps desirable, that a lot of time and effort is given to Entry Level skills. After all, being able to read and write will make a huge qualitative difference to the lives of every person in prison. After a student has progressed past Entry Levels, there are then 8 other educational strata that they can aspire to. There are many forms of qualification at each of these levels, but for ease of discussion this is what it broadly refers to in a purely academic context:

Level 1	GCSE Grades D — G
Level 2	GCSE Grade A* — C
Level 3	A Level
Level 4	Undergraduate Year 1
Level 5	Undergraduate Year 2
Level 6	Undergraduate Year 3
Level 7	Masters
Level 8	PhD

So, completing Entry Levels 1 — 3 potentially opens up a whole world of educational possibilities. However, of great interest here is that current funding streams are only available for NQF Levels 1 — 3. What this means is that despite Level 4 and above being a contractual obligation for the current education franchise holders, it is often seen as an add-on. Indeed, in a number of prisons it isn't even available.

As such, this seems to suggest a pressing need for three changes in approach to the education of prisoners. First, the nature and role of prison education needs to be forensically examined. In short, there needs to be an assessment of whether the appropriate levels of education are being offered to prisoners. Second, there should be much more funding at Level 4 and above. Third, there should be a detailed longitudinal assessment of the extent to which studying at Levels 4 — 8 enables an ex-prisoner to settle back into the community and to avoid committing further crimes. It should be also noted here that even though the lack of opportunity to study at this level is generally framed as a financial issue, the benefits cannot adequately be seen purely in monetary terms. If one considers that it takes on average £65,000 to take some to court and imprison them, and then the annual prison bill is approximately £40,000 per adult prisoner per year, the savings that are made by cutting back on education seem relatively insignificant.²³ However, the experiential and existential benefits of prison education really cannot be quantified in this way. Judging by that statistical evidence from the Justice Data Lab, there are good grounds to argue for a direct causal link between gaining a DL-based education whilst in prison and going straight. However, as much DL is at these higher levels this constitutes a missed opportunity. Given the persuasive evidence that there is direct causal link between DL and desistance, and that there are

enormous financial savings to be had if people stay out of prison after release, the key question seems to be why isn't DL more of a priority within purposeful activity?

Conclusions

Even though it is relatively easy to completely ignore the plight of prisoners, rarely can one open a newspaper without being able to find stories relating to some aspect of imprisonment. Although, at the time of writing, Islamist terrorism, Brexit, immigration and the US Presidential Election are currently dominating much of the headline debate, it still seems that prisons are rarely out of the main news for more than a few weeks. Popular interest in prison and imprisonment seems to have been a big contributory factor in a disproportionate, but ever-increasing, prison population. With such a large percentage of the population behind bars, there are two obvious reactions from the general public. The first is a feeling that we must be living in a time of unprecedented lawlessness. The second is a diminished belief that prisons can reform their residents, so sentences should be longer. In a society which emphasises work as the major basis for status, prison labour is clearly important, not least because it can help under certain circumstances to lead to what people often call 'rehabilitation'. However, the two main contentions of this paper are firstly that *the concept* rehabilitation needs to be reviewed and renamed. Secondly, alongside all the excellent work that is done in prisons to help their residents address their previous behaviour, Distance Learning can significantly assist in the necessary preparation for life on the outside. For example, a prisoner could quite realistically spend the start of their sentence learning to manage their anger and addiction. They could then move on to a vocational training course to acquire a trade and potentially be self-employed upon release. However, basic business and/or bookkeeping skills which can be learnt on an FE or HE DL course would be a distinct disadvantage. Also, prisoners involved in this kind of learning are known for their self-discipline, make a real contribution to their prison community and are role models for their peers. Over the years I have been told by dozens, if not hundreds, of prisoners that they have experienced enormous intrapersonal changes since they began DL modules and courses. As such, there are compelling individual, social, political, economic and cultural arguments to prioritise DL opportunities in prison. The entire basis of purposeful activity has to be more clearly defined, resourced and facilitated with a much greater emphasis on meaningful DL educational opportunities. After all, if this is not the best way of 'doing time', then frankly what is?

23. See Focus Prisoner Education: The Cost Of Prisons. Available at: <http://www.fpe.org.uk/the-cost-of-prisons/> [Accessed 3rd January 2016]

The Dalai Lama, prisons, and prisons research:

A call for trust, a 'proper sense of fear', dialogue, curiosity and love

Professor Alison Liebling is Director of the Prison Research Centre at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

'Trust is a security question'.

'Begin with yourself as a resource'.

'We have become weighed down by institutions'.

In October 2015 I was invited to participate in the inaugural *Inspire Dialogue* event on the theme of 'Growing Wisdom, Changing People' in Cambridge. The meeting lasted two full days and was hosted by Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and current Master of Magdalene College, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama: two giants of wisdom and philosophy. I do not know how I came to be invited, but I was struck by the relevance of the conversation to my most recent work with Ruth Armstrong, Richard Bramwell and Ryan Williams on locating and building trust in high security prisons, as well as to many of the general themes arising in our work in the Prisons Research Centre, including our creative and appreciative methodologies. In this article I try to organise my thoughts about what was said, in part to capture this unique event, but then try to show how these themes resonate with the findings and methods of our programme of prisons research and therefore affirm us in our efforts. The main themes are: the importance of dialogue and the building of trust, the need for clarity and curiosity rather than certainty, and the role of a certain model of education in growing a better future. I begin with trust, since this theme arose throughout the two days, was central to 'growing wisdom', and lies at the heart of our current research.

The importance of trust and a proper sense of fear

The dialogue in Cambridge started with the argument that we are 'deficient in a proper sense of fear'. Those words felt just right, in the light of our reflections on a recent 'return ethnography' in Whitemoor prison during which the prison felt newly

'paralysed by distrust'. Carrying out prisons research without feeling fear had been my instinct and ideology, until myself, Helen Arnold and Christina Straub carried out a return research project in Whitemoor in 2008-10. The first project there had been carried out in 1998-9. This earlier ethnography had been a favourite study of mine, and its description of the work of prison officers became the book, 'The Prison Officer'.¹ Perhaps this unafraid stance had been easy, given my topics (suicides in prison, the work of prison officers, and the prison experience). From the moment I set foot in a prison to do research, in 1986, I had loved the easy intimacy and humanness of talk: prisoners and staff appreciated the research role, and opened up willingly, sharing reflections and problems, and apparently trusting my capacity to make sense of them. Sometimes this took a little time and patience, but almost always, in the end, I could persuade even the more reserved participants to share their account of who they were, and what their experience meant in the interests of better understanding.

In 2008, for the first time, I noticed that this was more difficult. Some prisoners were 'creating distance' and making visitors to the wing, including our research team, feel unwelcome. Or at least that is how we felt, and how people in the prison (and elsewhere) talked about these prisoners and the wing. Anxieties about apparently coerced conversions to Islam, including by White ex-Catholic prisoners, about some Muslim prisoners enforcing narrow interpretations of the rules of behaviour (e.g., not cooking pork or bacon in kitchens, wearing underpants in showers, or not listening to music) on some wings, and the 'radicalisation' of vulnerable prisoners were confounded by a tendency to construct all incidents of violence in the prison as 'faith-related'. These dynamics were complex and difficult to penetrate. Prisoners were reluctant to talk openly about them, or gave radically

1. Liebling, A., Price, D. and Shefer, G. (2011) *The Prison Officer*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing.

different accounts of what was going on. We completed that project feeling uncomfortable with our inability to make sense of all that was going on in the prison, despite a year spent carrying out the fieldwork, and with our lack of humanity and courage — that is, our inability to walk through (invisible) barriers and just talk to everyone. This problem of barriers was faced only on one wing, and in relation to a small number of prisoners, but it was the first time in my research life that I had been unable to make the first move, or invite an account from everyone. It was impossible to work out whether the ‘fear’ we felt was located ‘out there’ (on the wing) or ‘in here’ (that is, whether we too were carrying risk thinking into the prison, and onto the wings, for reasons relating to contemporary social and political life and the media). We all now seem to live in an emotional climate of fear.

Like Onora O’Neill’s concept of ‘intelligent trust’ (‘aligning the placing of trust with trustworthiness’),² the Dalai Lama argued in our deliberations together that we need to distinguish fear-with-reason (‘intelligent fear’) from false (‘insane’) fear. Intelligent fear is felt for the right reasons, and in proportion to the risk. Conflict arises out of misplaced fear. It leads to pre-emptive acts against others. When the prison system acts in this way, taking pre-emptive action against those whom staff or ‘the system’ fear, then punishment turns to violence. We should all guard against irrational fears of the ‘other’, and understand the roots of fear (and of other disturbing emotions) better, in ourselves and in society. Do we understand what produces them? Where does distrust begin? These are important sociological questions. Physiologists can tell us that anxiety, anger and fear eat away at our immune systems. One prisoner, in a high security prison, put it like this:

You know something, living bitter and twisted in prison, it eats you up. It takes away... saps away your energy. Physically, it takes it out of you. Sitting there sharpening knives in your head, it's just... draining’ (Prisoner 2015).

This is also the case socially. Fear, anxiety and exclusion make violence more likely, and sap the energy

needed for positive change. We are ‘creating terrorists’ by distancing those we disagree with, instead of building bridges. ‘We should not isolate the terrorist’, the Dalai Lama said: ‘Invite them, the hard-liners in, to the table’. ‘Deep inside, they are the same human beings as us’. ‘Something has made their emotions get out of control’. None of their behaviour is about religion: ‘Religion is the practice of love’. ‘Any bloodshed, or urge to bloodshed, means this is not religion or religious practice’, he said, with confidence (and some laughter). ‘Jihad is ‘the holy war against oneself’ and has nothing to do with violence’. All religions strengthen the message about the value of compassion, and are means to help human beings become ‘better, more refined and more creative’ ... of ‘developing the awakening mind’ — the ‘field in which all positive qualities can be cultivated’ or the ‘ground on

which everything else rests’.³ His Holiness talked of his wish to visit Mecca, to show respect. He showed how humour, care and love can burst through fear. ‘Good morning, my Muslim Terrorist’, he said to a young participant, who had asked a good question the day before. His uncontrolled laughter communicated the affection he felt, and the poignant truth that this unjustifiable thought is so often silent, but real in its consequences.

The key question arising from this dialogue became, ‘can we turn around the political discourse on *security*’? The very term ‘security’ has a power of its own: it is the last word and cannot be questioned. Its meaning seeps out everywhere, capturing much that is irrelevant in its wake. ‘Trust is a security question’, he said. We only have to think about security departments and their role in many prisons to see the value of questioning this all powerful discourse. Prisoners of all varieties talk fluently and with frustration about the ‘pursuit of security’ and its effects on their lives and families, and lack of progression. It over-reaches, and trumps all else. Of course it matters, but it should be balanced by other important values, like humanity and freedom. Social theorist Hans Boutellier describes our utopian desire for complete security, ‘generated by dissatisfaction with the complexity of contemporary society’, as a dangerous illusion.⁴ As the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Williams agreed, ‘The most insecure community is a

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2. O’Neill, O. (2002) *A Question of Trust*, UK: Cambridge University Press.

3. HH The Dalai Lama and edited by R. Mehrotra (2011) *In My Own Words: An Introduction to My Teachings and Philosophy*, India: Hay House, 73, 76 and 113.

4. Boutellier, H. (2004) *The Safety Utopia*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, x.

gated community, where we try not to think about the people outside'. It may feel like the easy route. They referred to the 'slog of becoming less fearful day by day'. This is linked to the distinction identified in prisons research between fragile forms of order (imposed, and without assent) versus more sustainable or legitimate forms of order, which tend to have spaces for challenge and uncertainty.⁵ As prison sociologist Sykes said, 'you have to lose some control in order to gain control'.⁶ Security cannot be secured via anti-terrorism measures. Violence is always a short-term, short-sighted solution. We should fear certain *thoughts* more than we fear other people. Concern with safety, rather than security, 'unites'.⁷ There was much wisdom in this discussion, and many links between the trust-fear, trust-risk tensions inside prison and those in the broader community.

The importance of dialogue

The two day event was all about dialogue, and embodied its power to potentially transform the world. The bringing together of 80 people from all generations, backgrounds and traditions, of folk singers, artists, musicians, poets, philosophers, scientists, political figures, leaders of industry, academics, and photo journalists, among others, made things happen. Friendships were formed, new networks were created, and commitments were made to do things differently. Above all, in the process of organised conversation, much common ground was identified, intuitions were shaped and given meaning, and creative solutions were found to both small and apparently intractable problems. The process of meeting in this organised way was energising and constructive. Every participant agreed to do one thing differently as a result of their attendance. More ambitious dialogues were planned for the future — parallel meetings could be held all over the world, including in prison, where so many of those affected by the world's social and economic problems want to engage in moral-philosophical reflection and the reshaping of justice.

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As the former Archbishop said during the course of the event, Dialogue is an *attitude* and a *skill* the world needs to embrace. Its essence is learning. In any true dialogue there has to be a level playing field, so that all participants have an equal voice, and there needs to be some humility. There is no other alternative to solving the world's problems. We need to create communities that promote conversation. I reflected on how prisoners in Frankland 'campaign' for 'another Dialogue group' when we arrived to carry out fieldwork there in 2014. Some of these prisoners had participated in our Whitemoor discussion group ('Cambridge Dialogue')⁸ and had appreciated this approach, feeling reassured about the potential value of consultative and participatory research projects. As we said in a reflective article on the use of Dialogue in research following the Whitemoor projects:

The method permitted several values and practices to exist in an environment where they were typically constrained, feared, suppressed or denied: it promoted trust, respect, honesty, individuality and a sense of identity; it was humanising and thought-provoking; it was full of emotions (laughter, pain, anger, frustration, and disappointment). It

*provided a voice; it allowed for talk in an environment where talk was cautious and policed ... generat[ing] considerable insight, [it] sensitised us to important and unexpected themes, in the prisoners' own vocabulary, and helped us to devise meaningful questions for the interview phase of our research. We were aware that feelings and attitudes are not always expressed in reasoned responses to direct questions. However, it was common for prisoners to return to issues arising in the Dialogue group during interviews, and to continue to illustrate them with detailed examples.*⁹

5. Liebling, A. (2011) Distinctions and distinctiveness in the work of prison officers: Legitimacy and authority revisited, *European Journal of Criminology* 8(6): 484-499.

6. Sykes, G. (1958) *The Society of Captives*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

7. Boutellier 2004, as above.

8. See Liebling, A., Arnold, H. and Straub, C. (2015) Prisons Research beyond the Conventional: Dialogue, 'Creating Miracles' and Staying Sane in a Maximum-Security Prison, in D. H. Drake, R. Earle and J. Sloan (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 59-80.

9. Liebling et al. 2015, 73, as above.

Prisoners responded warmly to many aspects of the Dialogue group, and looked forward to it each week. They felt intellectually stimulated, supported, and pleased to be part of a reciprocal exchange. The same appreciation has been expressed by prisoners participating in other educational (e.g. 'learning together' courses)¹⁰ and 'philosophy in prison' groups.¹¹ There are other related organisations promoting dialogue for reasons unrelated to research (e.g. the organisation, *Prison Dialogue*). It is clear that these kinds of conversations are productive, affirming, and educational. Inspire Dialogue, the organisation that hosted this event, is committed to 'growing wisdom' and 'changing people' through bringing people together in open dialogue. Supported practice and the development of an 'undominated speaking voice' are essential. There is always much pent up creative energy among participants in these kinds of forums or events, which can become energy for change. It is also clear that there are strongly held and widely shared values among participants, linked to better visions of the future. Boutellier argued that 'utopian yearnings' can give us hope and 'society new impulses'.¹² It was uplifting to realise just how much energy for change there is around us.

Clarity, certainty and truth

How do we become 'transparent to the truth', to 'what is real'?

An important theme underlying the conversation, and constituting a key component of Buddhist wisdom, was the distinction between 'certainty' and 'truth'. Certainties are dangerous, and lead to clashes with other certainties. Certainties get in the way of truthfulness. Confidence, on the other hand, is the holding of a position or the comprehending of a meaning after reflection, exploration and analysis, and is quite different. Disciplined introspection and mindfulness help us to identify 'delusions' — for example, the belief that any individual or 'self' is independent from others. A 'part of our prison' is the

perception that the problem is 'out there'. These delusions give rise to anger, pride, anxiety, hatred and jealousy. Wisdom (clearer and sharper thinking) helps us to tackle the problems caused by these disturbing emotions. So often, we misunderstand things. As philosopher Iris Murdoch argued:

*What so often keeps us from acting morally is not that we fail to follow the moral rules that tell us how to act; rather, it is that we misunderstand the situation before us [emphasis added]. When we describe the situation to ourselves, we simply get it wrong.*¹³

Murdoch argued that 'the most crucial moral virtue [i]s a kind of attentiveness to detail, a wise, trained capacity for vision, which could see what was really going on in a situation and respond accordingly ...'.¹⁴ The main moral value of careful and painstaking research is this kind of authentic description, as I have argued elsewhere:

*To get the description right [emphasis in original] — to accurately grasp the nature of the motivations at play, to see the relevant individuals in their wholeness and particularity, and to see what, morally speaking, is at stake — is to grasp the 'shape' of the situation ...*¹⁵

This is difficult to achieve, whether in research, where we have accepted methods, or in our lives. Some prison officers do something like it, and then act on it, in their professional work. Seeing clearly (and then 'naming the elephant' in the room) takes *courage*.

Not seeing 'what is going on', on the other hand, creates major difficulties, for us as individuals, and for institutions. Our research report on Whitemoor 2 described a kind of unwillingness to see, following some shifting prisoner population demographics, and newly arising conflicts over faith.¹⁶ It was greeted with anger by those who 'did not recognise the prison you

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10. See Armstrong, R. and Ludlow, A. (this volume) Educational Partnerships Between Universities and Prisons: How Learning Together can be Individually, Socially and Institutionally Transformative.

11. Szifris, K. (this volume) Philosophy in prisons: Opening Minds and Broadening Perspectives through philosophical dialogue.

12. Boutellier 2004, x, as above.

13. Jollimore, T. (2013) Godless yet good, *Aeon Magazine*, paras. 16-17, <https://aeon.co/essays/rules-and-reasons-are-not-enough-for-an-ethics-without-god>

14. Jollimore, 2013, para. 16.

15. Dancy, J. in Jollimore, 2013, para. 17.

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

have described'. Others did recognise the description, and defended our attempts to report what we found. Research is about being able to find ways to see *more clearly*. This is extremely difficult work. One way of achieving this, and of 'sharpening our minds', is to practice the making of distinctions: 'it is this, it is not that'. So in the prisons context there are good and bad forms of safety, right and wrong uses of authority, good and 'right' relationships, and so on.¹⁷ These distinctions are helpful, as we sometimes assume we know what important words mean, but can be mistaken, or unclear. In our trust project we have become interested in the concept of 'political charge' — a kind of anger and alienation generated by experience, and politicised, or directed at the state. If it is to be a helpful term to think with, we need greater clarity and precision about its precise meaning. This is always difficult, but productive, and fundamental to the process of research.

Education and love

We need 'scientists who think like poets' (John Wood, ACU).

The long-term solution to our social, economic and environmental problems is education. But this prescription is for a certain kind of normative education, 'with compassion'. Education should encourage the development of warm-heartedness (affection creates a sense of community), open-mindedness, honesty, and emotional balance. Participants agreed that we have instrumentalised education, and linked it too firmly to 'wealth and material value', and 'the production of economic producers': a narrow goal. We have elevated 'compliance' and the passing of exams over the encouragement of initiative and critique, in both teachers and pupils. We need to reimagine its purpose. Education no longer 'teaches us how to live' (as it once did, in the time of the Classical Greeks). We should educate the whole person: mind, body and heart (or soul). The true purpose of education is *to awaken us* (as a prisoner recently demonstrated in his spontaneous

'diversity awakenings' essay, stimulated by our conversations on trust). What would a *vital and life giving* educational system look like? Education is about inducting human beings into human conversation. It should include thinking with our bodies or reflecting on how we relate bodily to the world.¹⁸ We should not be afraid of others' creativity, but should grow budding critics in our schools, and resist being shaped into passive, unthinking consumers. Shame and fear are the biggest enemies of education. Creativity and courage are related to each other and to the growing of human potential. There is an important and neglected relationship between love and knowledge, or love and education, as those of us who feel passionate about our research lives agreed.

One of the key findings from our 'trust' project ('locating and building trust in high security prisons') has been to identify an important distinction between prison regimes or climates based on 'containment' and punishment (which are based on *I-It* relations, or relationships that regard prisoners as experienced objects) versus those based on what we could call a concept of 'rehabilitation', or more philosophically, emergent personhood (which are based on *I-Thou* relations, or relationships regarding prisoners as experiencing subjects).¹⁹ These differences are profound, and they are related to outcomes.

All of our social practices and institutions — from prison work, and research, to education, have underlying them a particular concept of the person. For any of these institutions or practices to be humanistic, affirmative and generative, they depend on a concept of human persons as beings with depth and complexity, who are irreducibly socially constituted, and *emergent*.²⁰ Christian Smith, in *What is a person*, argues that our many capacities (he lists 30) function and develop in interaction with other persons; these capacities can be negatively as well as positively charged in reciprocal cycles. We can see the effects of these negative and positive cycles all around us. We

Education should encourage the development of warm-heartedness (affection creates a sense of community), open-mindedness, honesty, and emotional balance.

17. Liebling 2011, as above.

18. See, for example, the work of Zenon Bankowski and colleagues on movement, dance and how we 'share and negotiate space with others': Bankowski, Z. (2007) Bringing the Outside in: The Ethical Life of legal Institutions, in T. Gizbert-Studnicki and J. Stelmach (eds.) *Law and legal Cultures in the 21st Century: Unity and Diversity*, Poland: Wolters Kluwer, 193-217; Bankowski, Z., del Mar, M., Maharg, P. (2013) *The Arts and the Legal Academy Beyond Text in Legal Education*, Surrey: Ashgate.

19. See Buber, M. translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (1958) *I and Thou*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; Liebling, A. (2014) Description at the Edge? *I It/I Thou Relations and Action in Prisons Research*, *International journal for crime, justice and social democracy* 4(1): 18-32.

20. Smith, C. (2010) *What Is a Person?*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

either flourish, or we become 'broken'. Our social, psychological, emotional and moral capacities are the same, lying dormant within us, but they have different opportunities to develop. A 'central purpose of sociology as a discipline', he argues, should be 'to help achieve the human good by providing reliable knowledge and understanding about what kinds of social institutions and structures tend to lead toward the thriving of human personhood, on the one hand, and that tend to obstruct and diminish it, on the other ...'.²¹ Paying attention, 'suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object' matters as part of this process.²²

The distinction is evident in other processes — in 'learning together' courses led by Amy Ludlow and Ruth Armstrong.²³ Or in two 10 week philosophy classes in Full Sutton led by Kirstine Szifris,²⁴ one of my PhD students: a considerable challenge, during which, eventually, Muslim, TACT, Catholic and other prisoners discussed stoicism, justice, what is society, what is knowledge, what makes us who we are today, what are our moral foundations/ideals based on, and what are their implications for their own lives and behaviour? This kind of mutual exploration, grounded in a certain vision of personhood, is transformative because it works with the naturally emergent nature of the self.

Although this was not explicit in our discussions, it felt to me that the whole dialogue event was founded on a concept of the person as emergent, and on a desire to create communities in which the thriving of human personhood is possible. Seeing and connecting is an important part of this process, and of the ethical life.

This was an important two days, not least because it helped me to recognise more explicitly that some of what I have learned in several decades of prisons research about the importance of humanity, respect, safety and order, and of 'seeing and connecting', are applicable to societies more generally. There were some broader topics about the world we live in: how would we like to see capitalism change? Could we all do a bit of voluntary simplicity? We should see ourselves as global citizens, as part of a human family — patriotism and our concept of the state is out of date; resources are for *living* rather than *growth*. We should redefine what we mean by wealth —including inner richness rather than increased material richness. How do we now create the sharing economy (particularly as technology could make 'living well' possible for all)? If education is the key, there needs to be greater access to it, as well as to the results of research. The resonances were everywhere — we need to build safe schools, safe homes, fewer prisons, which should be ordered legitimately, and we need more recognition that 'elsewhere is here'. We need to learn to recognise and manage the conflicts within ourselves that get in the way of these important aspirations. We cannot promote 'research within borders' (the competitive model) and we should beware short-termism, whether in research or in policy. It was obvious that there are many people from all backgrounds and cultures with the energy and willingness to work hard to make the world a better place. Dialogue is inspirational and creates the energy and vision for change.

21. Smith 2010, 487, as above.

22. Weil, S. (1951) *Waiting for God*, New York: Putnam, 111-112.

23. Armstrong, R. and Ludlow, A., this volume, as above.

24. Szifris, K. (this volume) Philosophy in prisons: Opening Minds and Broadening Perspectives through philosophical dialogue.



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