

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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The Editorial Board wishes to make clear that the views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Prison Service.

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# Editorial Comment

There is increasing attention being given to the notion of 'rehabilitative cultures' in prisons. A rehabilitative culture is one where all the aspects of the culture support rehabilitation; they contribute to the prison being safe, decent, hopeful and supportive of change, progression and to helping someone desist from crime. The aim is for everyone to feel safe from physical and verbal violence and abuse, for prisons to be places of decency, where everyone treats each other with respect, and people's basic needs are understood and met. While this term has current organisational currency, it is underpinned by a set of values that have a long history. They reflect a liberal-humanitarian tradition in prison practice, the view that prisons should reflect the values of wider society, including detaining people in conditions that are humane and offering opportunities for people to lead a successful life after prison. While not specifically commissioned for the purpose of promoting 'rehabilitative cultures', the articles in this edition reflect those positive aspirations and values.

The opening article reports a study in a Dutch prison, holding Belgian prisoners, in which a self-catering facility was introduced. The research is the product of an international collaboration between Dr. An-Sofie Vanhouche, Dr. Amy B. Smoyer and Dr. Linda Kjaer Minke. The article draws attention to the social aspects of food in prisons. The authors conclude that too often food is viewed by practitioners, policy makers and researchers as simply a source of nutrition and fuel, but in fact it has an emotional and social dimension that can be harnessed in order to improve quality of life.

Two articles are included that reflect on the experiences of mothers and fathers in prison. Natalie Booth explores the response of women to children's visits or family days and makes recommendations for their improvement. Geraldine Akerman, writing with two residents at HMP Grendon, Charlie Arthur and Harley Levi, reflects upon the experience of fathers in prison. Together these articles describe the

importance of the parent role for both child and imprisoned parent, and the ways in which prisons can ameliorate the harms and enhance the better aspects of practice.

Dr. Kimberly Collica-Cox from PACE University, New York, contributes a substantial article focussing on HIV peer educators. This research pays attention to the ways that such constructive roles provide a benefit not only to the recipient of the service but also to the peer educator. Collica-Cox shows how this can contribute to more positive self-identity and enable people to move beyond offending identities towards more prosocial ways of seeing themselves.

Natalie Herrett, from Birmingham City University, contributes a study of the benefits of creative psychotherapies, in particular art therapy and psychodrama. Herrett describes how participants report that this can be a core part of their work in a therapeutic community. The benefits reported included gaining better insight into themselves and their thinking and behaviour; accessing subconscious trauma that has often been deeply buried but shapes thinking and actions; creating a space in which they can be supported and are willing to accept this help, and; improving their ability to manage their own behaviour. This article contributes to the understanding of creative psychotherapies in prison.

The final article, by Dr Matthew Maycock, Debbie Pratt and Dr. Katrina Morrison, assesses research undertaken in Scottish prisons. This illuminates the interests of the organisation and academic institutions in particular populations, and indicates the ways in which research can be a tool for nurturing progressive practices.

This edition of *Prison Service Journal* reflects the liberal-humane values that have always been supported and advocated through this publication. *PSJ* is concerned with contributing to better practice, not necessarily in terms of greater efficiency or management control, but in terms of the role that prisons have in wider social justice.

# Couscous in Tilburg Prison

## Food Narratives and the Quality of Prison Life in a Belgian-Dutch Prison

**Dr An-Sofie Vanhouche** works as a postdoctoral researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, **Dr Amy B. Smoyer** is an Assistant Professor at Southern Connecticut State University, and **Dr Linda Kjaer Minke** is an Associate Professor at the University of Southern Denmark.

**In February 2010, 500 men incarcerated in Belgium were transferred to the Dutch prison of Tilburg, in order to alleviate Belgian prison overcrowding. Upon their arrival, among the myriad stressors and adjustments that they encountered, they were confronted with a different food system. In Belgium, meals are cooked in an institutional kitchen inside each correctional facility. In Tilburg prison, incarcerated people were served ready-made frozen meals that were prepared off-site. At meal times, prisoners heated these meals in microwaves located in their cells. For several years following the transfer, prisoners in Tilburg complained about these frozen meals. For example, after visiting Tilburg prison in 2011, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment reported that: ‘the delegation received a large number of complaints about the quality and method of preparation of the food served in the establishment.’<sup>1</sup>**

Eventually, in 2013, Dutch prison authorities changed the food system, introducing a self-catering project that was positively received by prisoners. This project allowed men to cook and prepare their own meals in kitchens located in the housing units, with financial support from the institution. By altering the food systems in this way, the Tilburg prison managed to change its biggest weakness and source of inmate complaints, the prison food system, into one of the

facility's most popular programs. The self-catering system was perceived by the prisoners as a positive and meaningful initiative.

Analysis of the prisoners' perceptions of the frozen meals and the self-catering project, offers an in-depth understanding about the impact of food on the prison environment. While government officials initially dismissed the prisoners' complaints about the frozen meals by describing the nutritional value of the food, this analysis highlights that the prisoners' complaints were not related to nutritional concerns: Their grievances reflected a larger struggle with the detention experience. This article demonstrates the ways in which food-related complaints can reflect a broader perception of the prison system and its overall treatment of prisoners. Using Liebling and Arnold's<sup>2</sup> framework about the moral performance of prisons, this analysis expands understandings about the role of food in penitentiaries.

Prison researchers have historically ignored the centrality of food, leaving the subject in the arena of health care analysis. This is not to say that prison food was totally neglected in previous work, but it has been less than central. More recently however, a growing body of prison researchers have engaged with this topic. These studies provide important insights into the symbolic role prison food can play across a variety of correctional settings. Important themes have emerged, such as how food can reflect ideas of normalisation<sup>3</sup> or less-eligibility.<sup>4</sup> Food is important in the way that prisoners shape aspects of their identity(s):<sup>5</sup> it reflects power relationships

1. Council of Europe (2012). Rapport au gouvernement de la Belgique et des Pays-Bas relative à la visite effectuée à la prison de Tilburg par le Comité Européen pour la prévention de la torture et des peines ou traitement inhumains ou dégradants (CPT) du 17 au 19 octobre 2011. Strasbourg: Council of Europe (CPT/Inf (2012) 19).
2. Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2004). *Prisons and their Moral Performance. A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Minke, L. K. (2014). Cooking in prison-from crook to cook. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 10(4), 228–238; Minke, L.K., & Smoyer, A.B. (2017). Prison food in Denmark: Normal responsibility or ethnocentric imaginations? In P. S. Smith & T. Ugelvik (Eds.), *Embraced by the Welfare State? Scandinavian Penal History, Culture, and Prison Practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
4. Tomlinson, M.H. (1978). 'Not an instrument of punishment': Prison diet in the mid-nineteenth century. *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics*, 2, 15-26.
5. Valentine, G., & Longstaff, B. (1998). Doing porridge. Food and social relations in a male prison. *Journal of Material Culture*, 3(2), 131-152; Earle, R., & Phillips, C. (2012). Digesting men? Ethnicity, gender and food. Perspectives from a 'prison ethnography'. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(2), 141–156; Smoyer, A.B. (2014). Good and healthy. Foodways and construction of identity in a women's prison. *The Howard Journal*, 53(5), 525–541; Vanhouche, A. (2017). *Prison Cuisines in Europe. A comparative study of prison food systems in Belgium, Tilburg and Denmark*. Unpublished doctoral thesis defended at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the University of Southern Denmark.

between prisoners,<sup>6</sup> and between prisoners and officers or prison authorities.<sup>7</sup> Some studies also show how prisoners use food to fight and resist power.<sup>8</sup> Finally, food can be used as a tool to create or breakdown order in penitentiaries.<sup>9</sup>

## Methods

This multi-method qualitative study collected interview data from 27 male prisoners in three phases.<sup>10</sup> Twenty-four (24) interviews were recorded and a verbatim transcription was made. During the other three interviews, participants declined to be recorded. Therefore, notes were made during the conversations. During the first phase of the project, it was noticed that culture strongly influenced food habits and experiences with the prison food system. Therefore, in the next two phases of the study, immigration/residence status, a proxy for culture, was used to ensure a diverse sample. Of the 21 male prisoners who were interviewed during the second and third research phase (when immigration/residence status was used as a selection criteria), 13 prisoners were undocumented and would probably be expelled from Belgium after their imprisonment, one person had an unclear immigration status, seven prisoners had legal residence in Belgium, including four who were Belgian nationals. In terms of their prison food experiences, 24 of the 27 respondents were housed in a group unit where the self-catering project had been introduced. The other three participants had previously stayed on these group units but were removed to a unit with individual cells, including two people who were housed in a unit for vulnerable prisoners.

In addition to these 27 interviews with incarcerated men, eight staff members were interviewed: a prison governor, a nurse, an imam, three prison officers, a Sodexo employee and an accountant. Three months of participant observations were also conducted. These participant observations

took place on the housing units, the prison kitchens, and in prisoners' cells. Finally, an analysis of the prison's internal documents related to the organization of food services was carried out. The study used the grounded theory method, as described by Thornberg and Sharmaz,<sup>11</sup> to analyse the data.

A unique feature to this data includes the ability to link changes in the food system to participants' perceptions about prison life. As the prison system modified the food system—transitioning from the frozen meals to the self-catering system—participants' lived experience of incarceration and perceptions of the institution improved. This natural experiment indicates that the theories articulated in previous research about prison food are true: Food matters and is a powerful tool in building the prison experience.

## Findings

Using Liebling's and Arnold's<sup>12</sup> conceptualization of quality of life, this analysis evaluates the performance of this prison experiment by examining the prison's food systems over time. Some of the key aspects of prison life that Liebling and Arnold identified can be linked to our participant's food narratives. These aspects include safety and trust, staff support, humanity, well-being, and personal development.

### Food Service in Tilburg Prison

Prisoners who were transferred to Tilburg from Belgian prisons in 2010 experienced a change in food systems and, from the very beginning, the food served at Tilburg created problems. In 2013, in response to these complaints, prison administrators invited one of the group units to participate in a self-catering project: Distribution of frozen meals would be suspended and prisoners would receive a small allowance to buy and prepare their own meals. Since most of these men

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6. Minke, L. K. (2014). Cooking in prison—from crook to cook. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 10(4), 228–238.
  7. Godderis, R. (2006). Food for thought. An analysis of power and identity in prison food narratives. *Berkley Journal of Sociology*, 50, 61–75.
  8. Valentine, G., & Longstaff, B. (1998). Doing porridge. Food and social relations in a male prison. *Journal of Material Culture*, 3(2), 131–152; Smith, C. (2002). Punishment and pleasure. Women, food and the imprisoned body. *Sociological Review*, 50(2), 197–214; Godderis, R. (2006). Dining in. The symbolic power of food in prison. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45(3), 255–267; Brisman, A. (2008). Fair Fare?: Food as Contested Terrain in US Prisons and Jails. *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy*, 15(1), 68–145; Ugelvik, T. (2011). The hidden food. Mealtime resistance and identity work in a Norwegian prison. *Punishment and Society*, 13(1), 47–63; Smoyer, A.B. (2014). Good and healthy. Foodways and construction of identity in a women's prison. *The Howard Journal*, 53(5), 525–541.
  9. Sparks, R., Bottoms, A., & Hay, W. (1996). *Prisons and the Problem of Order*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Earle, R., & Phillips, C. (2012). Digesting men? Ethnicity, gender and food. Perspectives from a 'prison ethnography'. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(2), 141–156.
  10. The data in this article are gathered and analysed in light of the PhD study of An-Sofie Vanhouche on prison food. The project was funded by the Research Foundation Flanders and was supervised by Prof. Dr. Kristel Beyens (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Dr. Linda Kjaer Minke (University of Southern Denmark) and Prof. Dr. Peter Scholliers (Vrije Universiteit Brussel).
  11. Thornberg, R. & Charmaz, K. (2013). Grounded Theory and Theoretical Coding. In U. Flick (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analyses*. London: Sage.
  12. Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2004). *Prisons and their Moral Performance. A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

already cooked for themselves at their own expense, they were willing to join. In total, about 300 incarcerated men joined the project. Only the intake cell, where men were first housed upon arrival to the prison, continued to use frozen microwaveable meals to ensure newcomers had something to eat. After a week, these newly arrived prisoners could elect to join the self-catering project.

Prisoners who joined the self-catering project received 12.50 EURO a week to buy food for seven meals. Some basic staples (e.g. bread, spread, fruit, and desserts) were provided by the institution. Prisoners could spend this 12.50 EURO on a Sodexo canteen list that was specifically established for the project. The self-catering commissary list was limited to ingredients for cooking, snack foods, like chips and cookies, were not included. Prisoners had access to an industrial kitchen on the wing for about one hour per day. A small work space in the cells facilitated the use of the larger kitchen by allowing prisoners to prepare and cut all of their ingredients beforehand. Usually the men formed food groups that included from two to eight other men in order to cut costs.

### Humanity

One major theme that arose in prisoners' narratives was the link between food and their humanity, a relationship that improved over time. In the Belgian prisons, prior to their transfer to Tilburg, all meals were prepared in an on-site, institutional kitchen. Being able to eat only what the system put in front them—'They choose what you'll eat.' (PT#1)—felt unacceptable. When they moved to Tilburg, prisoners experienced their food conditions worsened. The frozen meals were described by participants as unpalatable meals and inhumane. Participants maintained that the frozen meals denigrated them, treating them worse than animals. From the very start of the study, this perception was clear:

*I explain the topic of my research to prisoners on the courtyard. One of them immediately reacts by stating that the food [deep frozen ready-made meals] is inedible. Others shout 'dog food'. One of them jokes that even his dog would not eat it. (Observations, June 25, 2013)*

When self-catering was introduced and participants had the opportunity to cook their own meals, their prison experience changed. The autonomy and choice they experienced from preparing their own meal made the prison seem more humane. As a participant puts it:

*You can make your own choice in what you eat and what you don't want to eat. Listen, in Belgian prisons, they choose what you'll eat. And of course, you have to eat what you get on your plate. This is not the case here. You can make your own choices. That's nice. (PT#1)*

This participant's narrative suggests that self-catering supports their humanity by allowing them to

control the food that they choose to consume. The link with Sykes<sup>13</sup> deprivation of autonomy is stark: 'Most prisoners, in fact, express an intense hostility against their far reaching dependence on the decisions of their captors. The restricted ability to make choices must be included among the pains of imprisonment.'

When prisoners are suddenly given the ability to make choices about their own personal food intake, it comes as no surprise that they experienced this choice as one of the greatest

advantages of the self-catering system. Participants reported that they felt treated as a person again, not as a prisoner.

### Identity

Participants also described how the self-catering system enhanced their capacity to create a non-prisoner identity in the penitentiary. For example, one prisoner described his dissatisfaction with the deep frozen ready-made meals because they were inconsistent with his cultural/ethnic identity, different from the cuisine he would eat at home: 'First, they gave us the food in a plastic box. Nobody could eat it...One time I ate it but I didn't like it. I prefer my cuisine' (PT# 3). For this study participant, the frozen meals were very different from what he would normally eat and being forced to eat tasteless food was a central pain of imprisonment. It was not uncommon for participants to report that they did not feel the frozen meals reflected the culture to which they were accustomed, their 'normal' baseline.

One major theme that arose in prisoners' narratives was the link between food and their humanity, a relationship that improved over time.

13. Sykes, G. (1940). *The Society of Captives. A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press: 73.

These perceptions of the frozen meals contrasted with prisoners' comments about the self-catering system. Self-catering allowed prisoners to control and shape their personal identities through food.<sup>14</sup> A participant explained:

*I was eating the food from the prison in Belgium [the food prepared in the industrial kitchens] and suddenly when someone gives you your dish ... like I am Indian...I will prefer my Indian dish. I want, I don't know what is in the box [ready-made meals in Tilburg], rice or whatever they make, I don't know. So they [other 'Indian' prisoners who participate in the self-catering project] just came to me and they said 'Okay we make this food' .... I said: 'Waaaw this is not like a prison!' (PT #4)*

After eating cafeteria food in Belgium and frozen meals at Tilburg, being able to eat a meal that had been prepared in the self-catering kitchen made this participant's food experience seem 'not like a prison,' but like what he would eat at home. The food cooked in the self-catering space connected to his non-incarcerated community and identity. The self-catering system allowed men to use distinct preparation methods, including specific ways of seasoning and habits of consumption. For example, one prisoner explained how he was very particular about his spices and preferred to eat on his own instead of adapting his meals to the group:

*Pistachio and baklava, you maybe know it. They grow in my city. If you buy them in a Turkish shop, it mentions [name of city anonymized], that's my city... Our cuisine is very spicy. We eat very spicy but not all people like that here. I tried to add the spices after the cooking but that doesn't taste the same. (PT#9)*

### Staff Interaction and Support

A third theme in the participants' narratives relates to the quality of support and interaction between staff and inmates. Study data illustrates how food systems can allow for staff interaction with

prisoners that demonstrates staff is listening to prisoners' complaints and trying to resolve them. The self-catering system was a response to the men's complaints about the food. This experience of being heard had a tremendous impact on the study participants who were overwhelmingly positive about their interaction with the Dutch staff. A prisoner described these positive relationships:

*The social contact between staff and prisoners is much better [...] you often notice it when people arrive...so they [officers] say their first name: 'I'm this person, who are you?' You are not used to it. In Belgium everything is behind glass, behind bars, no contact, you always must say 'chief, chief, chief', here we can use their first name. And that makes it quieter. It's more relaxed. You can ask everything. (PT#8)*

## Self-catering allowed prisoners to control and shape their personal identities through food.

Since prisoners felt staff was listening to their requests, the food system was regularly discussed with officers. In recognizing the disadvantages of the frozen meals, the staff demonstrated empathy and support for inmates. One participant explained (emphasis added): 'Before, we received black boxes [ready-made meals]. But we complained, complained, complained and, in the end, *they listened.*' (PT# 2). That complaints were actually reviewed and used to reform prison policies instilled confidence among the participants about the staff and their own ability to contribute to prison decision-making. These positive relationships did not only reflect prisoners positive approach towards staff but also staff's approach towards prisoners. In line with the study of Earle and Phillips,<sup>15</sup> these findings indicate that self-catering systems allow staff to afford some level of trust towards the prisoners, in particular prisoners' ability to organize the cooking activity. One officer stated:

*We also told them: 'Listen guys, we offer you this opportunity but expect you to stay calm and to clean the place. If you don't do that, the kitchen remains closed.' So it's for their own good and they encourage each other: 'You need to behave, if not, we can't cook for a week.' (OT#1)*

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14. See also: Earle, R., & Phillips, C. (2012). Digesting men? Ethnicity, gender and food. Perspectives from a 'prison ethnography'. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(2), 141–156; Minke, L. K. (2014). Cooking in prison—from crook to cook. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 10(4), 228–238.
15. Earle, R., & Phillips, C. (2012). Digesting men? Ethnicity, gender and food. Perspectives from a 'prison ethnography'. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(2), 141–156.

The attitudes and activities of officers can have a major impact on prisoners' experiences and are central to prison life. This example of how both groups, prisoners and officers strived to improve the food systems, serves as a clear example of how positive relationships between staff and prisoners can be developed within an institution.

### Trust and Safety

A fourth theme relates to trust and safety. Participants described poor quality pre-prepared meals as being a source of deep dissatisfaction and potential disruption. When the facility converted to a self-catering system, participants reported that prison safety improved because prisoners were no longer angry about the food. The increased freedoms afforded to prisoners through the self-catering system created a better atmosphere in prison and decreased hostility because they were able to prepare and eat decent meals.

The self-catering system, however, was not without safety issues. Specifically, there were concerns about making knives available to prisoners for cooking purposes. However, participants described these concerns as unfounded:

*I saw people in Belgium who were very aggressive. They come here and are not aggressive anymore...nobody does something with these knives. I'm here for a year now, I don't see anyone being killed or something else... (PT#5)*

As this participant explains, the dynamic prison environment in Tilburg, which included a variety of activities, reduced stressed and aggressive incidents. This impression was shared by the social and psychological staff from Belgium who temporary worked in the Tilburg penitentiary. Participants suggested that the trust they received from officers by being allowed to handle sharp utensils afforded a mutual sense of respect that encouraged them to follow prison rules. In short, participants experienced the self-catering regime, in which potentially dangerous objects were given to them, as safer than the traditional prisons where they had no access to knives but spend lots of time in their cell. The self-catering system allowed for more positive relationships with staff and experienced lower levels of stress. One of the prisoners explained this feeling:

*Why I say that it is better here? Because I already have my problems [...] I go to the recreation [where the kitchens are], I cook. You forget your problems a little bit because you do something. It's different from when you're constantly locked up. (PT#10)*

This respondent related time out of the cell to the relaxed environment that was created thanks to the presence of activities.

Other trust issues that arose from the self-catering system related to food sharing. The participants descriptions of this type of interaction made visible the trust, or lack thereof, that existed between incarcerated people and correctional officers. It was not uncommon for prisoners, who were very proud of the meals they prepared, to offer officers a plate. While prison rules prohibit officers from accepting any goods or services from prisoners, some officers accepted these invitations to eat together with the prisoners and most prisoners experienced this interaction as a positive element in their relationship. Other officers refused to share meals with prisoners. This rejection was interpreted as a clear lack of trust from officers towards prisoners. During the participant observations the following incident took place:

## The attitudes and activities of officers can have a major impact on prisoners' experiences and are central to prison life.

*I walk with the prisoners back to their cells. They ask if I want to taste their home-made lasagna. I sit with them in their cell and eat. A bit later X [name of one of the officer anonymized] enters the place. The prisoners offer her some lasagna. She gets irritated and tells she is not allowed to taste their food. She explains prisoners might abuse it later to ask a favor in return. Moreover, she adds that prisoners can offer her contaminated food... then, she leaves the cell and the prisoners are clearly annoyed by the incident. They ensure me that I should not believe her and claim she always exaggerates. They add everyone hates this officer due to this kind of behavior. (Fieldnotes, January 29, 2015)*

This example about the sharing of meals illustrates a central operational dilemma for correctional staff: the tension between balancing trust and relationships with security. In monitoring the self-catering system and other prison activities and supervision officers reported

struggling to balance seeming conflicting roles and responsibilities. On the one hand, staff seek to maintain order and security by controlling activities and keeping a distance. On the other hand, the prison aims to support and motivate prisoners to live a life without crime after their release. Staff reported conflicting views about how to best balance their role as a prisoner-officer, along the continuum between too soft and too strict. According to some, sharing food enabled to show appreciation for the work of prisoners and even learn from them through the sharing of recipes. Other officers believed certain barriers had to be maintained and were afraid prisoners would contaminate the food or ask a favor in return. Each officer decided which approach suited him/her best.

Finally, participants reported that the self-catering system bolstered relationships of trust between prisoners. In line with the results of Minke's<sup>16</sup> study on prisoners' food groups in Denmark, the cooking groups that were formed at Tilburg allowed people developed alliances through these cooking partnerships. The financial support from the institution during the self-catering project also decreased the pressure on prisoners with more resources to share money with others. Although income inequality did not disappear completely with institutional support, 12.50 EURO is a modest allowance, prisoners witnessed how this institutional support created more material equality between them and built trust by reducing stealing and subordination. A prisoner explains:

*Before we received this 12.50 EURO, there were some prisoners with whom I shared a cell, they just arrived and didn't have money on their account. And I was there for a longer time, so I had to financially support them... So these first months, I had to buy my own food and that of others... I did it voluntary because I cannot sit there and eat my meal in front of them.... [Now] when someone is new, they receive 12.50 EURO on their account... [Before the allowance was introduced] I spend between 400 and 450 Euros every month. (PT #2)*

For this individual, providing financial support for newly incarcerated people was an expensive endeavor. The introduction of a basic food allowance for all

prisoners, lifted the responsibility of providing for other from him.

## Well-being and Personal Development

Participants' narratives clearly linked food to well-being and personal development. While it is possible that the frozen meals, designed and approved by prison nutrition guidelines and dietary staff, were more nutritious than the meals they prepared on their own, participants overwhelmingly perceived their own cooking to be more healthy. A participant who was interviewed before the introduction of the self-catering project claimed that:

*They say even outside prison, it's not healthy to eat microwave food. In here, you don't get anything else. Sometimes I wonder if you eat it every day, two years in a row, would you get problems with your health? So I don't eat it every day. I throw it away. (PT #7)*

Self-catering allowed prisoners to enact eating habits and methods of meal preparation that they understood as healthy and fit for daily human consumption.

Self-catering allowed prisoners to enact eating habits and methods of meal preparation that they understood as healthy and fit for daily human consumption.

Similarly, allowing prisoners to be involved in health enhancing behavior (i.e. the preparation of fresh meals) promoted personal development. The tedium of incarceration is often discussed by prisoners as they search for ways to pass their time in a meaningful way. One participant noted: '[With self-catering] Time goes faster, yes. I think it goes faster. You can do more, you can exercise, you can prepare your food. You can keep yourself busy, not as in Belgium' (PT #8).

For some participants it was just nice to spend their time cooking, while others felt it improved their cooking skills and it enabled them to learn from their peers.

*And now it's getting better [compared to when they served pre-prepared meals]. Because you know, every country, they have their own food, as you know. And then it depends how you deal with it. I'm a*

16. Minke, L. K. (2014). Cooking in prison-from crook to cook. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 10(4), 228-238.

*gourmand, I cook with everyone. I don't have any problems, I talk to everyone, I want to learn things. For example now I can prepare couscous as the Arabs do. (PT #9)*

While explaining how one can learn from other prisoners, this participant touched upon another important advantage of self-catering: Cooking together can encourage prisoners to expand their horizons by talking to each other and showing interest in each other's culture. Moreover, several prisoners experienced cooking as a pleasurable experiment. Inventing new recipes and obtaining positive ratings from fellow prisoners for these new dishes could become a meaningful form of self-entertainment.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This analysis showed that prisoners' detention experiences changed after the institution shifted from pre-made frozen meals to a system of self-catering. Study participants reported that the self-catering system was more humane. Participants described feeling more supported and understood by prison officers. Moreover, they felt recognized as individuals with their own personal identities. Positive relationships with peers were built while cooking together and sharing meals in the self-catering system. Improved relationships with staff were also noted, although the sharing of meals between staff and prisoners was a precarious moment in the development of trust between the two groups. Finally, cooking offered a meaningful way to pass time that promoted prisoners' sense of personal development.

Issues of safety are critical for this analysis, given that the security of staff and incarcerated people is a

central goal for prison administrators. The idea of giving incarcerated people the tools to cook their own food, including knives and other potentially dangerous instruments, can give policy makers and administrators pause. Indeed, after data collection for this study was completed, an inmate-on-inmate assault in the self-catering kitchen was reported by the Tilburg administration. In response to this incident, additional correctional staff were assigned to monitor the kitchen space. While this additional staffing may help to prevent future violence, clearly it is impossible for staff and administrators to completely prevent fights in any part of the prison, including these kitchens. In both incarcerated and non-incarcerated settings, human beings argue and fight. In many prisons without self-catering systems there are assaults involving sharp instruments. While concerns about safety in the self-catering kitchens are legitimate and protocols should be developed to provide adequate supervision and support within these spaces, this data offers strong evidence to suggest that the positive features of these programs—including trust, relationships, and program satisfaction—outweigh the potential risks.<sup>17</sup>

To conclude, while prison administrators and regulatory bodies often focus on the content of meals and logistical issues about timing and serving, these narratives from incarcerated men challenge this narrow construction of food as simply a source of nutrition and fuel. In their responses, participants focused not only on nutrition, but on how the food made them feel and shaped their broader prison experience. Seen in this light, food is transformed into a tool that can provide not only physical sustenance, but emotional and psychosocial fuel that can improve the quality of life for incarcerated people.

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17. See also Earle, R., & Phillips, C. (2012). Digesting men? Ethnicity, gender and food. Perspectives from a 'prison ethnography'. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(2), 141–156.

# Family Matters

## A critical examination of family visits for imprisoned mothers and their families

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Whole families can experience serious disruptions and disadvantages when a mother is imprisoned.<sup>1</sup> The enforced separation generated by prison creates challenges for sustaining meaningful mother-child relationships. This paper focuses on 'family visits'; which are visiting opportunities generally designed to provide extended time and interaction between imprisoned parents and their children in the prison setting. The paper draws on the author's doctoral research findings which explored the lives of families following the mother's incarceration in England and Wales. Qualitative data was collected from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with fifteen imprisoned mothers and twenty-four caregivers (comprised of family members and friends) looking after children of female prisoners. Chiming with previous research, thematic data analysis revealed how family visits were highly valued and appreciated by families as they provided a special opportunity to engage in more 'normalised' family practices. However, extending prior knowledge, this study also identified how institutional barriers in the prison setting could hinder or prevent families from accessing and participating in family days. Practical recommendations attempt to respond to these issues, and to improve access and support for mother-child relationships during the mother's incarceration.

### Mothers in prison

The criminal justice system may only be charged with the responsibility of the prisoner—but when that prisoner is also a parent then we need to acknowledge that their custodial sentence will interfere with family life. Estimates suggest that 18,000 children experience separation from their incarcerated mothers every year in England and Wales.<sup>2</sup> Relationships with children will be affected for *all* imprisoned parents, but the upheavals and repercussions are more acute when that parent had lived with their dependent children prior to their sentence. This applies to the majority of mothers in prison; as most were primary caregivers before their incarceration.<sup>3</sup> As a result, mother-child relationships are seriously affected, as the daily contact and interactions at home become unachievable when a mother is incarcerated. The 'normal things' which are part of *doing* everyday family life, cannot be performed by imprisoned mothers<sup>4</sup> as Esther explains below.

*Just normal things that I would have been doing, it doesn't have to be anything overly exciting, just something normal. Put them to bed; wash their hair, something like that (Esther, mother of two children)<sup>5</sup>*

We know that prison, through its nature and functioning, is not an environment well-suited to mothering practices<sup>6</sup> or identities.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, most women enter prison for non-violent offences (80 per

1. Booth, N., (2017a) *Maternal Imprisonment: a Family Sentence* in Hudson, J., Needham, C., and Heins, E., (eds) *Social Policy Review 29: Analysis and Debate in Social Policy. The Policy Press and Social Policy Association: Bristol.*
2. Corston, J. (2007) *The Corston Report: A report by Baroness Jean Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System.* London: Home Office. [www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf).
3. Caddle, D., and Crisp, D., (1997) *Imprisoned Women and Mothers.* London: Home Office Research Study 162.
4. Morgan, D.H.J., (1999) Risk and family Practices: Accounting for change and fluidity in family life. In: E.B. Silvia, and C. Smart eds. *The New family?* London: Sage publications. Morgan, D.H.J., (2011) *Rethinking Family Practices.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.
5. See 1 also.
6. Enos, S., (2001). *Mothering from the inside.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press. See 1 also.
7. Baldwin, L., (2017) *Motherhood Disrupted: Reflections of Post Prison Mothers.* *Emotion, Space and Society.* See 5 also.

cent), and serving sentences which are very short in length, often lasting six months or less.<sup>8</sup> These circumstances, as well as the maternal and familial status of many women in prison, have contributed to the argument that most women should be diverted away from custody.<sup>9</sup>

Caregivers assuming responsibility for the children of women in prison are often put under immense social, economic and emotional strain. Generally it is family members (often grandparents and female relatives) who take care of the mothers' children; with nine per cent being looked after by their fathers; and 14 per cent going into social care.<sup>10</sup> Yet, there is little welfare support for family members in these circumstances in England and Wales;<sup>11</sup> making them the 'unsung heroes' of maternal imprisonment.<sup>12</sup> The caregiver's role also involves supporting mother-child relationships during the sentence; often by facilitating contact.

### Mother-child contact

*Special attention shall be paid to the maintenance of such relationships between a prisoner and his family as are desirable in the best interests of both (Rule 4 (1))*

Prisoners are permitted contact with friends and family through telephone, letter-writing and prison visits. The aforementioned Prison Rule (1999) indicates the importance of supporting prisoners' family ties, and these sentiments extend into several policy and penal documents that have linked family ties to reducing re-offending and better resettlement outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

Prison visits have received considerable academic and policy interest in recent years, especially for parent-child contact.<sup>14</sup> Often, they are the only face-to-face contact which imprisoned parents and their children

can achieve; providing important space, time, and opportunities to (re)connect.

However, because women are a minority group in the prison population, there are only twelve women's prisons serving England and Wales. Therefore, families often have to travel much further to visit a woman in prison, the average journey being 60 miles, meanwhile some families travel up to 150 miles.<sup>15</sup> This can be both time-consuming and costly. Convicted prisoners are permitted one two hour social visit every fortnight which means that children and families could be spending more time travelling to the prison, than with their mother.

Prison guidelines state that support for family ties during visits must be appropriately weighed against public protection and security.<sup>16</sup> However, restrictions imposed during social visits often limit physical interactions (e.g. hugs and kisses) as well as opportunities to move around (e.g. playing with children), which can seriously undermine attempts at sustaining meaningful mother-child relationships.<sup>17</sup> For this reason, family visits are often preferred by families.

### What are family visits?

*Family time in a more normalised environment [for a] better quality of experience and interaction for prisoners and their children<sup>18</sup>*

Family visits are sometimes referred to as 'family days' or 'children's days', and are designed to provide extended time and interactions between imprisoned parents and their children in the prison setting. Family visits are typically in place in most prisons and usually take place once a month, or in school holidays. These visits are afforded to prisoners with children (and sometimes grandchildren) in addition to their statutory provision of social visits.

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8. Prison Reform Trust (PRT) (2016) *Bromley Briefing Prison Factfile, Autumn 2016*. London: Prison Reform Trust.
  9. Booth, N., (2017b) Prisoners' Children and Families. *Criminal Law and Justice Weekly*, Vol: 181 (15), pp. 246-248 See 5 & 6 also.
  10. Minson, S., Nadin, R., Earle, J., (2015) *Sentencing of Mothers: Improving the sentencing process and outcomes for mothers with dependent children*. Prison Reform Trust. Accessed at [http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/sentencing\\_mothers.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/sentencing_mothers.pdf)
  11. See 8 also.
  12. Raikes, Ben (2016) Unsung Heroines: Celebrating the care provided by grandmothers for children with parents in prison. *Probation Journal*. ISSN 0264-5505.
  13. Lord Farmer Review (2017) The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime. Ministry of Justice. McCarthy, D., and Brunton-Smith, I., (2017) Prisoner-family ties during imprisonment: Reassessing resettlement outcomes and the role of visitation. *Prison Service Journal*, Issue 233, pp.23 – 27.
  14. Hutton, M., (2016) Visiting Time: A tale of two prisons. *Probation Journal*, Vol. 63 (3) pp.347-361. Sharratt, K., and Cheung, R., (2014) Incentivising Prison Visits: New research findings on the Needs of Children with Imprisoned Mothers and Fathers. *Prison Service Journal*, 216, pp.24 – 29.
  15. See 3 also.
  16. National Offender Management Service (NOMS), 2011. *Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 16/ 2011*.
  17. Booth, N., (2016) *Families separated by bars – the home truths about sending mothers to prison*. The Conversation. Available from: <https://theconversation.com/families-separated-by-bars-the-home-truths-about-sending-mothers-to-prison-56626>. Booth, N., (2018) Maintaining Family Ties: The Disparities between Policy and Practice Following Maternal Imprisonment in England And Wales in Gordon, L., (ed) *Contemporary research and analysis on the children of prisoners: invisible children*. Pp.155-171. Cambridge: Cambridge Publishers Ltd. See 1 & 9 also.
  18. See 16 also.

Research evidence has found that family visits are characterised by fewer security restrictions than standard visits, fostering a more relaxed environment.<sup>19</sup> The incarcerated parent is allowed to move around more freely and engage in a range of activities with their children, such as crafts, sports or sharing a meal together.<sup>20</sup> These basic family-friendly activities are not generally available to mothers and children during standard visits or at any other point during the custodial sentence.

The environment and ethos surrounding family visits enable imprisoned parents to 'momentarily restore their role as a parental figure',<sup>21</sup> and can lead to an increased sense of involvement in their children's lives. In comparison to standard visits, the 'normalised' environment which family visits provide is considered to be more conducive for more meaningful and quality parent-child interactions.<sup>22</sup> Thus, being able to access and participate in family visits is critically important for several imprisoned mothers and children seeking to remain connected.

## Methods

This paper focuses on one theme identified in the narratives of family members experiencing maternal imprisonment in England and Wales. The findings are drawn from the authors' doctoral research which qualitatively explored family after a mother was incarcerated. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted between May and November 2015 with fifteen imprisoned mothers, and twenty-four caregivers (family and friends) to female prisoners' children. The study received ethical approval from University of Bath and the National Research Council who are responsible for all research conducted within and around prisons in England and Wales.<sup>23</sup>

The imprisoned mothers were recruited from one prison, whilst the caregivers were recruited across four female prisons. Note that the family members in the two cohorts were not related (e.g. the mothers and caregivers were not from the same families). The cohort of mothers opted into the research after

information posters and leaflets were distributed around the prison. The researcher met with every mother before the interview to ensure participation was voluntary, and out of recognition for the sensitive nature of the research topic. All prison interviews were conducted in a private office in the prison. The cohort of caregivers were primarily recruited in prison visitors centres, with a few (n=4) learning about the research through a third party (i.e. prison family engagement worker). Interviews with the caregivers generally took place at their homes or at another location of their choosing, and at a time convenient to them.

Informed consent was gained verbally and in writing, and all participants agreed to have their interview audio-recorded. Interviews lasted anywhere between 40 minutes and 2 hours. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and thematic analysis<sup>24</sup> identified key themes. Over half of the families in the study participated in family visits, and although it was evident that these visits were highly appreciated, there were also some issues in their operation. Four key themes are discussed, together with recommendations which suggest ways to improve the support for mother-child relationships during family visits.

'On the family day the officers aren't dressed up as officers, you can get up, you can interact with your children more.'

## Valuing family visits: 'It's a chance for us to connect'

*On the family day the officers aren't dressed up as officers, you can get up, you can interact with your children more. You can go with money and pay for things at the snack bar, they make it comfortable...and you get 4 hours, 4 and a half hours, so the difference between a 2 hour visit where you're sat on the chair...compared to a family day where you can get up and you can play with your kids and you can make cakes and then you can go to the dining hall and you can have dinner with them (Stephanie, mother of seven children)*

19. See 16 also.

20. Ibid.

21. Dixey, R., and Woodall, J., (2012) The significance of 'the visit' in an English category-B prison: views from prisoners, prisoners' families and prison staff. *Community, Work and Family*, Vol: 15 (1) pp.29-47.

22. See 16 also.

23. National Offender Management Service (NOMS), 2014. *Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 22/2014*. London: HMSO.

24. Braun, V., and Clarke, V., (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol: 3 (2), pp.77-101.

The families' narratives revealed how family visits were highly valued because they provided time and space where the mothers could interact and connect with their children in a comfortable, relaxed environment. As Stephanie's extract shows, family visits were different from the more restrictive environment found in social visits. She reveals how she preferred the family visits because she could move about and play with her children, and could engage in fun activities with them. In a similar way, Eve explains how eating a meal with her older children (aged 19 and 13) at the family visit provided her with a unique and useful opportunity to connect with them, and better tease out, and discuss, any issues.

*We can sit at the table and eat food and discuss any issues, any problems that have been happening...it's a chance for us to kind of connect and deal with any problems or issues and quite often enough there are [problems] and we get them sorted out (Eve, mother of two)*

Families were focussed on the interactive nature of family days, highlighting how opportunities to do these 'normal' things were not otherwise available in the prison setting. Interestingly, these findings support recent sociological understandings of contemporary family life which have emphasised the importance of doing family practices and being actively involved in a given role.<sup>25</sup>

Further, in revealing their appreciation of family days, several of the mothers and caregivers suggested how the children also preferred these visits over social visits. This supports previous findings from research undertaken with children of prisoners in the UK.<sup>26</sup> As one Grandmother, Annette, explains, her five year old Grandson always hoped for their visit to be one of the 'special' ones because he knew that this would enable him to play with his mum.

*He loves it 'cause mummy can get up and play, oh yeah he loves it. He asks every time we visit 'is it one of these special days Nanna?' It does make a lot difference that the prisoners getting up with their children and can go and play with them instead of just sat*

*there with the child, it makes a big difference (Annette, grandmother caregiver)*

There was an overriding agreement that family days provided a special and unique time for families to connect and were, therefore, precious to the families in this study. However, because the family days were organised and executed within the prison, the families also identified some issues with them. These are revealed in the themes below.

### **Considering family circumstances: 'Are we there yet?'**

Family visits often take place in the morning. Considering we know that many families live on average 60 miles from the prison this meant that

caregivers had to get children up, dressed and ready early in the day to make their lengthy journey to the prison. As Terry explains, ensuring his grandson was at the prison for 9 o'clock start involved getting up several hours beforehand.

*We found it was not fair on our grandson, having to get him up 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning to get ready and get up there to be there for 9 o'clock (Terry, grandfather caregiver)*

There was an overriding agreement that family days provided a special and unique time for families to connect...

The travelling distance was further compounded when family days were held in the week, rather than on a weekend. Usually when the family visits took place on weekdays, this was during school holidays though, on occasion, they ran during term time. This sometimes happened because visiting children lived several miles away from the prison—and in another county with a different term timetable—their school holidays did not necessarily coincide. As one Grandmother, Shelia, explains, travelling through the morning rush hour to get to the prison's family day at 9 o'clock on a Friday, was stressful.

*If we go early on a Saturday morning it's not too bad because we can do it in about an hour and 15 minutes, because there's nobody going to work or using the motorway at that time on a Saturday morning, but they've changed the family days recently to a Friday*

25. See 11 also.

26. Please note: as this study did not directly engage with the children in these families, the thoughts and feelings expressed by the mothers' and caregivers were not corroborated by the children. See also 16 (Sharratt and Cheung).

*and that has been a nightmare because you've still got people going to work and you're queuing up in traffic jams and that and you've got my Grandson in the back [of the car saying] 'How much longer? How much longer? Are we there yet?'* (Shelia, grandmother caregiver)

This is not the first occasion when the 'time' of prison visits has received criticism. Social visits which take place mid-afternoon can clash with school times—making it more difficult for children to visit their parent in prison.<sup>27</sup> In a similar way, the findings from this study highlight the importance of taking into consideration the needs and circumstances of the families hoping to make the most out of family days. Thus, the first recommendation from this study proposes that prisons acknowledge the long distances families travel to the prison when making plans for the time and date of the family days. On a practical level, this would improve the accessibility of family days, and remove some of the logistical stresses and strains for caregivers.

### **Prioritising family life: 'It's not enough time'**

There can be several hundred women housed in a prison, but each family day can only accommodate a certain number of mothers and children. As we know, family days are highly valued by families; making them popular and, sometimes, also over-subscribed. However, the mothers (and hence the caregivers) were not told whether they had secured a place on an upcoming family day until a few days beforehand. As staff put a lot of time and effort into co-ordinating the family visit in and around the prison, there may be very good reason for the delay in this communication. However, for the caregivers, this causes issues for preparing for the visits in advance.

*They tell my daughter say on the Monday and the family day might be on the Wednesday but for me to get time off work, it's not enough time so she said 'just book it anyway Mum, in case I do get it'* (Janice, grandmother caregiver)

Janice's extract shows just how important participation on the family day was; as despite not knowing whether a place had been secured, her daughter encouraged her to book the time off work 'just in case'. However, she also explains how the late notice of a secured place did not give her much opportunity to book time off from work, to make sure she could take her grandchildren to see their mum.

In addition to organising this journey around other commitments (e.g. work), this late notice also created challenges for families both logistically (e.g. having access to a car or booking train travel), and financially (e.g. affording the travel costs). As Carly explains, families also spend a lot of time and money planning a visit, especially when travelling from afar, as with her family who were travelling 200 miles from rural Wales.

*Because they're coming from so far away, that's why the family day visit is better...but they're not sure what they're doing completely, but I think they're planning to hire a car, and my mum's boyfriend will drive them...but well, we'll just have to see.* (Carly, mother of two)

## Social visits which take place mid-afternoon can clash with school times—making it more difficult for children to visit their parent in prison.

On the day, the prison controls and steers the running of the family visit. This means that the family day is subject to institutional operations, including delays brought about by staff shortages. Claudia recalls the delays she experienced with her nine year old grandson at the last family day they attended. Of particular concern was that the staff delays caused several family members—including young children—to be left waiting in the rain outside the locked visitors centre, getting cold and wet ahead of their visit.

*There was a family day last week and they [the officers] were supposed to be down by quarter past nine [to open the visitors centre], they turned up at quarter to 10 and we were supposed to be in family day for 10 o'clock...it's the waiting and children stood out in the rain...and the kids were soaked, absolutely soaked, it was unbelievable and we only actually got up to the family day at quarter to 11, it were really bad* (Claudia, grandmother caregiver)

27. Barnardo's (2014) Just visiting. Experiences of children visiting prisons. Available from: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/just-visiting.pdf>

Barriers to participation on family visits which are produced by operational delays and procedures within the prison institution, such as those described here, can affect the families overall experience of visiting. Hence, ensuring that families are treated thoughtfully and with respect both before, and during, the family visit is imperative for facilitating quality mother-child contact. These sentiments echo Lord Farmer's review findings<sup>28</sup> which reported that family life can often receive little priority or precedence in the prison setting. Thus, the second recommendation from this study proposes that the needs of families are afforded higher status both in the organisation and delivery stages of the family visit.

### **Prison transfers: 'I was shipped out'**

*The day before my family day I was shipped out. I was devastated...I was looking forward to it, the kids were looking forward to it, and then they shipped me out...there was a big gap before I saw my kids again.*  
(Leanne, mother of two)

Prison transfers can occur with or without consultation with the individual prisoner about their wishes and with little notice. The mothers' accounts indicated that they were generally told about their transfer less than a day before it was scheduled. Although this is necessary of security reasons, in some instances, this meant some mothers were moved shortly before a visit with their children—which subsequently delayed their face-to-face contact. As Leanne explains, she was transferred the day before a family visit which left her devastated because it was a few months before she could arrange for her children to visit again. Yet, this is not the first time that prison transfers have been identified as problematic for family ties.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the third and final recommendation from this study emphasises how prison transfers should take into consideration the maternal and familial needs of imprisoned women, and most importantly, should not be obstructing or hindering family ties.

### **Concluding remarks**

This paper has drawn on the lived experiences and perspectives of imprisoned mothers and caregivers (family and friends) looking after female prisoners' children in England and Wales. Echoing previous research, it is evident how highly valued and appreciated family visits are for these separated family members. The study reported how the nature and format of family visits provided time and space for mothers and children to (re)connect and do 'normal' everyday activities.

Extending prior knowledge, the findings also highlighted some limitations in the current operations of family visits, and recommendations from the study sought to address these inadequacies by proposing that; 1) prisons acknowledge the long distances families travel to the prison when making plans for the time and date of the family days; 2) the needs of families are afforded higher status both in the organisation and delivery stages of the family visit; 3) prison transfers should take into consideration the maternal and familial needs of imprisoned women.

Effectively supporting mother-child relationships will be beneficial to families and wider society both in the short and long term, as in almost all instances, an imprisoned mother will return to her children once her sentence is served. The quality of visits, rather than the existence of visits, has been identified as a key indicator for positive resettlement outcomes,<sup>30</sup> indicating why it is important that family-friendly initiatives, such as family visits, are better supported and available. Indeed, implementing these recommendations has the potential to have a considerable and positive impact the lives and experiences of families.

Of course, if women were appropriately diverted away from custody, then there would be less need to rely on visiting for mother-child contact in the future. However (and for now) failure to take forward the three simple recommendations from this study could unnecessarily hinder quality and meaningful mother-child contact, which is as we know, essential during this period of painful separation, and also for future relationships.

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28. See 15 also.

29. Ibid, and Woolf (1991) An inquiry into Prison Disturbances. Available from: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Woolf%20report.pdf>

30. See 15 also.

# A qualitative study of imprisoned fathers: Separation and the impact on relationships with their children

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## Introduction

In English, the verb 'to father' means to sire and this implies a single act acquiring little effort or commitment.<sup>1</sup> Burgess<sup>2</sup> felt that fathers have long been confused as to their function. When asked about their role they produce such thoughts as protecting, providing and advising, but if asked to outline their actual relationships with their children, these things are rarely mentioned. Instead they prioritise intimacy, tenderness and trust. So, they may traditionally see their role as the protector/provider, but in reality, their relationship is closer and more loving. Lewis and O'Brien<sup>3</sup> mused that the ideal father was viewed as affectionate, emotionally involved and willing to play with the children, but on the other hand he is assigned the breadwinner, and so this can cause tension. In 1951, John Bowlby<sup>4</sup> presented a report highlighting the consequences for social learning and emotional development in young children who experience separation from their mothers. In it he claimed that *'mother love in infancy and childhood is as important for mental health as are vitamins and proteins for physical health'* Davies and Houghton.<sup>5</sup> Many psychologists have also mentioned that this can also apply to children that are separated from their fathers. Initially, Bowlby made scant mention of the father—child relationship, other than the his being viewed as an economic and emotional support to the mother; thus, devaluing the role of

the father. However, he went on to amend his view on this later,<sup>6</sup> in which he suggested that a child can have more than one attachment figure, but there would be an important one and other less important ones. Akerman,<sup>7</sup> conducted research, with the aim of exploring fathers' experiences as primary caregivers. Akerman concluded that some of these fathers had resolved to be better fathers than they had perceived their father's to be. Participants also acknowledged that there were generational differences in a fathers' role now and when they were children. In addition, they felt that there were differences due to their circumstances which enabled them to take a more active role in their child's upbringing. Most the participants reported that *'time was the most important thing my father could have given me.'* Thus, they had spent more time with their children and taken full responsibility in the day-to-day lives of their children. The consequence was that they felt they were extremely close to their children.

There is little research in the UK relating to the impact of separation of fathers and children by imprisonment.<sup>8</sup> Katova cites a study from the USA,<sup>9</sup> which primarily covers practical issues such as patterns of visiting and giving factual information rather than the emotional impact on those involved. Katova notes that the person in prison is also missing important milestones; anniversaries, birthdays, child's first steps, word etc. and explanations must be given to others when they are released. Furthermore, visitors describe

1. Seel R, (1987) *The Uncertain Father, Exploring Modern Fatherhood*. Gateway Books. Bath.
2. Burgess, A. (1997) *Fatherhood Reclaimed, The Making of a Modern Father*. Vermillon.
3. Lewis C., & O'Brien, M (1987). *Reassessing Fatherhood*. Sage.
4. Bowlby J. (1951) *Maternal Care and Child Health*. WHO Geneva.
5. Davies, R. and Houghton, P. (1995) Development over the lifespan, *'The Attachment Process'*. In R. Davies, and P. Houghton (Eds.) *Mastering Psychology*, Second Edition, MacMillan Press LTD, UK, pp. 1-16. (p.6).
6. Bowlby J. (1993) *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*. Routledge.
7. Akerman, G (unpublished) *A Grounded Theory Study of The Dimensions of Fatherhood: Beyond Attachment*. Roehampton Institute. Thesis prepared for BSc. Psychology and Counselling 1998.
8. Katova, A. (2014). Justice and prisoners' families. Howard League What is Justice? Working Papers 5/2014. Retrieved from [https://d19ylpo4aovc7m.cloudfront.net/fileadmin/howard\\_league/user/pdf/Research/What\\_is\\_Justice/HLWP\\_5\\_2014\\_2.pdf](https://d19ylpo4aovc7m.cloudfront.net/fileadmin/howard_league/user/pdf/Research/What_is_Justice/HLWP_5_2014_2.pdf)
9. Merriman, P. (1979). The families of long-term prisoners. *Probation Journal*, 26, 114-120.

how at times they feel they are treated like criminals by the Police and Prison service staff. It stands to reason that the more comfortable those outside feel when visiting a prison, the more likely they would be to do so.

Lösel's<sup>10</sup> study, described as the first of its kind in the UK and Europe, reports half of those in custody have children under the age of eighteen years, and highlights how parental imprisonment can be one of the most critical life events for families. It can disrupt marital and family relationships, result in negative outcomes for children, and aggravate material and social problems. Families with strong ties can also be 'a resource, which is part of the solution'.<sup>11</sup> These relationships help to defend the children involved and assist desistance from further offending. The children involved in the Lösel study reported feeling a profound and challenging sense of loss when their father/step-father was imprisoned; missing day-to-day interactions, for instance the father being there in the morning, or supporting them at sports events. The opportunity to visit their father in a welcoming environment was important but these experiences could also be challenging, both practically and emotionally. Lösel concluded that the predictors consistently linked to positive resettlement outcomes for fathers, mothers and children were: Maintaining a high quality of family relationships; good communication between the father and family during imprisonment including high frequency of contact; there having been intensive involvement of fathers with children before prison; social support from family and friends; participation in family-oriented programmes (when controlled for quality of the parents' relationship); more material resources before imprisonment (i.e., income, employment, accommodation); and less previous involvement of the father with crime and the criminal justice system.

More recently, Woodhall and Kinsella<sup>12</sup> highlighted how prison visiting can be traumatic and anxiety-provoking with the emotional burden of seeing a loved

one within a daunting environment causing stress and worry. They comment that some of those in custody even stop visits because of the 'come-down' they feel after the time spent with those they love.

### Context of the research

HMP Grendon is an adult male category B prison that also holds category C prisoners. Grendon functions as a Democratic Therapeutic Community (DTC). Bennett and Shuker<sup>13</sup> describe the DTC model of change and its effectiveness. In brief there is an emphasis on encouraging the residents to take responsibility for their past and current behaviour. The environment is structured to offer the opportunity to residents to understand and overcome their previous difficulties in anti-social attitudes, interpersonal relating, emotional management and coping style.

Akerman<sup>14</sup> explains how the community is the agent of change rather than any one intervention within it. Psychodynamic therapy is undertaken, alongside Core Creative therapies (such as Psychodrama, Art Psychotherapy and music therapy) help this exploration. HMP Grendon houses men who have committed a range of offences, for example, murder, sexualised violence, rape, and violent robbery. Most residents are

serving indeterminate sentences with fewer determinate sentenced residents. In Grendon the residents, who volunteer for therapy, have complex needs, for example, disrupted attachment, various addictions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), arising from previous experiences, including their own offending. Akerman and Geraghty<sup>15</sup> report that the residents in therapy at HMP Grendon at the time of the research 69 percent report having had a significant separation from their primary caregiver. There is an emphasis on social learning, attachment and relationships within the therapeutic community. Included within this, is the men's own families, and

In brief there is an emphasis on encouraging the residents to take responsibility for their past and current behaviour.

10. Lösel, F. (2012). Risk and protective factors in the resettlement of imprisoned fathers with their families. University of Cambridge. Retrieved from [http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/research/fathers\\_in\\_prison/final\\_report.pdf](http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/research/fathers_in_prison/final_report.pdf)
11. Ministry of Justice/Department for Schools, Children and Families (2007). Children of offender's review. London: Ministry of Justice. (p.17).
12. Woodhall, J. & Kinsella, K. (2018). Striving for a 'good' visit: the facilitative role of the prison visitors' centre. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 8, 33-43.
13. Bennett, J., & Shuker, R. (2017). The potential of prison-based democratic therapeutic communities. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 13, 1-6.
14. Akerman, G. (accepted 28.7.16). Communal living as the agent of change. In D. P. Polaschek, A. Day, and C. Hollin (Eds.). *The Wiley International Handbook of Psychology and Corrections*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
15. Akerman, G., & Geraghty, K.A. (2016). An exploration of clients' experiences of group therapy, *Therapeutic Communities: The International Journal of Therapeutic Communities*, 37, 101- 108. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/TC-12-2015-0026>

how they maintain these relationships whilst imprisoned. For most men, families can play a crucial role in providing emotional support, motivation to change and are considered as a protective factor associated with risk management. Grendon places a considerable amount of focus on maintaining family ties and provides the men with special visiting days throughout the year. These include Family Day, which happens on the wing and so enables family members to see the environment in which their loved one lives, have lunch with them and talk in a more relaxed environment and for longer. Children's Days are held in the gym and visits centre, and the men get to spend 6 hours with their families, play and socialise, and eat meals together. Both are set in a relaxed environment with prison officers and therapeutic staff—interacting with the families to assist in breaking down barriers between anti-authority views. This helps foster a sense of openness and transparency.

The prison also facilitates the 'story book dads' scheme through which residents can record a short story of their choice, which is sent to the child for them to listen to and enjoy hearing their fathers' voice. Lösel reported this scheme could be helpful in maintaining family ties.

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of paternal imprisonment on the father. From the findings of this study it is hoped that knowledge and understanding of the needs, experiences or effective responses to fathers and their children during the term of a custodial sentence is gained.

### Method

The research used interviews and focus groups to collect the views of the participants. Information on the study was sent to all wings in HMP Grendon and those who wished to, volunteered to take part. Each interview/focus group lasted between an hour and one and a half hours. The research was conducted in 2017 over a four-week period. A semi-structured interview was used, with questions relating to:

- How they felt about being separated from their children
- The impact separation had on their relationships with their children and on the relationship with the person who was now the primary carer

- What support they received at HMP Grendon, to what extent this met their needs, and what could be done to improve them
- How they saw their role as a Father in custody, how they could support their children and the primary care giver, and what support they received
- The impact their being imprisoned had on their children, how they were told, what input they had on that
- What their own experience had been of their Fathers and whether or not they had a parent in custody

### The Participants

Participants were recruited from all wings at HMP Grendon. Nine men participated, one was interviewed individually and as part of the first group, which included another 6 residents. The third interview was with 2 men. Their ages ranged from 24-51 years, mean = 37 years. Three of the men had fathers who were or had been in prison, two did not know their father. They were all convicted of sexual or violent offences, seven had committed violent offences against their current or previous partners, four in their index offences and three as previous convictions.

### Design

The participants were interviewed individually and in groups to collect rich detailed, first-person accounts of the participants' experience of being fathers who were separated from their child/ren by imprisonment.

### Procedure

A semi-structured interview was used to allow discussion to develop within the theme of the research. The first author undertook the interviews, and is female, so it was thought that having other fathers to discuss the subject with may help participants explore their experiences. The first author conducted the interviews, took notes throughout and recorded them to ensure as much data as possible was captured.

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of paternal imprisonment on the father.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis<sup>16;17;18</sup> was used to analyse the data. Shaw describes IPA as a qualitative method favoured by psychologists due to it seeking to understand meaning in a human experience. During the interviews participants were asked about their lived experience, and how they feel about their position as fathers in prison. The method aims, as much as possible, to 'walk in the shoes' of the participant, and as a researcher every effort will be made to interpret and analyse the information shared, while making sense of their experiences. This dual interpretive process is known as a 'double hermeneutic' is described by Smith and Eatough,<sup>19</sup> 'the double hermeneutic neatly illustrates the dual role of the researcher, in one sense the researcher is like the participant, drawing on the mental faculties they share. At the same time, the researcher is different from the participant, always engaging in second order, sense-making of someone else's experience'. It was thought that by having a group discussion it may evoke a more in-depth exploration of the subject. Two of the authors had devised the idea and so were both researchers and participants. Superordinate and sub themes were then identified through reading the notes and listening to the recorded material again in more detail.

To further help ensure the integrity of the findings an independent researcher was asked to complete the steps detailed above and discussion was had to the identified themes. Further, the two researcher/participants independently went through the anonymised data as above.

### Ethical Considerations

Prior to the research taking place, the participants were informed of the aim of the research and the issues being explored. The importance of 'co-researchers' was considered carefully. It is not deemed ethical for one resident to conduct research on another. However, the ideas grew out of discussion with two residents, and so it is also important for them to be given credit.

The superordinate and sub-themes are exemplified with narrative examples, as space is limited the full information is available from the corresponding author.

**The past, present, and projected future relationships with the child/ren and other family members.** The participants spoke about their relationships with the children when they were born, during their time outside, and since being incarcerated, and hopes and fears for the future (Relationship outside, Relationship now, Thoughts for future). With regards to **relationships outside** some participants did not have close relationships with their child/ren prior to their incarceration.

During  
the interviews  
participants were  
asked about their  
lived experience,  
and how they feel  
about their position  
as fathers in prison.

*[I was] already estranged from family before prison. I only saw her when she was staying with mum or dad. We had a more brother/sister relationships. I wasn't responsible for her. Mum, dad, and her mother protected her. (...) She remembers I chose to go out rather than be with her (P.1).*

*I had a child without wanting a child. At first, I wasn't ready for a child. I fell in love with her when she was born (P. 3).*

*Before I didn't appreciate them. Every time I went to prison I tried to do the right thing got back in touch (P.5.)*

*I saw I wasn't a good dad to my daughter. It wasn't her fault, it was me being selfish (P.8.)*

*Children born while I'm in custody...it's very difficult. Different feelings at different times in sentence. (P.9.).*

*I have periods when I'm out then not out. So, it's confusing for her (P.6).*

*I've not been in my son's life, but he went to university I don't think it would have happened if I'd been around. The bad influence I was (P.4).*

16. Aresti, A., Eatough, V., & 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, 169- 190.

17. Shaw, R. (2010) Embedding reflexivity within experiential qualitative psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 7, 233-243.

18. Smith, J. A., & Eatough, V. (2007). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. In E Lyons & A Coyle (Eds.) *Analysing qualitative data in psychology*. (pp 35-50.) Sage. (p.36).

19. Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. London: Sage.

Others described how they had closer relationships, and this increased the impact when they were separated:

*[While I was] out for 2 years—I did what a dad should do, took her to school etc., now away again, she's lost all that. She's older now. She was used to me being there, now I'm not (P.6)*

*Kids remember the good times—lay on settee and watch TV. Forget holidays, quarrels etc. He remembers the smell of alcohol on me. It gave me a ray of light. I broke the family up, killed his mother, kids remember good times though (P.7).*

They spoke of the ways through which they maintained the **relationships now**. The range of options available, letters, phone calls, visits, emails were used:

*We don't write so much anymore. I'd rather talk to him. Letter less personal I make sure I talk to him at least a couple of times a week. We don't email, we talk a couple of times a week, him and his mother. You can go where you want with talking, easier than letters it's a conversation (P.8).*

*Daily phone calls vital; Phone calls are no longer superficial. She can tell if I've I have slipped back to old ways at times: She can tell when I'm lying now (P.1).*

However, there were times when their child did not want to speak:

*I can hear her iPhone in the background. She tells me, talk to mum, you're wasting your credit. I can't force her back on the phone. Now she usually wants to talk if her mum has told her off (P.6).*

*I haven't seen my daughter for 4 years due to going to prison. It's hard, I'm close to home, my daughter goes to school just down the road, it's terrible (P. 3).*

The men in custody had **thoughts and fears for the future**. The thoughts involved how their dreams of spending time together may not be straightforward.

Some had yet to meet the child or had to reinstate contact:

*I don't want to meet her on a prison visit. I don't want to come out and just walk back into her life (...). She said if I get out of Grendon she will let me have time in a contact centre. I thought at first it was muggy—now I realise it's for the best. She needs to get to know me (P. 3).*

*My little girl was 18 months when I left. Will have to go through the attendance centre for her to get to know me. I've got to think of her. She has to get to know me*

*I went to see son once outside but then I fucked everything up went back to drink and drugs. My fear is doing same thing for daughter as I did to him (P. 4).*

## The men in custody had thoughts and fears for the future.

While others wanted to do every-day activities:

*I want to do normal things like going to cinema. I don't want to make promises I can't keep: Fears for impact on them when I get out (P.1),*

*When I get out I want to be with the twins 24/7 but I know I can't smother them. First thing is you need to be there. I want that relationship with them, not just now, but when they they're 30. Best thing is not to lie. (...) I couldn't just walk out and say, 'daddy's home'. I know it's better for them. I want to meet them, take them shopping before I take them to my house:*

They were aware that they needed to put the needs of the child ahead of their own:

*You have to be responsible and do what's best for them (P.2).*

*I can't get involved in crime again, no more thrill seeking. If I'd started on the ladder of employment at the bottom I would be getting up now. I have to start that way when I go out (P.5.).*

**The relationships with the child's grandparents and extended family** were integral to whether or not they could remain in touch with the children. Those

caring for them outside, and their extended families, had taken on a parental role in their absence, which was appreciated:

*Dad has been a great role-model throughout. It's stabilised her right from birth and while in prison. He's filled that gap. Grandparents play a vital role for dads in prison. (P.1).*

*I haven't seen my daughter for 4 years due to going to prison. She goes to my mums' at weekends she knows her father is in prison. My mum reminds her who I am (P.3).*

*When they are at my mum's I ring them regularly. I put credit on phone and speak to them non-stop (P.5).*

*[Daughter's] mum passed away—[maternal] grandmother got legal custody. I have only met her [Grandmother] twice outside, she knows about me but was willing to give me a chance and she's given me a chance to keep in contact even though she knows my offending, as have the other mothers of children. [Daughter] had never seen me until she was 8, never met me. For 6 years she'd only seen my picture. My brother and sister-in-law saw her, they were part of her life and I wasn't. Because of that contact with them she as all over me when we met. Family had told her so much. She came straight to me, arms round me etc. I thought where has that come from (P. 8).*

There was also a powerful sense of **time passing slowly for the participants and fast for their child/ren**. They spoke of seeing their children grow up, for instance noticing the change in their clothing, how they interacted and how willing they seemed to be to maintain contact:

*Time stagnates here, it flies for them: Ripple effect of offending; She is growing up; used to wear little dresses (P. 1.)*

*I don't want her to grow up—I want to keep here where she is. Time is slipping away nothing I can do. They're growing up, I'm helpless. Can't stop time with them (P.3).*

They spoke of finding it difficult to put pressure on the child to visit, particularly as they grew up:

*I feel it's difficult to ask her to come up—it's hard for her. I don't force her to come, when she was younger she did (...). My daughter*

*was young—but now growing into a woman. I missed her teenage years being in before—now missing it again. She shot up. She's gone through the teenage years. That's one of the hardest things. That's what I've done. Hope to be out just before her 18th. Only out for 3 of 18 years. We are where we are now— but daughter growing up—nearly 14—it's more like talking to a little woman now. for her she doesn't want to be talking to dad on phone—she wants to be on Snapchat, but I've only got myself to blame. (...) She tells me, talk to mum, you're wasting your credit. I can't force her back on the phone. Now she usually wants to talk if her mum has told her off. It's horrible for me. It's part of the process of them growing up—you can't change, you can't press pause (P.6).*

Finally, in terms of relationships, they described their **relationships with their own father** and the impact this had on them. Some had little knowledge of their fathers, while others had fathers (and other family members) in custody. One had a son in custody, fearing that his son had been emulating his actions.

*[I have a] son in prison: I didn't meet my own dad: I'm an even worse father than him: Crime was son's way of bonding with me: It's a vulnerability when the parent is away they take on the identity they think they should have: Son is in for similar crimes. He didn't stand half a chance to stay out (P. 2).*

They considered whether having a father in custody had impacted on them. Some had visited their father in prison, and this had not been a negative experience:

*I grew up visiting jail—it was a badge of honour. Thought when I got out it'd be like when dad get out—it wasn't (P.4).*

*[I]Identify with the criminal. Biological mother was in prison in the short time we were together. My birth father was in prison. Adoptive father in prison (P.5).*

While others had not visited but their imprisonment had a negative impact:

*I didn't visit prisons—I was aware my dad and uncle were in prison, but I was living in a children's home. I didn't have that experience. Kids say, 'dad's away doing this'—It's embarrassing for us, for them it's like a badge*

of honour. You are a product of your environment. I grew up everyone was a thief.—It's what you show them (P.6).

All the feelings I went through as I child, my dad wasn't there and then I wasn't there (P.8).

**The impact of offences and imprisonment on the relationship.** While some participants had committed offences which impacted directly on their children, for others the separation was more important. In addition to the pain of separation, the participants spoke of the dilemma of explaining to children where they were and why.

*I feel like I've failed her. She asks—you said you wouldn't do it again, you're never going to disappear again. I said no definitely not. It upset me to see her here. Coming to prison pressed the regret button: How many years I missed out on. I can't be there day to day to help: Fears she may get into crime (...) I didn't think about it when she was a baby. I didn't think much of it, it was how it was. I didn't take on board what I was losing out on. Being out and building the bond, it's hit me harder this time. I appreciate what I'm losing. Regret the relationship I had but it gives me the motivation to be a better person. I've made mistakes—can't undo it. It's about learning from it. Now I want to value daughter's love and that lifestyle (P.6).*

*If you loved your children, you wouldn't do these things (...) It broke my heart she knew it all I was embarrassed: She was too young to know that. I didn't put her under pressure to tell me where she heard. She dealt with it in such an adult way when she was so young. I felt so ashamed. That feeling you get in your stomach that you are not there (P.2)*

*I'm here and can't do anything for them. It's hard not being there for your children when you're in custody. You can write and phone but not be there. I can't be there to soothe them*

**How the child/ren were told** where they were and why had a major impact, some participants felt powerless to influence this:

How the child/ren were told where they were and why had a major impact, some participants felt powerless to influence this.

*I didn't have a chance to tell, her mum did—even the extreme of the violence—it's shameful—degrading as a man. I thought she was too young to be told. She's a young innocent child—didn't want her to know I'm in prison for stamping over someone's head. but don't want her to resent her mum either if she didn't tell her the truth it's my fault (P.3).*

*I had to tell her what I'd done. The details were on front page of newspaper, I had to sit her down and tell her I had to go back to prison. It was one of the hardest things I've done. She was there when I handed myself in. I don't know if she was too young, but I talked to her like an adult. I try to not hide things from her. Not hide things. I don't know if she was too young—it was emotional—not seen me outside since. With the internet, they will find it all out. Got to be hard to sit and tell them (P.6).*

They discussed the **child's response to being told:**

*My daughters asked them why I beat up grandma. I said I was a selfish drunkard junkie. I gave them the cheater's version, then they Googled me. It's something they've always got over me—goes back to not being able to discipline them—can only advise them (P.6).*

*[My]son doesn't understand, and I can't explain [why pleaded guilty]. His life had been revolving around me coming to prison. He needed to have his own life...it would help him in the long run if he didn't visit me every weekend (...) [They are] affected by the press/social media even at a young age. They don't understand. [I had] concern of social media and them finding out about me that way. Hard to know what to tell the children about the offence-if they will find out if they want to ask questions how and when to tell them, age related (P.8).*

*We avoid talking about my offence. [I have] concern for when she finds out about it (P.1).*

The participants discussed **where the child/ren thought they were.** The way they were told and

what they were told was balanced between their ability to deal with their own feelings of shame/guilt at their actions, and the child being old enough to understand.

*I used to say I worked for the queen. That's why there's the signs (...) It's important for them to keep knowing who you are: They need to learn from a young age who you are: I'm not a figure of their imagination (P.2).*

*She knows I'm in prison she knows why. At first, I resented her mum for that. She was right though to tell her where I was (P.3).*

*[I was] not telling them where I was—She lived close by and told her friend her dad looks after the princess there and they told her it was a prison. That's how she found out. I should have told her the truth (P.4).*

They spoke of the **impact on the child/ren**, who appeared to have a lot of unresolved anger:

*[My] child was bullied; Daughter needed counselling; She takes it out on her mum (P.1).*

*My kids can be spiteful when they are fighting. I got them to listen. Maybe they're craving input from father (...)  
[I was] banged up since she was 2. I was banged up for 16 years, Served 9 years (P.6).*

In the case of a father who killed his partner he spoke of the profound impact this had on his children, how they expressed these feelings and how he felt about the future:

*A lot of the anger is there, son in a special school. He had lots of anger—chasing people with knives—he wanted me to be on the end of that. I'm not there for him to show his anger to. I Feel I've betrayed him. There's no way to challenge it (...) I thought of myself as a good dad, I worked, had a home. But one day my kids woke up and I'd taken everything—They went through the ultimate they lost mother and father. They went to sleep, and everything was taken. Any little fuck up from me now would send them running. If in and out you rebuild but if I mess up again that will be it*

*because of the seriousness of what I've done (...) [I] murdered my partner—as my children were in the house at the time I was put on level 3[risk assessment of risk to children]. [I was] no direct risk to children. I understand the psychological damage—they have lost father and mother. (...) I'm not just in jail, I've taken their mum away (P.7).*

While others described how their children had not seen this negative aspect of their behaviour:

*My kids never saw that side of me. They can't understand why I'm in prison and can't come home. It would be easy for me to fall into the trap of not taking responsibility. Their dad is not the person who committed that offence. Why can't I come home and be dad? (P.9).*

*They think I abandoned them: I've never done anything wrong to the children. I've just come to prison. My children are victims too: No wonder their behaviour got worse at school. You think they don't know but they overhear conversations. Imagine them going to bed after they heard that: My son would get into fights then hide*

*under the table and cry (P.2)*

They reflected on **things they have missed**.

*Birthdays and Christmas are difficult (P.1).*

*I can't go to school plays, Christmas, birthday, cheer-leading competition. When I was out before my life was dedicated to her and her mum. Took her to cheerleading, gymnastics, when I finished work, weekends together all the time, we had quality time together. Not to have it now, she feels lost she hasn't got that (P.6).*

*All the school runs, trips, after school classes, they want their mum and dad there (P.7).*

*First day at school, birthdays, children's days at schools, everything you can't physically be there to attend. just when they feel sad, or down, you can't give them a hug. You can't physically be there (P.9).*

My kids never saw  
that side of me.  
They can't  
understand why I'm  
in prison and can't  
come home.

*It's important not to forget the past. I remember that I miss plays. Not there to support other things (P.2).*

*Miss the intimacy-teaching him to drive; a hug and a kiss (p.8).*

They summarised their **general feelings**, mainly of regret and guilt and how being in prison had stunted the experience and expression of emotions. This seemed to have been a protective mechanism for them, but the relationship with their child had somehow cut through this defence:

*[I am] cut off from feelings: Prison made me shut down emotions. Now thinking about it [daughter being told where he was] I was so detached it didn't affect me. Maybe inside it hurt me, but the environment of prison made me shut down (...) I feel like I abandoned my child. I feel guilt I let her down: I feel physically homesick (P.1)*

*It took a while to sink in... the enormity of the situation...everything I was responsible for (...) Feeling lost. Feeling I had let him down. It hurt from day 1(P.8).*

*I feel guilty for causing emotional trauma-it's my fault (P. 2).*

*I have guilt/shame, everything, missing first everything I caused that by going out and getting pissed and being violent: I hate myself for putting her through this (P.3).*

*If I dwell on it. I can get upset. I make sure it's the last time. I have broken the cycle. My parents etc. were in prison. I have to not go back to drugs. Worst time I felt guilty and helpless—I'm a tree surgeon—she fell out of a tree. I felt sick that I couldn't be there. She shattered her wrist. She'd really hurt herself (P.5).*

*Embarrassing, I put myself in this position away from her. Regret—If Skype was around years ago, if I'd stayed out of prison I wouldn't have lost contact with daughter (P.6)*

The participants spoke of **Feeling deskilled as a father** as they were not with them on a regular basis to

offer an opinion as to their upbringing. They wanted to take a fathers' role in the relationship, by for instance, chastising the child, but this was difficult when they saw them infrequently. They also felt they were not in a position to tell the child off, having done that they had done;

*I support them by phone: I offer support and guidance: We agree on rules together (...) If I tell her off I'm a hypocrite; I can't take the moral high-ground: 'you can't talk dad' (P.1).*

*I can't discipline him: Hard to be a parent from prison: On visits, I let children get away with things: I can't take role of friend instead of parent: Need to be there to support them (P.2).*

*As a father in prison you make mistakes. You say the wrong thing and you can't reach out*

*We have to change our relationships (P.8).*

However, they recognised the need for boundaries:

*You have a responsibility to them. Say something if they slip. If I had said something said to me when I was younger I wouldn't be sat here now. I have to start slowly like I should have done when I was younger. Children do veer away from parents naturally to peers (P.5).*

*I set the punishment on the phone and missus follows it through. So, she's not the bad person. I feel the impact of not being able to tell her. Missus [has] been with daughter all her life but she tells me things she won't tell her mum. I tell her I have to tell her mum- I don't attack her when she's done something wrong—dad will go mental—I tell her how I feel. 'You've annoyed me'. Wife says why don't you tell her? I said she won't tell me again. I say you know you have to be punished I ask her what she thinks is a worthy punishment (P.6).*

*What right do I have to voice my opinion-I could have a solid opinion outside if I was always there. I want to say yes to make up for not being there...guilt kicks in. I'm not the*

parent who has been there I feel worse if I have to say no. (P.9).

This linked with **co-parenting** and how they made every effort to make joint decisions:

*We agree on rules together; Play one parent off against the other: I don't go against the mum; I find it hard to support her mother enough she is tired looking after her alone. We have 3-way conversations (P.1).*

*We make sure partner is not the bad one who says no. It's not how I would have done it if I'd been there. The dynamics change. We just dip in and out. I'm not part of the life—on outskirts looking in. Dynamics of the family totally change. Balance between what I'm doing here and family time. I'd split up with [son's]mum but good relationships. Still like a family—she's my best friend. We talk and discuss things, treat like a family. She and son understand we'll never be a family again don't know what the long term is, but will all help each other through it makes it easier (P.8).*

*Relationship is fractured but not unfixable (P.2).*

Further, their **relationship with the child's mother** had an impact, alongside the fact they were trying to maintain a relationship with the mother:

*[One] [Mother plays games. I appreciate my missus—I've been away for most of her life. For 14 years of my daughter's life I've been away 10 of them. First 9 years came up once a fortnight, got that bond. She visited all over the country. Our relationship with partner is on pause. Somehow that relationship is established enough to pause whereas the one with child is more fragile (P.6).*

*I'm lucky that females involved give me a chance to be involved but with that comes guilt (P.9).*

*Children are used as a weapon: The longer between seeing them the less likely it is authorities will encourage contact (P.2).*

*She feels left out in my relationship with her mother (P.1.)*

The **Benefits of being in therapy at HMP Grendon** arose out of the discussion. They spoke of the impact of being in therapy generally, in that they received support throughout their time at Grendon. They also spoke of the therapy having developed their ability to feel and express emotions.

*I can talk to men here about problems: Therapy visits help relationships with adults: If I hadn't come here I wouldn't have faced up to this, matured and built this relationship. When I first came to Grendon I started contact with [daughter. I asked mum if there was any chance of talking to her on the phone. I wanted to because of talking about families in the groups. I spoke about her on [assessment unit] and this made me realise and think about things a lot. Before Grendon I didn't think of anything. I missed my daughter and family but shut it off. Mum sent me photo early in sentence. I ripped them up. I couldn't face it. Access to phones all day—don't get in other prisons—lucky to have 5 mins. Letters—2 OLs [free letters] a week, emails (25p). Pin phone rates are good—better than before. 3 x Children's days a year. One of the biggest supports is the men here. I can talk about problems in relationships, don't have to just shut it off (P.1).*

*Understand myself better at Grendon: We get to explore relationships from the other perspective: If I hadn't come here I would have sent someone round: Self-awareness is so under-rated. We are privileged here (P.2).*

The additional opportunity for a Therapy Visit, which is facilitated by staff and involves the opportunity to discuss particular difficulties was deemed useful, but how this could be experienced by his son was considered:

*I've had offers from officers and [wing therapist] to have a therapy visit. They know it will be hard to have that first visit. For me that's great, but son it's the time first time he has seen his dad, that will be hard enough he's gone from a child to an adult. I worry*

## The Benefits of being in therapy at HMP Grendon arose out of the discussion.

*how comfortable he will be with a stranger, I've known staff 2 years. It's hard enough for him without the staff in and questions (P.7).*

Further, the increased understanding of their self in the role of father had been beneficial, along with the chance to talk to other residents and staff about the emotions evoked by visits and phone calls.

*If I hadn't come to Grendon I could have carried that on [not taking responsibility]. If I hadn't come here I'd have lied to myself, said I was a good father, but I wasn't. It's the best relationship I've had with them. In another prison in my experience no one to talk to. Good or bad mood. In other establishments cons don't want to know, staff don't want to know. You can't talk to someone if you come back from a bad visit or phone call maybe they can link in maybe they can't, but they listen. You can talk to people, be receptive to what they say. In Grendon it's relaxed. So many men together who don't speak about emotions—can't deal with their feelings, you crowd them all together. They just bottle things up, macho bullshit. put all those people together, such an unhealthy environment. How could they show emotions, break down and cry? do that in that environment. Here you can talk about everything going on for you. It would be like showing weakness in front of wolves. Here you're encouraged. You've tried in group and not found a way. In another prison if you have a difficult phone call you have no one to talk to (P.9).*

Participants spoke of the **quality and range of visits** available and how this helped their relationship:

*Childrens' days and quality of visits helped relationship (P.1).*

*Grendon visits best I've had, officers are friendly most relaxed ever. She likes the relaxed atmosphere. If there is something I know is going to be difficult, staff arranged it, so we were more away from others. Put to one side given time and space. Could relax (P.6).*

*It's the best relationship I've had with them. Throughout the prison estate you could not*

*have a better time anywhere. I am trying to make up for what I didn't do when they were younger. Kids know I'm in prison but not like another prison. The searching, the way family interact with staff. In other prisons, they are static. You can't move or play with kids. Here you can have a child sit on your lap, buy a drink, walk about. It's great to build relationship, a bond just the visits, especially with younger kids. It's so important to have that time with the kids. If you only have those visits like in other establishments, kids can't relax around you. This environment is best for your kids. It's so important to have that time with your kids. If you have a long time in prison and the visits in another environment is the only time you have you can't build the bond. If you're just the guy who writes or at the end of the phone and that is your experience of visits. When you're there with them if they can't relax around you it's very difficult to bond with your kids. I've seen the difference. Difficult to interact with your child. You can talk on the phone but when actually there if the kids can't relax around you, you can't have the bond. I saw the difference with my family. They can relax, don't feel like they're being watched obviously, they are being watched but staff are respectful. Staff bend over backwards for your visits. [visits are] number 1 priority. Other places it's security (P.9).*

This environment is best for your kids. It's so important to have that time with your kids.

Some suggestions for improvements to visits were made:

*Talks would be useful on Childrens' Days to inform them about Grendon (P.1).*

*Skype would be great to call from the comfort of their home: Restrictions should be explained before going on visits (P.2).*

Some offences (for instance if a child had been in the house at the time of the event, even if not present) have an impact on how visits can be conducted, and this had caused distress to the participants who had not had this explained to them prior to the visit. They spoke of the shame felt when they were told they had to sit in a particular place in visits, or could not go outside into the garden.

*I was told I was not allowed round children, I freaked out- while I was in the garden. I wanted to hit the Kanga [Officer]. I should have been told that before the visit (P.4).*

The need to have this explained prior to going on the visit was emphasised. Further improvements suggested included:

*[The ability to help with] homework would be great here. Great idea. I'm sure staff would be receptive to that if they could facilitate it. There's little I could say to improve it. Also, if you could have Skype calls, having the opportunity to see them (P.9).*

*A therapy-assisted visit would be useful. If you have a therapy- assisted visit family could have a phone call afterwards to support them (P.6).*

## Discussion

The results illustrate the complexity of the relationships between the imprisoned father and their child/ren. The many facets, such as how they related to their child prior to the offences, their current relationship and how this changed over time had a major impact. The participants spoke of watching their child grow up, and sometimes more distant, and how this emphasised the time passing. It felt to the participants that time was passing slowly, while their children were growing up without them, which had been experienced by the children in Lösel's study. Consideration was given to how the offence impacted on the child, and how they were told, which had been out of the control of some of those who participated. This highlighted how those caring for the children outside had to make decisions, (some of which those in custody agreed with and some they didn't), and then they had to work through the outcome. The conflict between telling the child where they were and how that may impact on them; as opposed to not telling them and the effect this may have on their relationship was difficult to process. The existence of social media also had an impact, as increasingly younger age children had access to information on their father which was in the public domain. Further thought could be given to those who are having to make these decisions, often while they are traumatised by the impact of the father being imprisoned, and how they can be supported. As Lösel had highlighted the importance of the relationship with the child's mother and other family members, were integral. Some of the participants considered that while the relationships with adults were more robust and established enough, those with the child were more fragile.

Like Woodhall and Kinsella reported, the visits had made the time in custody more bearable, but also evoked powerful emotions. The participants commented how the environment at Grendon enabled them to express these feelings openly, in contrast to other establishments, where this could be viewed as a weakness. This had provided a buffer to the 'come down' mentioned by Woodhall and Kinsella. The importance of the visits was emphasised throughout, and linking to Katova and Lösel's view the participants emphasised how the staff being more relaxed with the visitors had a major impact of the experience for the children in particular. This helped the development of a closer relationship. The findings support those of Katova and Lösel, from the father's point of view, thus triangulating the data. The participants' suggested ways through which the relationships could be maintained and improved. These included the use of more accessible services such as video visits, which could mean that the father could lift the burden from the primary carer through, for instance, helping with homework, or not having to make the long journey to the prison. The additional visits, such as Childrens' Days and Family Days, and therapy visits were valued, and suggestions such as talks being given to children to explain the regime could be implicated. This may relieve some anxieties the children may have as to how the father is cared for. It may also be supportive for the children who visit to have the opportunity to talk to each other about their experiences, helping them feel less isolated. The discretion of the staff to seat residents in a slightly more secluded area if they knew they had a sensitive subject to discuss was appreciated, and could be more widely used when it is apparent. This too may facilitate a closer relationship with the visitor, who may feel relieved having discussed the issue.

Having an independent psychologist analysing the data helped ensure that the researchers were not over-involved or biased. IPA allows for being creative, as in this case of enabling participants to be co-researchers, while thought is given to them in each position.

## Future areas of research to consider

This research has highlighted the complexities of the relationships father/child relationship while separated from them. Generally, they had reflected on their attachment to their child/ren and some expressed regret for the quality of the relationship prior to their imprisonment and what they had missed out on because of, and since being, incarcerated. Future research could collect data from children in this position and ascertain what they feel and what they think would help maintain and develop the ties so important for them. Further the use of technology such as video calls could be implemented, and its use researched.

# Prisoner HIV Peer Educators as Wounded Healers:

When You Take the Woman out of Prison,  
You Don't Need to Take 'Prison' Out of the Woman

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## Introduction

**Former prisoners change their criminal trajectory by coming to terms with their criminal past and making plans for a law abiding future. Maruna's study,<sup>1</sup> which distinguishes between criminal *desisters* and *persisters*, finds that in order for the formerly incarcerated to maintain the process of desistance or what he terms *making good*, they need to be able to find a higher purpose in life, whilst subsequently making sense out of their life histories. Many desisters express a strong desire to provide assistance and support to other prisoners as a way of *giving back*. By helping others, they are able to reform their past, recreate their self-identities, and finally accomplish a certain level of success. This concept of the *wounded healer* describes the offender's two identities: the old criminal identity and the new law abiding identity.<sup>2</sup> The offender does not have to be ashamed of his/her past; he/she utilizes it as a tool to help others. It becomes a way to establish a positive future, to 'leave a positive legacy'.<sup>3</sup> This new way of looking at one's self provides fresh insight into one's past and allows one to turn something *bad* into something *good*, thereby, aiding the process of criminal desistance. 'Essentially, the desisting ex-offender has found a meaning in his or her otherwise shame filled past'.<sup>4</sup> Working in the field of HIV/AIDS within the prison system and/or on release can allow prisoner peers to also *give back* to others and help them establish a higher purpose in life. In essence, they become a *wounded healer* and adopt a new identity that does not ignore their past but rather embraces it.**

Academics and practitioners express concern that prisoners often learn how to become better criminals whilst incarcerated<sup>5</sup> and that the trauma of incarceration begets negative effects and hinders rehabilitative efforts.<sup>6</sup> If this is true, upon release, inmates are removed from prison but the negative experience of prison is not removed from them. Yet, those who adopt the *wounded healer* role may be insulated from these lingering effects. The prison experience becomes a vital element in the narrative, used as a tool to serve others, in addition to being utilised as a tool to meet their own rehabilitative needs. In order to determine the effect of serving in a *helping role* while incarcerated, interview data was collected from 49 female prisoners who worked in two HIV prison-based peer programs during their incarceration. This notion of *giving back* begins behind the walls, and for many of them, it continued outside of the walls, providing them with a sense of purpose upon release. The true rehabilitative effect of this type of vocational programme may not only be attributed to the marketable job skills it can provide, but to the higher purpose it allows prisoners to obtain. Providing prisoners with the opportunity for purpose can assist authorities in mitigating the negative effects of incarceration and improving post-release outcomes.

## Literature Review

### *Mutual Aid—Peer Help*

The notion of prisoners being trained to help other prisoners in their recovery began in 1955 with Donald Cressey, who advocated for the enlistment and education of former prisoners to aid rehabilitation for current prisoners. In a process he termed *retroflexive*

1. Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How exconvicts reform and reclaim their lives*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
2. Lofland, J. (1969). *Deviance and Identity*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Nouwen, H. (1972). *The wounded healer*. New York: Doubleday.
3. See Footnote 1: Maruna, p.104.
4. Ibid, p.105.
5. Sommers, I., Baskin, D., & Fagan, J. (1994). Getting out of the life: Crime desistance by female street offenders. *Deviant Behavior*, 15 (2), 125-149.
6. LPSSC - The Lifers Public Safety Steering Committee of the State Correctional institution at Graterford, Pennsylvania. (2004). Ending the culture of street crime. *The Prison Journal*, 84 (4), 485-685.

reformation, the former prisoner closely identifies with those he/she is trying to help:

*In attempting to reform others, the [prisoner/probationer] almost automatically accepts the relevant common purpose of the group, identifies himself closely with other persons engaging in reformation, and assigns status on the basis of anti-criminal behavior.*<sup>7</sup>

Giving support and receiving support is key to learning from one another during this *mutual aid* process, which can be essential to prisoner recovery and rehabilitation,<sup>8</sup> helping to replace one's criminal status with a more conventional status.<sup>9</sup> During this transformation, prisoners can use their shame to assist others, rather than become paralyzed by it.<sup>10</sup> Helping others can be extremely therapeutic because it increases levels of self-esteem, encourages higher rates of engagement in pro-social activities, and provides for strong conventional attachments, particularly for incarcerated women;<sup>11</sup> in essence, it positively influences levels of 'recidivism and psychological well-being'.<sup>12</sup> The deviant identity is in a way, professionalised, and not abandoned.<sup>13</sup>

*Mutual aid* or peer mentoring is successfully utilised in many venues, including, but not limited to, education programs in schools and community groups<sup>14</sup> and programs promoting disease prevention/education.<sup>15</sup> They are also effective in helping those with mental disorders;<sup>16</sup> and assisting soldiers returning from war.<sup>17</sup> The same positive results are found with prison-based peer education programs, especially the ability to increase knowledge, provide conventional support, enhance self-esteem, and

advance behaviour modification.<sup>18</sup> Peers can positively impact the newly released since released prisoners, particularly women, feel more comfortable receiving support from others who are formerly incarcerated; it gives them 'a sense of belonging'.<sup>19</sup>

### **Promoting Remorse, Feeling Worthy and Enacting Identity Transformation**

In addition to identifying with their clients, *wounded healers* can incite feelings of remorse in those they are helping by sharing their own narrative. Stimulating guilt is a mechanism that can be used to further desistance when helping others (i.e., I used to do that but look at me now) and in themselves (i.e., I will never be you again).<sup>20</sup>

*....to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves. As such, they need to account for and understand their criminal pasts (why they did what they did) and they also need to understand why they are not 'like that anymore.'*<sup>21</sup>

The prisoner's worth in this process is validated by their past experiences,<sup>22</sup> which, in this case, can be complimentary to that of a trained counselor without such experience. Past deviance is used to develop a new career. Formerly incarcerated women may not have a professional degree but their training in the streets, coupled with their desire to change and their yearning to help others, is their makeshift diploma.

It is difficult to leave prison and re-enter society with the 'ex-con' stigma but a new career trajectory is important in mitigating its impact on the formerly

7. Cressey, D. R. (1965). Social psychological foundations for using criminals in the rehabilitation of criminals. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 2, 49– 59 (p119).
8. White, W. L., Boyle, M., & Loveland, D. (2004). Recovery from addiction and recovery from mental illness: Shared and contrasting lessons. In *Recovery and Mental Ollness: Consumer Visions and Research Paradigms* (ed. Ralph, R., & Corrigan, P.), Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 233-258.
9. Brown, D. J. (1991). The Professional Ex-: An Alternative for Exiting the Deviant Career. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 32, (2), 219-230.
10. Maruna, S., & LeBel, T. P. (2009). Strengths-based approaches to reentry: Extra mileage toward reintegration and destigmatization. *Japanese Journal of Sociological Criminology*, 34, 59-80.
11. Heidemann, G., Cederbaum, J. A., Martinez, S., & LeBel, T. P. (2016). Wounded healers: How formerly incarcerated women help themselves by helping others. *Punishment & Society*, 18 (1), 3–26.
12. Bellamy, C. D., Rowe, M., Benedict, P., & Davidson, L. (2012). Giving back and getting something back: The role of mutual-aid groups for individuals in recovery from incarceration, addiction, and mental illness. *Journal of Groups in Addiction & Recovery*, 7, 223–236.
13. See Footnote 9: Brown.
14. Devilly, G. J., Sorbello, L., Eccleston, L., & Ward, T. (2005). Prison based peer education schemes. *Aggression and Violent behavior*, 10, 219-240.
15. Ramchard, R., Xenakis, L., Geoffrey, G., Apaydin, E., Raaen, L. (2017). A systemtic review of peer-supported interventions for health promotion and disease prevention. *Preventative Medicine*, 101, 156- 170.
16. Clay, S. (2005). *On our own together: Peer programs for people with mental illness*. Vanderbilt University press: TN.
17. Greden, J. F., Valenstein, M., Spinier, J., Blow, A., Gorman, L.A., & Dalack, G.W. ( 2010). Buddy-to-buddy, a citizen soldier peer support program to counteract stigma, PTSD, depression and suicide. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1208, 90-97.
18. Collica-cox. (2007). The Prevalence of HIV Peer Programming in American Prisons: An opportunity wasted. *Journal of Correctional Healthcare*, 13 (4), 278-288.
19. Eaton, M. (1993). *Women after Prison*. Pennsylvania: Open University Press.
20. See Footnote 7: Cressey.
21. See Footnote 1: Maruna, p.7.
22. Humphreys, K. (2004). *Circles of recovery: Self-help organizations for addictions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

incarcerated,<sup>23</sup> especially in how they are perceived by others. In a study conducted with NYS prisoners by LeBel,<sup>24</sup> *wounded healers* had higher levels of self-esteem, were more satisfied with their life, and had lower rates of recidivism/predicted recidivism than other types of prisoners. These prisoners often perceived fewer stigmas and were engaged in more pro-social activities when compared to those in *non-helping careers*.<sup>25</sup> A factor often differentiating persisters from desisters is their indifference to helping others.<sup>26</sup> By helping others, desisters are able to reform their past, recreate their self-identities, and accomplish a certain level of success; they find a higher purpose that supersedes their need to engage in crime.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, desisters believe they have some sense of control over their futures that include a *missionary* life purpose. The belief is that past acts led them to this new path. To the contrary, persisters believe their chances for future success are low. The desister, however, is a new person—'What he is now is what, after all, he was all along'.<sup>28</sup>

A factor often differentiating persisters from desisters is their indifference to helping others.

### **Prison Programmes and Finding Purpose**

The process of identity transformation can begin when prisoners are regularly engaged in prison-based programmes designed to promote and support conventional behaviour. Reduced maladaptive behavior while incarcerated, reduced recidivism upon release, and increased involvement in other pro-social activities, are three vital factors intrinsic to this new conventional identity.<sup>29</sup> Prison programmes can aid in accomplishing these goals but they vary in their effectiveness, depending on whether they can address the prisoner's individualised level of need.<sup>30</sup> Effective programmes incorporate the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model,

which holds that the level of rehabilitative intervention should be based upon the risk level of the prisoner; the higher the reoffending risk, the higher the required level of intervention.<sup>31</sup> Not all programmes will serve as a rehabilitative tool for every prisoner; resources are used most effectively when the express service matches the express need of the prisoner.<sup>32</sup> Prisoners often have limited job skills and inconsistent work histories.<sup>33</sup> Programmes that can target deficient job skills and provide prisoners, particularly women prisoners who have the added burden of caring for children upon release, with marketable job skills, creates a viable way for them to support their families, and thus, provides them with a higher chance for reintegration. The adoption of a new pro-social identity and a new career path are keys elements of this desistance process,<sup>34</sup> both which can be furthered through effective prison-based programmes. Since women may lack supportive networks (which is necessary for successful desistance to occur) and employment skills (more than men), prison-based programmes can increase opportunities for institutional and

post release success by targeting these issues.<sup>35</sup> Jobs that prisoners have while they are incarcerated are often geared toward maintaining the day-to-day operations of the facility (e.g. cleaners). These jobs are necessary to maintain facility operations but have limited utility in the outside world. In order for women prisoners to be successful on release, they need to possess job skills that will allow them to be financially independent:

*Women offenders are often involved in co-dependent relationships that stimulate their criminal activities. Skills are important for*

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23. Aresti, A., Eatough, V., & 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.
24. LeBel, T. P. (2005). An examination of formerly incarcerated persons' desire for a career as a 'wounded healer' or 'professional ex'. Paper presented at the 57th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Toronto.
25. LeBel, T. P., Richie, M., & Maruna, S. (2015). Helping others as a response to reconcile a criminal past the role of the wounded healer in prisoner reentry programs. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 42 (1), 108-120.
26. Ibid.
27. See Footnote 1: Maruna.
28. Ibid, p10.
29. Gaes, G., Flanagan, T., Motiuk, L. & Stewart, L. (1999). Adult correction treatment. *Prisons* (ed by Tonry, M. & Petersilis, J). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
30. See Andrews, D. & Dowden, C. (2007). The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model of Assessment and Human Service in Prevention and Corrections: Crime-Prevention Jurisprudence. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 49 (4), 439-464.
31. Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation. Public Safety Canada. Retrieved from: [https://cpoc.memberclicks.net/assets/Realignment/risk\\_need\\_2007-06\\_e.pdf](https://cpoc.memberclicks.net/assets/Realignment/risk_need_2007-06_e.pdf)
32. See Footnote 30: Andrews & Dowden.
33. Flower, S. M. (2010). *Employment and female offenders: An update of the empirical research*. US Department of Justice/National Institute of Corrections: Washington DC.
34. See Footnote 23: Aresti et. al.
35. See Footnote 31: Bonta & Andrews.

women so that they also gain social independence, thus removing them from co-dependent relationships and other circumstances that contribute to their criminal lifestyles.<sup>36</sup>

Possessing job skills is the first step on the path to desistance, but more importantly, prisoners must find a career that is open to ex-prisoners, which is no easy task. Stigma limits employment opportunities and increases ostracism.<sup>37</sup> Yet, one opportunity open to ex-prisoners is the field of HIV/AIDS. Many community-based organisations, particularly in the New York City area, that receive funding to provide HIV related services, have hired ex-prisoners to provide outreach, case management, and educational and supportive services to their clients, most of whom are also recently released from prison or jail. In these positions, a criminal past serves as an asset, not a liability. HIV prison-based peer programming provides a great opportunity to give serving prisoners the skills they need to obtain entry-level positions in the field of public health upon release. For many prisoners, this may be the beginning of a successful career or at least an initial way for them to support themselves financially, while subsequently providing them with a higher purpose.

## Data and Methods

### Peer Education Programs—ACE and CARE

This study, based on the narratives of 49 female prisoners, examines the potential for prisoners to adopt a new identity while working in the two HIV prison-based peer programs in NYS: The ACE (AIDS, Counseling and Education) Program located at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF) and the CARE (Counseling, AIDS, Resource and Education) Program located at Taconic Correctional Facility (TCF). BHCF is the only maximum-security prison for women in NYS, holding approximately 800 prisoners, and TCF, located across the street from BHCF, is a medium-security facility for women in NYS, holding approximately 400 prisoners. Since TCF is a medium-security facility, many women at BHCF, who worked for ACE, will also work for CARE when they are transferred to TCF as their security status decreases. ACE/CARE civilians work in both facilities. Both programs were created in the late 1980s to deal with the AIDS epidemic in female prisons and provide a variety of services to prisoners such

as support groups, education, crisis counseling, HIV testing, discharge planning, etc. ACE educates over 3,000 women annually and CARE educates approximately 600 women annually. The programmes comprise five civilians when fully staffed: a CARE Coordinator, an ACE Coordinator, an HIV Test Counselor, an HIV Discharge Planner, and an Upstate Supervisor. The number of prisoner peers varies (anywhere from 4 to 9). Prisoners in this sample worked for ACE/CARE for an average of 4 years, ranging from 6 months to 13 years. Prisoners are trained to provide counseling, educational work-shops, and facilitate support groups. In addition, they have permission to work with specialised prison groups such as the nursery mothers.

Prospective peer workers must have or be working toward their GED (high school equivalent certificate). All are required to submit a CV, successfully complete the HIV professional training series (offered by CARE/ACE), undergo two interviews (one by the programme coordinator and one by other prisoner peers), and teach a demonstration lesson. Prospective workers must have a good discipline record during the months preceding employment. Prisoners with poor records are encouraged to maintain good behavior for a few months before reapplying. Indiscipline, once hired, is grounds for dismissal.

Prisoners are trained to provide counseling, educational work-shops, and facilitate support groups.

### Study Sample

The sample for this study included: (a) women incarcerated in BHCF and TCF who were currently working as peer educators for ACE or CARE, (b) women incarcerated in one of NYS' five female facilities who previously worked as peer educators for ACE/CARE or both programs, and (c) formerly incarcerated women living in the community who, during their incarceration, worked for ACE, CARE, or both programmes. The author collected data from the prisoners over a seven-month period, yielding a sample of 49 women (a response rate of 86 per cent based on the 57 women identified for the study). Participation was voluntary (no incentives were allowed) and all interviews were conducted in private. Forty-nine percent of the study group were released from custody (n=24) and 51 per cent of the women were in custody (n=25)<sup>i</sup>.

The concept of HIV peer educators as *wounded healers* was not hypothesised at the study's onset but was a theme that emerged as the women discussed their life stories. In order to maintain the confidentiality of subjects, women were asked to choose their own pseudonyms,

36. Koons, B., Burrow, J., Morash, M., & Bynum, T. (1997). Expert and offender perceptions of program elements linked to successful outcomes for incarcerated women. *Crime and Delinquency*, 43 (4), 512-532; p.528.

37. See Footnote 1: Maruna.

which served as a unique identifier to describe a part of their personality. On average (of all 49 subjects), interviews took approximately one hour and fifteen minutes to complete (range of 105 and a standard deviation of 25.15). The shortest interview lasted 35 minutes, while the longest interview lasted 140 minutes. The questionnaire, which reflected their experiences as peers, was divided into five parts: *demographics, disciplinary (institutional and post release) institutional/post release experiences, experiences regarding ACE/CARE, and goals and expectations.*

### **Qualitative Interview and Analysis**

Many questions required open-ended responses and yielded in-depth answers. The author examined common themes in answers generated by respondents, using a framework analysis, managing data by case and theme.<sup>38</sup>

Data coding and analysis connected theoretical assertions with inductive concepts.<sup>39</sup>

Thematic analysis is fluid and can accommodate different theoretical frameworks; it is suitable for identifying themes that present multiple times within a data set.<sup>40</sup>

Based on preliminary observations of the data, a codebook was developed, providing definitions for concepts; identifying themes emerged and succeeding concepts categorised. Coding was a continuous process. In this study, thematic analysis was used to

identify concepts aligned with the 'wounded healer' such as, serving as a role model, mentoring others, achieving purpose, sharing past experiences, changing perception, and desiring a 'helping' career.<sup>41</sup> To examine maladaptive behaviour, respondents were asked to self-report disciplinary infractions. In order to determine whether a behaviour change occurred, respondents were asked to report on the total number of disciplinary offences they received prior to and during the time they were employed with ACE/CARE. The author was unable to obtain permission to view the participants' prison discipline record and relied solely upon self-report data. Released respondents were asked to report parole violations or any commission of new crimes, even those not 'caught' by parole officers. All responses were recorded in writing by the author (tape recording was prohibited) and transcribed later that day. Categorisation of responses and themes continued during transcription.

Released respondents were asked to report parole violations or any commission of new crimes, even those not 'caught' by parole officers.

### **Demographics**

Demographics of the sample differed slightly from the average NYS female prisoner where whites tended to be over-represented (33 per cent compared to a 22 per cent rate among the study population), and the age of participants tended to be four years older (40 years old compared to an average of 36 years old among the study population). Almost half of the women (43 per cent; n=21) were unemployed prior to imprisonment. Over half (65 per cent; n=32) of the sample stated that they earned less than \$10,000 per year, prior to their arrest, 59 per cent (n=29) stated that they had children, and most women (73 per cent; n=36) resided with a family member prior to imprisonment. Forty-nine percent (n=24) of the women reported sexual abuse and 45 per cent (n=22) reported a history of physical abuse.

Seventy-one percent (n=35) of the women had a history of drug use/misuse and 41 per cent (n=20) exchanged sex in order to obtain drugs. Fifty-seven percent (n=28) reported that this was not their first offense. For releases, 33 per cent lived alone when they returned home and for incarcerated respondents, less than half (48 per cent) believed they could reside with a family member/partner: 24 per cent hoped they could obtain placement in transitional housing, 16 per cent planned to live alone, and 12 per cent did not know

where they would live. Subjects were involved in other programmes while incarcerated, with 86 per cent of subjects reporting involvement in an educational program, 12 per cent in a religious programme, and 19 per cent involved with other prison-based programmes, in addition to their work with ACE/CARE. It is important to note that most of the women were not HIV positive; only 14 per cent (n=7) were diagnosed with HIV.

### **Research Findings**

#### **The Role Model**

The *wounded healer* theme emerged as the women spoke about why they wanted to work as an HIV peer educator while incarcerated. These women were invested in *giving back* and really found purpose in their HIV educator/counselor role. Interestingly, this was not an easy position to maintain because prison behaviour was

38. Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company. Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. London: Sage.

39. Layder, D. (1998). *Sociological Practice: Linking Theory and Social Research*. London: Sage.

40. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.

41. LeBel, T. P. (2007). An examination of the impact of formerly incarcerated persons helping others. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 46, 1–24.

always under review. If engaged in behaviour unbecoming of a peer, they knew they could be removed from the programme. They also knew their behaviour was monitored more carefully and peer workers felt this sense of heightened responsibility. Participants preferred this work, despite the heightened level of visibility, which proved to be emotionally rewarding. It was preferable to working in a job with less scrutiny but also generated little reward; it was viewed as an honour, not a burden:

*It was a privilege to work for the CARE Program and they expected more from you because you worked for CARE. You were supposed to act in a certain way at all times. You were supposed to be a role model at all times. (Free/CARE)*

*...when I took this job I took it with the understanding that I would not have a disciplinary record and if I received one, she [the civilian supervisor] would have lost an educator. (Kate/ACE)*

Similar to the above narratives, the notion of being a role model, was mentioned explicitly by 10 participants, even though there were no interview questions that specifically asked. This unexpected, yet, recurring theme was related to the *Wounded Healer* identity:

*We were looked at as role models to others, to everybody. (Mary/ACE)*

*...we were seen as someone to look up to, a role model.' (Sky/CARE)*

As a role model, there were very high expectations placed on them by their peer workers, where 92 per cent (n=45) said their peers expected their work to be excellent/good, and by their civilian supervisors, where 96 per cent (n=47) said their supervisor expected their work to be excellent/good. All of the women (100 per cent; n=49) evaluated their own work as excellent/good and all the women said their supervisor evaluated their work as excellent/good.

In order to maintain their identity as a role model, ACE/CARE peers could not incur disciplinary infractions, which would result in immediate dismissal. Reduced maladaptive behavior during incarceration is the first

factor related to the adoption of a new conventional identity.<sup>42</sup> In looking at the effect that ACE/CARE had on rates of disciplinary infractions among participants, more than one-half of participants (51 per cent; n=25) had a decrease in the number of infringements they received after joining ACE/CARE. On average, the women had received 5.17 infringements prior to working for ACE/CARE (.59 tier ones, 4.10 tier twos, .52 tier three) (tier ones are the least serious and tier threes are the most serious) and they only received, on average, 1 infringement (.95) during the time they worked for ACE/CARE (.19 tier ones, .70 tier twos, .10 tier threes)<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Mentoring**

In addition to being a role model, the women believed part of their role was to mentor other women. This is another component of the *Wounded Healer* identity and a theme that emerged through the narratives. Although the women were not explicitly asked about serving as a mentor, they discussed being a mentor, providing guidance/counseling services to other prisoners:

*ACE was really my first job and it provided me with many of the skills I use today, like counseling, mentoring, and making presentations. It gave me a sense of community and how a group of women, working together, can make a difference. (Power/ACE and CARE)*

*The younger members often came to me for guidance. (Shyone/ACE).*

*It was common to get phone calls on the unit for someone who was having an emotional crisis. We would even get phone calls for women that weren't HIV positive. The officers would call for us to counsel other women before they would even make that call to (mental health). The women asked for us, they respected us and they knew that we would keep everything confidential. (Purposed/ACE)*

### **The Purpose**

Wounded healers need a purpose, a higher calling (i.e., secondary desistance).<sup>43</sup> When asked why they decided to work for ACE/CARE, the majority stated that

These women were invested in giving back and really found purpose in their HIV educator/counselor role.

42. See Footnote 29: Gaes et. al.

43. Maruna, S. and Farrall, S. (2004) Desistance from crime: A theoretical reformulation. *Kvlnner Zeitschrift fur Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 43, 171–94.

they 'wanted to help others' (43 per cent; n=21). The remaining participants discussed ways in which they were able to 'give back' to the community through their work with ACE/CARE; they became involved because they wanted to educate inmates and learn more about HIV infection (39 per cent; n=19), they had a loved one who died of AIDS-related complications (14 per cent; n=7), or they wanted to lessen the stigma associated with being HIV positive (4 per cent; n=2):

*... I went to CARE because this is what I do. It's fulfilling for me. It gives me the chance to be there for somebody else. I can give them a shoulder to cry on. Some people just can't accept their status but I can be there with them to help them cope. (Hopeful/ACE and CARE)*

Involvement in pro-social activity is the second factor intrinsic to a new conventional identity<sup>44</sup> and tasks performed in their roles within ACE/CARE are duties characteristic of the *wounded healer*. Most respondents stated that their main responsibility was education and counseling (90 per cent; n=44), eight percent worked exclusively in IPC (in-patient care) taking care of other women that were too ill to leave the facility hospital (i.e., hospice) (n=4), and one woman (4 per cent) stated that she worked exclusively as an administrative assistant to the ACE supervisor. Their dedication to helping others was unambiguous, even if it meant putting their own health in jeopardy:

*I worked mostly with the women in IPC...No one else wanted to go in there to help these women. No one wanted to breathe the same air. I was young and I didn't take shit from anyone. I couldn't believe that people could be so cruel and so mean. It was all based on ignorance. What were they going to do? Just leave her in there? The medical staff didn't want to be bothered. They came in dressed up in all sorts of crazy gear like masks and gloves which scared us more. I put myself at risk a lot of times by helping people who were positive. I didn't think about it. If I saw someone hurting and bleeding, I would pick them up and worry about the consequences later. (Yasmeen/ACE)*

These women really wanted to make a difference, especially upon release:

*It, (working as a peer), has made me more compassionate. I want to do all in my power to help those that are HIV positive and I feel the need to educate those who are not positive to*

*help stop the spread of infection. (Big Sis/ACE and CARE)*

*When I left prison, I never turned my back on AIDS. ACE made me more committed to what I do today and to the services I provide for PWAs (persons with AIDS). I realized that it could have been me and that these women were being rejected like they were some sort of animal. They should not have been punished again because they had an illness. (W21/ACE)*

One released worker credited all of her employment success to her work in ACE:

*The two jobs I had out here (after release) were in HIV. ACE was a stepping stone to something real, something concrete out here. (Ice/ACE)*

All participants stated that ACE/CARE was a positive experience for them (n=49) - the 49 includes women from both programs. For some, a sense of community developed:

*When I became involved with ACE, I began to understand what a community is all about...I developed social skills, a sense of community,*

*and I began to understand we could all make a difference, each one of us. (Shyone/ACE)*

It gave their life meaning or purpose:

*Because of the way it makes you feel about yourself. It gives your life meaning in here. There are people who live on the outside who have never touched as many lives as we did through ACE. (Purposed/ACE)*

*It gives me a chance to give something back, just knowing that I am making a difference, just being there for someone so they are not alone. It doesn't matter whether they need to cry or to vent, they know that they don't have to do it alone. (Hopeful/ACE and CARE)*

### **Transforming and Sharing Their Past: Perception is Key**

An important element of these programmes that emerged was that respondents could be themselves; they could transform shame to pride:

## These women really wanted to make a difference, especially upon release

44. See Footnote 29: Gaes et. al.

*The majority of women were looking for a place where they would not be judged. I did not want to be judged either, so it went hand-in-hand. It was a place that we could all gather without having to worry that others were judging us (Smarty/ACE)*

This was the time that they could use their past to connect with others and further their new identities. They could take pride in their current role and be proud of the 'new woman' or the woman they were 'meant to be':

*They (staff) were proud of me and I felt proud of me... I grew up in there and I am proud of all I accomplished... there is no shame to my game. I have a wealth of knowledge from my experiences of living in prison. (W21/ACE)*

Rose (ACE), one of the few peers who was HIV positive, spoke about why it was important to share her story:

*I think it is important for a person who is positive to have another positive person try to reach them. Other positive people will hear you better. Others need to hear my story because it will give them strength... [In a presentation I made in reception] I said that people can stigmatize me because I am HIV positive, but words do not validate who I am. She [an inmate] came up to me afterwards and said that my story gave her strength and she was able to disclose her status and state that she was positive. People are so afraid of being stigmatized and they feel shame and guilt.*

Importantly, these women did not worry about being judged by the civilian staff:

*I was never judged. They always laughed with me, shared with me, listened to me, and wow, it meant the world to me that that could happen in prison. (Blondie/CARE)*

*I was treated like a human being instead of a number (referring to the CARE civilians). I was not judged on what I did. The civilian staff treated us like real people. (Shak/CARE)*

*I feel comfortable enough to talk them [civilian staff] about anything and I know I*

*won't be judged and I won't be looked down upon. (Tyler/ACE)*

*...No one ever judged me or treated me like I was convicted felon... (Autumn/ACE)*

The women had no regrets in choosing to pursue this line of work. Their commitment was evidenced by the fact that 78 per cent of participants (n=38) believed their time in prison would have been different if they had not worked for ACE/CARE (12 per cent or n=6 said it would not have been different; 10 per cent or n= 5 were not sure):

*I wouldn't have felt needed, like I was making a difference. I would have had too much extra time on my hands and my time would have went much slower. (DM/CARE)*

This transformation seemed apparent throughout many of the women's narratives:

*I don't think I would have changed as much as a person, I wouldn't have grown as much. I would still be in the same place as when I came in. (Volcano/ACE)*

I came here with a  
victim mentality  
and when you give  
back, it helps to  
empower you

*I did a lot of growing in ACE. The women who worked there were positive role models and their input and their dedication impacted me. I came here with a victim mentality and when you give back, it helps to empower you, it helps you to heal and to not feel so weak and powerless. By helping someone else, you are not only affecting their life, you are affecting your own as well. (Purposed/ACE)*

*Everyday there was a reason to get up and go and stay out of trouble. I felt useful. ACE gave me that. (Nicolette, ACE/CARE)*

Six women did not believe ACE/CARE impacted their experience while incarcerated either because they were never troublemakers or, if they did not work in ACE/CARE, they would have tried to be involved with another program:

*I don't think so because I was never in trouble. (Poison/CARE)*

*Not really because they still had other programs I could have been involved in. (Mary/ACE)*

## **Wounded Healer and The Perception of Transforming**

One's identity is affected and reinforced by perception. As a result of their work in these programmes, these women were perceived differently from other prisoners. Their positions as educators/counselors lessened the stigma associated with their incarceration, even during imprisonment. When asked if they thought other prisoners, because of their work in ACE/CARE, perceived them differently, 94 per cent (n=46) said 'yes,' four per cent (n=2) said they did not know if they were perceived differently, and two per cent (n=1) said that they were not perceived differently. Seventy-one per cent (n=35) of subjects believed they were viewed as more knowledgeable, more trustworthy, and more supportive, than other prisoners. They also felt that other prisoners viewed them as role models:

*Yes, they felt that we were doing something that they couldn't do. They made us feel that it was important for us to run support groups and to go to the units to give them information. (Poison/CARE)*

*'When they saw me, they would say she works for ACE. She does the workshops. You can talk to her, you can trust her. Many of the women have trust issues but they felt safe talking to us.' (Blissful/ACE)*

It appeared that the perceptions of both prisoner population and prison staff had an effect on how the women perceived themselves. These positive perceptions gave the workers confidence, made them feel as if they were making a positive difference in the lives of others, and encouraged them to continue this approach. When asked if they believed they were perceived differently than other inmates by prison staff because of their work in ACE/CARE, 74 per cent (n=36) stated 'yes,' 12 per cent (n=6) said that they were not sure if they were perceived differently, and 14 per cent (n=7) stated that they did not think that they were perceived differently than other prisoners or it depended on the staff person. Over one-half of the sample (53 per cent; n=26) thought that they were perceived as more dependable, more educated, more respected or trustworthier than other prisoners. They also felt they were perceived as role models:

*I was treated with more respect. The COs looked at me more like I was on their level rather than just some inmate. (DM/CARE)*

*Yes because we are allowed to work and go to certain areas that were not open to all of*

*population. We were looked at as role-models for others. (Scarlet/ACE)*

*Yes, I was perceived as someone who was serious and doing something meaningful. I was always respected. (Shak/CARE)*

## **Wounded Healers Upon Release**

The commitment to their new identity would continue upon release. For incarcerated subjects (n=25), most (72 per cent; n=18) planned on working in the field of HIV upon release, 16 per cent (n=4) were unsure, and 12 per cent (n=3) stated that they would not want to work in this field upon release. Those who did not want to work in this field stated that they wished to pursue other interests or that they found the work to be too stressful. Those that wanted to pursue a career in this field gave reasons like, they 'loved' the work, it was where their 'heart' was, or they 'enjoyed' what they were doing in the facility and wanted the opportunity to continue the same type of work upon release:

*I want to be an HIV counselor. Working in ACE, being in groups, and meeting other people has made me want to help other people who are in denial like I was. (Ten/ACE)*

*...it is something that I really enjoy doing and I believe that God has a purpose for me...*

*God has put me in the path of certain people so I can help them. (Freckle/ACE)*

For the three women who decided to change professions on release, it was primarily because they were 'burnt out' and wanted to do something different:

*I want to do something that is not mentally or physically challenging. Before I wanted to work in the field when I was released but I have done this work for a long time. I want to sit on a beach for 6 months and then I want to work in my uncle's casino. That's it. (Volcano/ACE)*

Post discharge (n=24), 88 per cent (n=21) worked in an HIV-related position, particularly within the first six months of release. At the time of the interview, 75 per cent (n=18) were still employed in an HIV-related position post release:

*When I came home I worked in a work release center for men for about a year until I went to [name of organization]. I started as an HIV counselor, then program coordinator,*

manager of reentry services, and now I am the director of reentry services. (Power/ACE and CARE)

Most of the women (90 per cent) believed that working in ACE/CARE helped them or would help them to successfully make the transition from prison to the community. Sixty-three percent of participants stated that the transition was or would be easier because of the knowledge they gained and the skills they acquired. Many believed it would help them or has helped them to obtain employment positions that they would not have otherwise attained. Some stated that the skills they learned would be useful in *all* employment and personal settings.

The ability to reintegrate successfully appears related to the work experience as *wounded healers*. Most were able to obtain employment after release; although non-for-profit jobs do not pay particularly well, they earned enough money to support themselves and to help support their families. In examining the rate of post-release success, most were employed at the time of the interview (21 out of 25 women). Seventy-two percent (n=18) of the women worked for community based organizations providing social services such as HIV related services, mental health services, or substance abuse services. On average, they had been living in the community for five years (median=4 years; mode=10 years) since their release from prison, ranging from 1- 15 years. Out of the 25 released women, only one was re-arrested . Nonetheless, her transgression was quite minor (i.e., trespassing) and she was not re-called. Two were recalled for a parole violation (i.e., leaving the jurisdiction) but were re-released. The recidivism rate for this sample was stated to be 12 per cent.

### Discussion

ACE/CARE provided prisoners with a higher purpose in life, it helped them to reframe their narrative (from lawbreaker to helper) and it enabled them to adopt the role of the *wounded healer or professional ex*, (a prosocial identity or secondary desistance),<sup>45</sup> all of which led to the maintenance of a conventional lifestyle. They were able

to use their work in ACE/CARE to bring together their two identities; the old criminal identity and the new law abiding identity.<sup>46</sup> These women did not have to be ashamed of their past because they were able to utilise it as a tool to help others. By doing so, they subsequently helped themselves. Even after release, while working in the HIV field, their criminal past was viewed as an asset. This new way of looking at one's self provided new insight into their past and allowed them to turn something bad into something *good*, thereby, aiding desistance. Subjects demonstrated that they met the criteria needed for successful adoption of a conventional identity.<sup>47</sup> First, women engaged in very little maladaptive behavior while incarcerated, which is characteristic of primary desistance. Maruna and Farrall<sup>48</sup> distinguish between primary and secondary desistance, whereas primary desistance is related to a change in *behaviour*, secondary desistance is related to a change in one's *identity*. For desistance to be successful, an identity shift must occur. This initial change in behaviour is not sufficient to successfully maintain a crime-free lifestyle but is a required first step toward achieving that goal. The women in this sample incurred few disciplinary infractions and they knew the expectations of their behavior and performance was high, which appeared to motivate them.

Secondly, subjects were involved in prosocial activity as a *wounded healer*. A large number of women believed working as a peer educator gave them a higher purpose in life (a calling) and it impacted how they were perceived by others, which is characteristic of secondary desistance. Initially they were known by their criminal identity, after several months, they become known by their 'helper identity'. They adopt this role as their primary label or master status and once others accept the label, it helps to reaffirm their connection as a member of this unique, conventional group.<sup>49</sup> Labelling's foundation is based on the theory of *symbolic interactionism*, which began in 1902 when Cooley<sup>50</sup> developed the idea of the *looking glass self*. His theory claimed that our understanding of ourselves is principally a reflection of our perceptions of how others react to us. Mead elaborated on Cooley's theory by focusing his attention on the interaction between

The ability to reintegrate successfully appears related to the work experience as *wounded healers*.

45. See Footnote 1: Maruna.

46. See Footnote 2: Lofland; Nouwen.

47. See Footnote 29: Gaes et. al.

48. See Footnote 43: Maruna & Farrall.

49. Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders*. The Free Press: New York.

50. Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human Nature and The Social Order*. Transaction Books: New Brunswick.

the emerging self and the perceptions of others' reactions to that self.<sup>51</sup> According to Mead, the most important aspect of our socialisation lies in our ability to anticipate what others expect from us and to behave according to those expectations. As stated above, the expectations placed upon each peer by their coworkers and by their supervisor were quite high; they also had high expectations of their own work. As we become older, we learn to internalise the expectations of the larger society; we evaluate ourselves, and construct our own self-concepts, based on others' perceptions of us and/or on the labels that they assign to us.<sup>52</sup> As a result of their work in these programmes, these women were perceived differently from the rest of the prisoner population, this made them view themselves differently.

Participants had a low rate of recidivism (12 per cent), compared to national rates for female discharged prisoners (39.4 per cent),<sup>53</sup> and for female prisoners in NYS at 31 per cent.<sup>54</sup> The true rehabilitative effect of this type of vocational programming may not only be attributed to the marketable job skills it can provide prisoners, but to the higher purpose it allows them to obtain.

Peer programs like ACE/CARE benefit facilities by providing comprehensive education/counseling services free to the prisoner population and by increasing overall knowledge about HIV and risky behaviors.<sup>55</sup> They serve to be rehabilitative to the offenders who work as in these programs, increasing self-esteem,<sup>56</sup> building supportive communities and networks,<sup>57</sup> reducing disciplinary infractions,<sup>58</sup> reducing recidivism, and promoting viable employment opportunities for females offenders.<sup>59</sup>

## Limitations

There are several limitations to the current study. First, the sample was not random since it was an already established programme within the prison, Second, there was an issue of selection-bias. Third, there was no control group in this study; it was not allowable to have another group of prisoners taken from their regularly scheduled programmes to participate in a comparison group.

## Implications and Future Research

Identity transformation will work most effectively when it occurs years prior to release, which allows the investment in conventionality to gain strength and priority in a prisoner's life. Essentially, it becomes their *master status*.<sup>60</sup> It appears deviation from this identity, once ingrained, will be less likely to occur, despite temptations that exist in the community. ACE/CARE gives women the skills to work in entry-level positions in the field of public health, where the stigma of incarceration can be an asset rather than a liability. These women are experts at working with at-risk populations. The appropriate job skills, coupled with support, provide an incentive to maintain conventional behavior. Future research could examine other roles within the correctional environment that can provide *wounded healer* status for prisoners in order to study the impact on maladaptive behavior, engagement in prosocial activity and levels of recidivism. Prison administrators who are willing to engage in partnerships with community based organizations to help promote opportunities that lend itself to the adoption of a wounded healer identity will help in achieving rehabilitative outcomes.

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51. Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

52. Ibid.

53. Langan, P. & Levin, D. (2002). Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report*. Washington, DC.: US Department of Justice.

54. Staley, M. (2003). *Female Offenders: 2001-2002*. New York State Department of Correctional Services.

55. Collica, K. (2002). Levels of Knowledge and Risk Perceptions about HIV/AIDS Among Female Inmates in New York State: Can Prison-Based HIV Programs Set The Stage for Behavior Change? *The Prison Journal*, 82 (1), 101-123.

56. Collica-Cox, K. (2015). Feeling Positive about HIV: Prison-Based Peer Educators and Self- Esteem. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 66 (1), 21-44.

57. Collica, K. (2010). Surviving Incarceration: HIV Prison-Based Peer Programs Build Communities of Support for Female Offenders. *Deviant Behavior*, 31 (4), 303-313.

58. Collica-Cox, K. (2014). Counting Down: HIV Prison-Based Peer Education Programs and Their Connection to *Reduced Disciplinary Infractions*. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 58 (8), 931-952.

59. Collica, K. (2013). *Female Prisoners, AIDS, and Peer Programs: How Female Offenders Transform Their Lives*. New York & London: Springer Publishing.(60).See Footnote 49: Becker.

i. Due to a reduction in NYS' prison population, two women's prisons closed.

ii. The author worked with the creators of ACE/CARE to devise a list of all women who worked for both programmes. Out of approximately 65 women identified, 49 were interviewed. Women not included were deported, deceased or unable to be located. Hence, 75 per cent of all women who worked for both programs participated in this study. Snowball sampling, though not ideal, was the only way to locate subjects. The prison does not keep records on peer workers.

iii. In conducting a pair samples T test, the associated p value of .537 (comparing tickets incurred before and during work with ACE/CARE) and the associated p value of .839 (comparing tickets incurred during and after work with ACE/CARE) were not statistically significant at the <0.0005 level.

# Evaluating the Efficacy of Core Creative Psychotherapies within Therapeutic Communities at HMP Grendon

*Natalie Herrett is based at Birmingham City University.*

## Introduction

**Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is responsible for the running of the prisons and the rehabilitation services in England and Wales, making sure support is available to deter individuals from offending again.<sup>1</sup>**

Democratic Therapeutic Communities (TCs) can exist in the prison sector and they provide an open living-learning environment for prisoners and staff with residents living close together. Shuker<sup>2</sup> describes TCs as 'prisoners (or residents) taking responsibility in the treatment setting' (p. 464); where everyone is in constant therapy and acts as everyone else's therapist. The prison model for TCs has been adapted to incorporate discipline and control so the notion of democracy is controlled so as not to compromise the authority of the prison.<sup>3</sup> There are principles which characterise democratic-analytic TCs; Democracy regarding decision-making, Permissiveness, in terms of individual and collective tolerance, Communalism, the emphasis of shared facilities and close relationships, and reality confrontation, encouraging regular expression of how each other's behaviour affects them.<sup>4</sup>

HMP Grendon (Grendon) is a category B male prison accommodating 230 men in England and Wales. The prison consists of a series of TCs where the residents are encouraged to work as a team, address their offending behaviour, and understand their previous life experiences better. There is a strict drug-free and violence-free policy and the residents must be committed to rehabilitation. Of the population at Grendon, 50 per cent report self-harm history, 52 per cent have experienced physical abuse, 32 per cent report history of sexual abuse and 69 per cent report loss of or separation from a primary care giver.<sup>5</sup> Residents in the prison participate in Group Therapy within their allocated TC three times a week; within this there is a slow, open group process used and recent and current behaviour is discussed which parallels to their offences and childhood.<sup>6</sup> Due to the emphasis on democracy throughout the prison, every decision which is made must be presented to the community to gain the 'backing' and the support, of all the men. There has been much success in the use of TCs on offending<sup>7,8,9</sup> and low rates of re-conviction.<sup>10</sup>

A proportion of the residents of Grendon also partake in Core Creative Therapies (CCT) which include Art therapy and Psychodrama. These aim to help the

1. HMPPS (2017). Retrieved from [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/668256/HMPPS\\_Business\\_Plan\\_2017\\_to\\_2018.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/668256/HMPPS_Business_Plan_2017_to_2018.pdf)
2. Shuker, R., & Sullivan, E. (Eds.). (2010). Grendon and the emergence of forensic therapeutic communities: Developments in research and practice. *John Wiley & Sons*.
3. Scharf, P. (1980). Democracy and justice in a prison therapeutic community. *Therapeutic Communities in Corrections*. Praeger, New York in: Rawlings, B. (1998). Research on Therapeutic Communities in Prisons. A Review of the Literature. *Unpublished document produced for the Prison Department*.
4. Rapoport, A. (1960). Modification of the Howard test for the detection of renal-artery obstruction. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 263(23), 1159-1165.
5. Akerman, G. & Geraghty, KA (2016). An exploration of clients' experiences of group therapy. *Therapeutic Communities: The International Journal of Therapeutic Communities*, 37 (2), 101-108.
6. Shuker, R. (2010). Forensic therapeutic communities: A critique of treatment model and evidence base. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 49(5), 463-477.
7. Bennett, J. & Shuker, R. (2017). The potential of prison-based democratic therapeutic communities. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 13(1), 19-24.
8. Newberry, M. (2010). A synthesis of outcome research at Grendon therapeutic community prison. *Therapeutic communities*, 31(4), 356-371.
9. Newton, M., & Erikson, M. (2007). Reconviction after treatment in a prison-based therapeutic community. *LA Craig, TA Gannon & L. Dixon (2013), What works in offender rehabilitation: An evidence-based approach to assessment and treatment*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
10. Marshall, P. (1997). A Reconviction Study of HMP Grendon Therapeutic Community, *London Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate*, Research Findings, 53.

men who have trouble accessing traumatic memories verbally by being able to access this creatively and perhaps subconsciously.<sup>11</sup> Art Therapy is a form of Psychotherapy where art materials are used to express and can address confusing and distressing emotional issues.<sup>12</sup> Psychodrama uses guided dramatic action to help with issues and to explore past, present and future life events whilst allowing to see oneself through different perspectives.<sup>13</sup>

11 states that the use of creative therapies is based on the idea that many offenders at Grendon, especially sex offenders, were abused in their childhood either physically, emotionally, or sexually and this plays a significant part in the reason that they offend themselves. Due to the young age that most of the offenders were abused, the men cannot explain or access these memories verbally so creative therapies allow for their traumatising experiences to be retrieved in an alternate way.<sup>14</sup>

### Psychodrama

Psychodrama, originally created by Dr. J. L. Moreno, is based on behavioural responses and focuses on individuals' beliefs about oneself, others, and the world, reviewing their feelings and consequences. Psychodrama is suitable for individuals that are unable to improvise, take roles, or distinguish between their own point of view and someone else's.<sup>15</sup> The physical setting of scenes provoke emotions, feelings, and memories, and other group members are used as auxiliaries to play significant others demonstrating how experiences in childhood can affect how one behaves in adulthood—expressing suppressed and repressed emotions. This aspect helps to understand prisoners' negative projections on the world.

Internal working models of attachment and the expectations of support and affection from relationships

## Many of the men at Grendon suffer from anger issues which contributed to their index offence.

determine whether we see ourselves as worthy to be cared for. These models are dynamic and it is believed that Psychodrama can change these perceptions. It is designed to differentiate the participant's childhood from their offence, the present and the future, and trace the source of their anger. Psychodrama incorporates different exercises including 'chain of offences',<sup>16</sup> where essential moments of the offence are mapped out and analysed by the participants. This helps the participants to recognise the specific parts of the event where they could have acted differently—identifying the reasons for the actions at each point in the chain. This allows the individuals to take responsibility for their actions and solve recurring problems.

However, a recent meta-analysis by<sup>17</sup> found that victim empathy was not as important as originally thought in preventing recidivism and has been described as being more punitive than rehabilitative.<sup>18</sup>

Many of the men at Grendon suffer from anger issues which contributed to their index offence.<sup>19</sup> It has been stated that Psychodrama is aimed at individuals who show aggressive behaviour and the therapy helps to control these through role play and to help them behave

differently through distancing in fictive scene and roles<sup>20</sup> and this has been shown to be successful.<sup>21</sup>

### Art therapy

Art therapy allows the person to creatively express themselves and help to show what they are feeling, their fears, and their emotions, in a way that they may have previously found hard to articulate. In art therapy, using childhood experiences the offender can imagine themselves as both the victim and the offender working through thoughts of this and reflecting them on their artwork. It was speculated that individuals with a lack of

11. Jefferies, J. (2005). Psychodrama: Working through action: 'My thank you is for your concern'. *Group analysis*, 38(3), 371-379.
12. British Association Art Therapy (2017) Retrieved from <http://www.baat.org/About-Art-Therapy>
13. British Psychodrama Association (2017) Retrieved from [http://www.psychodrama.org.uk/what\\_is\\_psychodrama.php](http://www.psychodrama.org.uk/what_is_psychodrama.php)
14. Wylie, B. (2007). Self and social function: Art therapy in a therapeutic community prison. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(4), 324-334.
15. Smeijsters, H., & Cleven, G. (2006). The treatment of aggression using arts therapies in forensic psychiatry: Results of a qualitative inquiry. *The arts in psychotherapy*, 33(1), 37-58.
16. Mulder, J. (1995). The relapse prevention model as a treatment method in a forensic day care clinic. *Journal of Psychotherapy*, 21(2), 71-80.
17. Mann, R. E., Hanson, R. K., & Thornton, D. (2010). Assessing risk for sexual recidivism: Some proposals on the nature of psychologically meaningful risk factors. *Sexual Abuse*, 22(2), 191-217.
18. Barnett, G., & Mann, R. E. (2013). Empathy deficits and sexual offending: A model of obstacles to empathy. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 18, 228-239.
19. Shuker, R. (2010). Forensic therapeutic communities: A critique of treatment model and evidence base. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 49(5), 463-477.
20. Smeijsters, H., & Cleven, G. (2006). The treatment of aggression using arts therapies in forensic psychiatry: Results of a qualitative inquiry. *The arts in psychotherapy*, 33(1), 37-58.
21. Balfour, M. (2003). *The use of drama in the rehabilitation of violent male offenders*.

insight might achieve insight through Art therapy by exploring cognitions, feelings and behaviours, and achieving a less distorted cognition.

Speech, language, and communication difficulties are more prevalent in the prison population<sup>22</sup> than the general population and the majority of prison treatment programs do not take these difficulties into consideration. The ability to show feelings symbolically- like the explosion of a volcano- overcomes the need for verbal expression which can be more difficult.<sup>23</sup> The prevalence of aggression is high in prisons which can cause problems between inmates<sup>24</sup> with figures of 16,195 assaults in prisons in England and Wales in 2014.<sup>25</sup> A qualitative study by<sup>26</sup> found that Art therapy resulted in increased awareness of the participant's own aggression and decreased impulsivity.

Although there are clearly differences in the delivery of Art therapy and Psychodrama, it is important to view them collectively as they are both Core Creative Therapies.

### The current study

The rationale for this study was that there has been no previous experiential research undertaken at HMP Grendon directly measuring the added values of Art therapy and Psychodrama to the whole therapeutic process and the prison requested this study was undergone.

*The research questions for the study were:*

1. *What is the therapeutic progress made by the men in CCTs and how does this help in meeting treatment targets and individual needs and deficits of the men?*
2. *What do the CCTs contribute to men's treatment that other therapies do not?*
3. *Do the CCTs help with progress in the verbal therapies?*
4. *What specific areas of the CCTs helped group members?*
5. *How do the CCTs prepare the men for life outside prison?*

### Participants

A sample of eleven male residents from HMP Grendon partook in this research. The men were living in four different Therapeutic Communities and had completed a Core Creative Therapy, either Art therapy or Psychodrama; five of the men had completed Art therapy and six had completed Psychodrama. Each of the men had participated in the CCT for at least one year; the maximum participation time was three and a half years and the minimum was eighteen months. The men were recruited through an advertisement in their wing announced at their community meeting.

### Design

The study used qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and was analysed using Thematic Analysis where the common and prevalent themes were identified to determine the effectiveness of the therapies. The basis of the semi-structured interview questions consisted of the Treatment Targets<sup>27</sup> identified through previous research at Grendon.<sup>28</sup>

### Results and Discussion

The Thematic Analysis performed on the data identified four overarching themes;

1. Gained Insight.
2. Accessing Subconscious Trauma.
3. Space to be Supported
4. Behavioural Management.

#### Theme 1: Gained Insight

This theme encompassed how the men felt that through Core Creative Therapies they were now able to reflect inwardly regarding how other people viewed them and why they were reacting in a negative way to situations. Furthermore, the men were able to grasp another point of view, increasing their understanding for other's feelings.

22. Bryan, K. (2004). Preliminary study of the prevalence of speech and language difficulties in young offenders. *International journal of language & communication disorders*, 39(3), 391-400.
23. Bennink, J., Gussak, D. E. & Skowran, M. (2003) The role of the art therapist in a Juvenile Justice Setting. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 30(3), 163-173.
24. Watt, B. D., & Howells, K. (1999). Skills training for aggression control: Evaluation of an anger management programme for violent offenders. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 4(2), 285-300.
25. Prison Service Journal (2015). Retrieved from <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20221%20September%202015.pdf>
26. Smeijsters, H., & Cleven, G. (2006). The treatment of aggression using arts therapies in forensic psychiatry: Results of a qualitative inquiry. *The arts in psychotherapy*, 33(1), 37-58.
27. Treatment Targets identified were; Emotion expression/management, Self-management, Understanding childhood, and Offending behaviour.
28. Hall (2016). *Psychodrama and art therapy at HMP Grendon: do pre-therapy assessments contain measurable treatment targets?* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Birmingham City University, Birmingham, England.

## Self-Awareness

Art Therapy and Psychodrama create an alternative medium to talking for partakers to study themselves and their lives. From the interview data, the men appeared to have acquired knowledge about themselves, how they are perceived by others and how they have treated others.

*[Psychodrama helps you to] see yourself through peoples' eyes.*

It seemed that, particularly in Psychodrama, the men were able to witness aspects of their life through a different perspective where they could see their own behaviour. This feature of the therapy seemed to cause the men to evaluate their behaviours due to the aversive feelings they felt towards the actions they had observed.

*[Psychodrama was the] closest thing to a video recording of events.*

The concept of triggers is a stimulant that can offset maladaptive behaviours in this offending context which can take the form negative feelings usually revolving around childhood and adolescence. Triggers were a common theme, especially in Psychodrama, that the men found that they were now able to recognise what causes them to act in an anti-social way, possibly leading to their offense. This is an important skill as the men were not previously aware of these and were now able to avoid situations in the future where they might offend again.

*...recognise that when I feel humiliated, belittled or alienated that I'm higher risk of offending because those are the trigger states from when I was a teenager.*

In an alternate way, the men found they had achieved self-awareness through realising that they deserve better than the criminal life and that they had become a better and stronger person since completing the CCT.

## Understanding feelings

This sub-theme referred to the men feeling that they had connected to their emotions and were better able to better understand, and to order their thoughts

and feelings, which was not previously the case. The men demonstrated that they were aware that if they understood their feelings by understanding why they were feeling how they were, they could control their reactions. This understanding dated back further than the CCT sessions, and through to their lives before prison allowing them to make sense of their past feelings. 'Self-understanding' was identified to be one of the key therapeutic factors which highlighting its importance in the therapeutic progress.<sup>29</sup>

*You have more control on how you react to things if you realise what it is that is affecting you.*

## Gained Perspective

Many of the men discussed how they previously showed no respect for others' feelings and that, after completing a CCT, the men felt that they had more consideration for others' feelings than before. Through Psychodrama especially, the men were able to play the role of their victims, realising the fear they inflicted in them, which helped the men created some victim empathy. Despite recent research finding weak links between victim empathy and recidivism rates, the men found it comforting and enlightening to be able to take responsibility for their victims, aiding their therapeutic progress.

*...able to personalise my victim...adopting his position helped me connect a lot more and realise he didn't deserve it.*

Through practising taking other's perspective and an increase in victim empathy, the CCT's helped the men to achieve the skills to examine situations from another person's point of view.

*Made me realise what my son must've thought when he saw.*

## Theme 2: Access Subconscious Trauma

This theme addresses how the CCT's were able to provide an alternate avenue for the men to access their memories and trauma in a way they had previously not been able to, subsequently dealing with the trauma.

29. Vlastelica, M., Urli, I., & Pavlovi, S. (2001). The assessment of the analytic group treatment efficiency according to Yalom's classification. *Collegium antropologicum*, 25(1), 227-237.

### Accessing Deep Memories

This subtheme refers to how the CCTs allowed the men to access memories and parts of themselves that they had not previously been able to access through verbal therapies, or had been averse to. It was also explained how the men were transported back to memories to be able to explore and discuss these avenues. It was discussed how the men could make sense of the situations that they had experienced either with their offence or childhood which brought them some resolution.

*...access things in my head I hadn't before.*

*...some buried memories I had recovered.*

### Dealing with Trauma

The men described the different ways that the CCTs helped them to deal with their unresolved traumas. This included the freedom to be able to talk about problems that they did not even realise had occurred in childhood and grieve for losses that they never did before prison. The CCTs allowed the men to offload their problems to the group which helped them relieve feelings of guilt that they had held for so many years.

Psychodrama has been found to help resolve painful emotional experiences.<sup>30</sup> Many of the men mentioned how the therapies allowed them to distinguish their abuser from other people and this then allowed them to control their reactions and how they treated other people. This element of CCTs is important due to the link between trauma and offending.<sup>31</sup>

*'It allowed me to grieve for myself'*

Specifically, in art therapy, the power of the image was highlighted regarding how there was no escape from what the men had created. This aspect was different to small groups as there was no way to divert away from their problems and this seemed to help them to directly deal with their problems- even if they did not want to. This gave the men the

opportunity to accept themselves due to being able to sit with the image in front of them.

### Theme 3: Space to be Supported

This theme referred to the element of safety which occurred in the CCTs; the men felt they could show vulnerabilities and express themselves in ways they had not previously done. Specific aspects of the group were highlighted such as the therapists and group members.

### Safe to be Vulnerable

A common theme outlined by the men was the increased sense of security they felt whilst in the CCT group, especially compared to Small Group. The 'deconstruction of the mask' was mentioned by many

of the men and how they felt they were able for the first time in their lives to be vulnerable, liberating themselves of their 'macho' persona. The men were able to break down and cry in front of others, which subsequently improved their involvement in Small Group. Additionally, the men felt that CCTs were a perfect place for shy people who struggle to speak as the safety of the therapy allowed them to be able to voice their opinions and feelings. There has been a link found between

The CCTs allowed the men to offload their problems to the group which helped them relieve feelings of guilt that they had held for so many years.

emotional openness and risk of offending in men,<sup>32</sup> which demonstrates the importance of openness within the therapeutic progress. It seemed that due to the men feeling safer to be vulnerable, they could disclose information and aspects of their lives that they would not discuss with other people.

The space and time that the men felt they had within the CCTs was expressed to be of importance to the men and how they were processing their feelings and their past. The men explained how there were no interruptions within the CCTs, when it was your turn, it was your chance either on stage or presenting or drawing to explore events in your life, or your feelings.

*You have the time to think...not having a lot of questions being thrown around the room.*

30. McVea, C. S., Gow, K., & Lowe, R. (2011). Corrective interpersonal experience in psychodrama group therapy: A comprehensive process analysis of significant therapeutic events. *Psychotherapy Research, 21*(4), 416-429.

31. Macinnes, M., Macpherson, G., Austin, J., & Schwannauer, M. (2016). Examining the effect of childhood trauma on psychological distress, risk of violence and engagement, in forensic mental health. *Psychiatry research, 246*, 314-320.

32. Underhill, J., Wakeling, H. C., Mann, R. E., & Webster, S. D. (2008). Male sexual offenders' emotional openness with men and women. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 35*(9), 1156-1173.

## Self-Expression

The expressive nature of the CCTs seemed to allow the men to talk about their problems more than they had ever done before. The medium of creating an image in Art therapy bypassed the verbal explanations of the men's feelings (that they found difficult to say out loud). The unique use of the image allows the men to work on their treatment targets more than the small Group because they are inspired by the images to further explore their feelings and past experiences.

*The actual picture was bringing more out of me than if I was just sat there talking about it.*

The comparison to reverting to being a child was prominent in Art therapy and the benefits of being free and able to express their feelings and experiences were discussed. Many of the men explained how they did not get the chance to be a child and how Art therapy allowed them to experience that, completing some of their childhood which seemed to aid their therapeutic progress.

## Group Dynamics

The importance of the CCT group was emphasised throughout the interviews. Much praise towards the therapists, especially their honesty, was expressed and how this contributed to the men's progress. Staff involvement and engagement have been endorsed as the fundamental objective of any treatment program which supports the evidence from the interviews.<sup>33</sup>

*Jo just tells you straight...you don't hear what you wanna hear... in the small groups the facilitator sits back a lot more they don't get involved.*

*Susie, she's just so good at what she does and you don't even realise what direction, you go somewhere else which helped me, not direct questions.*

The importance of the interactions of members of the group was emphasised by the men. The sharing of

their experiences and connections they made, were said to have benefited them and their therapeutic progress by helping one another to reach conclusions. Universality, understanding that 'one is not alone' and that others experience the same problems, was one of the highest ranking therapeutic factors,<sup>34</sup> (demonstrating its importance to the therapeutic process).

*...problem shared, problem halved.*

## Theme 4: Behavioural Management

This theme refers to how both CCTs allowed the men to control their behaviour and how they reacted to certain situations; this was helped by understanding the consequences of the men's behaviour.

### Control Reactions/Emotions

A common issue for the men arriving at Grendon is their lack of ability to control their emotions and thus, anger, which can result in negative behaviour and a possible contribution to their crime. For many of the men this is a Treatment Target and the interviews discussed the perceived improvements in the control of their reactions and emotions by acquiring relevant skills. A link has been found

among offenders between the levels of aggression exerted, and the ability to control emotions which demonstrates the importance of this skill.<sup>35</sup>

*I don't fly off the handles as often as I used to. Don't get me wrong I still get angry and that but I can deal with it in an appropriate way now.*

### Consequential Thinking

The concept of consequential thinking refers to the ability to assess choices and anticipate how other people will react in each different scenario. Through completing the CCTs, the men seemed to demonstrate an understanding of how their actions had affected their lives and others around them. The men described how the therapies helped examine each event of their

A common issue for the men arriving at Grendon is their lack of ability to control their emotions...

33. Sheldon, K., & Tennant, A. (2011). Considerations for working with personality-disordered patients. *The British Journal of Forensic Practice*, 13(1), 44-53. ISSN: 1463-6646.

34. Vlastelica, M., Urli, I., & Pavlovi, S. (2001). The assessment of the analytic group treatment efficiency according to Yalom's classification. *Collegium antropologicum*, 25(1), 227-237.

35. Robertson, T., Daffern, M., & Bucks, RS (2014). Maladaptive emotion regulation and aggression in adult offenders. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 20 (10), 933-954.

life in such scrutiny that the ripple effect of their actions was made clear to them by re-enacting parts of the men's lives and practising possible future scenarios. For example; parole board meetings or challenging situations outside of prison. It has been found that teaching 'consequential thinking' can reduce impulsivity, which is a risk factor for many of the men at Grendon.<sup>36</sup>

*...that led onto me realising the consequences for the bigger picture and the implications for my family...even the value of the houses on the street because there was a murder there.*

It seemed that through the newfound 'consequential thinking', the men were able to view their lives in a different way- realising they were in control of what happens to them. Through acknowledging the work that the men had achieved participating in the CCT, they were able to see that there is more to life than being in prison and that, they felt, was enough to stop them from reoffending.

*...what's the point of getting out if I'm gonna go back there.*

### **Limitations**

The research period did not permit recidivism rates to be explored. Furthermore, the retrospective nature of the study may have changed the way the men recalled their experiences. Nevertheless it allowed the experiences of the Core Creative Therapies to be reflected and allowed a long-term view to be captured, especially as each of the men had completed the therapies at different times, some were longer ago than others. It is clear that there is uncertainty regarding whether or not it was solely the Core Creative Therapies alone that were responsible for the benefits of the men? However, the interview questions were focused towards the added benefit of the CCTs to the men's progress at Grendon, which may have reduced the overlap between CCTs and small Group therapy.

Another limitation is that the men might have felt biased to respond positively towards the CCTs explaining the positive results. However, the researcher made it clear that their answers would not affect their reports (or anything to do with them and the prison), and encouraged them to answer as honestly as possible. It should be noted that some of the men raised criticisms of the therapies as well

### **Implications/Future Research**

Despite the presented limitations, this research demonstrated promising outcomes of each CCT and was the first to conduct an experiential study on the effectiveness of CCTs at Grendon. The current study extended previous research regarding Art therapy and Psychodrama and the specific benefits and outcomes of completing these therapies. The implications for this should be increased support for the positive outcomes of participating in CCTs and this will aid funding decisions at Grendon concerning therapies.

For future research, log books have been designed for the CCTs to be distributed to the men in each session, in order to gain insight to the specific day to day features of the therapy that they are enjoying or disliking. This is to ensure that the accounts are not retrospective (in order to gain a more accurate description and reflection of the therapy). The research can be continued using a longitudinal method to incorporate recidivism rates by following the men from the start of their CCT journey to when they leave prison. This will provide a comprehensive idea of the effects of CCTs on individuals and their progress through prison.

### **Conclusion**

With all things considered, the Core Creative Therapies clearly provide added value to the therapeutic progress made by the men in HMP Grendon. These benefits are reflected through the themes of the data which can all be contributing factors to reduce the individual's risk of reoffending by increases in openness, and control of the men's actions. It is clear from the interview data how much the residents at Grendon value, and enjoy, the CCTs and wish for the continuous of them.

36. Ross, RR, & Fabiano, EA (1985). *Time to think: A cognitive model of delinquency prevention and offender rehabilitation*. Institution of Social Sciences & Arts Incorporated.

# What does publicly available research submitted to the Scottish Prison Service Research Access and Ethics Committee (2012-2016), tell us about the distinct nature of Imprisonment in Scotland?

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**The criminal justice system in Scotland is in many ways distinct from criminal justice systems both within the UK and Europe, which is reflected in the institutions, processes and experiences for those whose lives are affected by it.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government which was established in April 1993. Since having been established, a wide range of research has been undertaken on and about the SPS throughout the prison estate that illustrates aspects of the distinct nature of imprisonment in Scotland.**

This distinct context has both been a consequence and has been shaped by multiple factors, including the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (<http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/>). Within this context, this paper identifies and analyses publicly available research, based on primary research undertaken within the Scottish Prison Service Estate between 2012-2016. In order to identify research published during this period, we collated a database of all research proposals submitted to the SPS Research, Access and Ethics Committee (RAEC) between 2012-2016. Using this database as the basis of a literature review that identified 19 papers, this has allowed us to illuminate a number of aspects of

prison research in Scotland between 2012-2016, including the dominance of certain methods and focus on specific prisons. It is hoped that this paper will provide a template for shaping future submissions to the RAEC through highlighting gaps in the existing research base, which will ultimately lead to a deeper engagement between the research community and the SPS.

## **Towards a Distinct Penal Context in Scotland**

The Scottish penal tradition has been shaped by a distinct set of practices and, some would say cultures, underpinned for the past 300 years by its own legal system and set of legal institutions.<sup>2</sup> Recent years have seen the issue of Scottish 'distinctiveness' in criminal justice and penal affairs debated from those arguing it is distinctive and underpinned by a more 'welfarist' approach,<sup>3</sup> and those who argue that differences tend to be overstated, and that any differences that do exist can be explained by different governance structures rather than reflective of a different set of 'values' or 'cultures'.<sup>4</sup> While the arguments around Scottish 'distinctiveness' tend to focus more on community justice and juvenile justice than imprisonment,<sup>5</sup> arguments about imprisonment in Scotland do also

1. Audit Scotland. 2011. *An overview of Scotland's criminal justice system*, Edinburgh, Audit Scotland, Croall, H., Mooney, G. & Munro, M. 2016. *Crime, justice and society in Scotland*, London, Routledge, McIvor, G., Barry, M. & Scotland. Central Research Unit. 2000. *Social work and criminal justice: the longer term impact of supervision*, Edinburgh, CRU, Hutton, N. & Duff, P. 1999. *Criminal justice in Scotland*, Aldershot, Dartmouth, Reid-Howie Associates & Scottish Prison Service. 2002. *Small units within the Scottish Prison Service*, Edinburgh, Scottish Prison Service.
2. McAra, L. 2005. 'Modelling Penal Transformation.' *Punishment and Society* 7(3): 277-302. McVie, S. 2017. *Social Order: Crime and Justice in Scotland*. *The New Sociology of Scotland*. D. McCrone, Sage. Young, P 1997 *Crime and Criminal Justice in Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office.
3. McAra, L. 2005. 'Modelling Penal Transformation.' *Punishment and Society* 7(3): 277-302. McAra, L. 2008. 'Crime, Criminology and Criminal Justice in Scotland.' *European Journal of Criminology* 5(4): 481-504. McVie, S. 2017. *Social Order: Crime and Justice in Scotland*. *The New Sociology of Scotland*. D. McCrone, Sage.
4. Munro, M., et al. 2010. 'Criminal justice in Scotland: Overview and prospects.' *Criminal Justice in Scotland*: 261-278.
5. McVie, S. 2017. *Social Order: Crime and Justice in Scotland*. *The New Sociology of Scotland*. D. McCrone, London: Sage.

feature in debates about the 'nature' of criminal justice in Scotland.

Literature which highlights distinctiveness in Scottish imprisonment discusses the role and influence of the 'founding father'<sup>6</sup> of the SPS, William Brebner in the 19th Century, who was an early pioneer in enabling prisoners to maintain contact with their families and communities, and in promoting what we now regard as a form of 'throughcare'.<sup>7</sup> Scotland's Special Unit in HMP Barlinnie is also highlighted by those seeking to promote an argument about Scottish 'distinctiveness'.<sup>8</sup> The Special Unit was a 'unique experiment' which proposed a therapeutic regime for the most violent and disruptive of people held in Scotland's largest prison, which operated between 1973 and 1994. Beyond specific cases, it is argued that historically, SPS operated along therapeutic and rehabilitative principles, until they were tested in the 1980s with a series of high profile disturbances.<sup>9</sup>

Other literature disagrees that the SPS followed a 'welfarist' or more progressive philosophy (in contrast to England and Wales) arguing that there is a 'mythological' dimension to these claims.<sup>10</sup> These authors point out that the Barlinnie Special Unit was a one-off penal experiment which was never repeated indeed, there was an 'uneasy' relationship between the Special Unit and the rest of the service). Munro et al<sup>11</sup> also point out that rates of imprisonment in Scotland remain amongst the highest in Western Europe, and altogether suggest a model of imprisonment with far greater convergence with England and Wales than those promoting Scottish distinctiveness may claim.

The publication in 2013 of the Organisational Review 'Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives',<sup>12</sup> signalled a new direction for the SPS, and opened up

the potential for greater divergence with prisons in England and Wales. *Unlocking Learning, Transforming Lives* suggested a vision of imprisonment which was considerably more optimistic than that which preceded it, by placing individuals in custody, and their 'assets' at the centre of its operation. The Organisational Review readily adopted the vocabulary and key tenants of desistance theory<sup>13</sup> into the operating rationale for the service. Key themes from desistance theory have subsequently been translated into strategic priorities and daily regimes throughout the service, for example, bespoke training on desistance for prison staff, and the inclusion of processes aimed at identifying and building self-agency and assets in case management processes. The language of 'rehabilitation' and 'reoffending' has diminished, and in its place 'citizenship' and 'reintegration' are discussed.<sup>14</sup>

A number of other notable examples are worth highlighting in relation to recent and current trajectories within SPS, which, together, point to an approach which has the potential to create greater divergence with practice in England and Wales. First, whilst a few decades ago, it was possible to state that reforming prisons in Scotland was constrained by the architecture of the estate,<sup>15</sup> this is now no longer the case, and over the past

## The current direction in Scotland is enabled by a stable political direction and support from the SNP Government.

decade, the SPS has received significant investment in order to modernise the estate. Whether or not this was motivated by avoiding any costlier payments .. etc,<sup>16</sup> a modernised estate has enabled the SPS to operate, for the most part, in decent physical environments. Second, reforming the prison estate and regimes for the female population has become a central priority following the publication of the critical Angiolini report, with the proposed Community Custody Units (CCUs) for women proposed for 2020. CCUs are small custodial units holding around 20 female people in each, they will

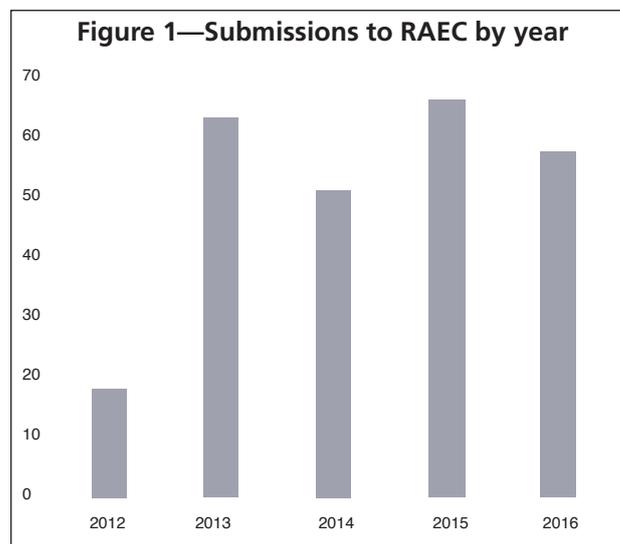
6. Coyle, A. 1991. *Inside: Rethinking Scotland's Prisons*. Edinburgh: Scottish Child.
7. Coyle, A. 1991. *Inside: Rethinking Scotland's Prisons*. Edinburgh, Scottish Child. Tombs, J. and L. Piacentini 2010. *Prisons and imprisonment in Scotland*, Willan Cullompton.
8. Coyle, A. 1991. *Inside: Rethinking Scotland's Prisons*. Edinburgh, Scottish Child. Tombs, J. and L. Piacentini 2010. *Prisons and imprisonment in Scotland*, Willan Cullompton.
9. YOUNG, P 1997 *Crime and Criminal Justice in Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office
10. Munro, M., et al. 2010. 'Criminal justice in Scotland: Overview and prospects.' *Criminal Justice in Scotland*: 261-278.
11. Munro, M., et al. 2010. 'Criminal justice in Scotland: Overview and prospects.' *Criminal Justice in Scotland*: 261-278.
12. Scottish Prison Service. 2013. *Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives: Organisational Review of the Scottish Prison Service*. Edinburgh Scottish Prison Service.
13. See; McNeill, F. 2016. Desistance and Criminal Justice in Scotland. *Crime, Justice and Society in Scotland*. H. Croall, Mooney, G., Munro, M. Abingdon, Routledge: 200-216.
14. Scottish Prison Service. 2016. Value Proposition. Edinburgh, Scottish Prison Service. Scottish Prison Service. 2017. Corporate Plan 2017-2020. Edinburgh, Scottish Prison Service.
15. McManus, J., et al. 1999. 'Imprisonment and other custodial sentences.' P. Duff, and N. Hutton, *Criminal Justice in Scotland*. London: Ashgate: 228-242.
16. For example, see Tombs, J. and L. Piacentini 2010. *Prisons and imprisonment in Scotland*, Willan Cullompton.

be located within more urban parts of Scotland than larger establishments, enabling women to maintain closer contact with their families and communities in this time.<sup>17</sup> Third, the professionalisation agenda for prison staff, which will include professional qualifications and a requirement for ongoing CPD for staff.<sup>18</sup>

The current direction in Scotland is enabled by a stable political direction and support from the SNP Government. Since 2008 there have only been two Justice Secretaries under the same SNP Administration, and there has been a consistency of approach towards the SPS and sentencing policy. Following the publication of the Organisational Review, the potential for divergences in prisons and the experience of imprisonment have opened up further between Scotland and the rest of Great Britain. In this climate it seems even more necessarily to understand change, or reasons for stasis, both for the benefit of the Service, and for an understanding of penalty further afield. The relationship between the academic community and the SPS is better now than it has been in times of recent past,<sup>19</sup> so one might expect an analysis of recent research activity in and around the service to highlight the diversity of important developments in recent published literature. However, as the analysis of the findings of the literature review undertaken to explore published research on the SPS between 2012-2016 illustrates, the publicly available research that has been published on the SPS does not illuminate many important facets of the distinct penal context outlined here.

### The Sample

Through unique access to the RAEC agendas,<sup>20</sup> we collated all agendas submitted between 2012 to 2016 that included details of all submissions to the RAEC. This timeframe was selected for pragmatic reasons, as records prior to 2012 were problematic to access and that the literature review began in January 2017 (and was completed in June 2017). Within the timeframe selected for review, 255 applications were made to the SPS, RAEC. There are variations by year, with an average of 51 submissions per year between 2012-2016:



We do not outline the details of these submissions due to multiple reasons (including confidentiality), in order to ensure the integrity of and confidence in the RAEC process, that has supported and facilitated research within the SPS for almost twenty years.<sup>21</sup> We used these submissions to shape a literature review following standard protocols,<sup>22</sup> that are outlined in more detail below.

### Methods

Having created the database of 255 applications submitted to the RAEC, we undertook a literature review using 28 databases, covering all areas of social science, health research. Over a period of six months, a review was undertaken by using the name of the lead researcher and a number of key words from the title of the research project submitted. This included a number of variations, for example, prison, imprisonment, incarceration etc. The review identified 19 publications that were linked to the author and the key words from the submission to the RAEC. At the final stage of the review, a check of the identified literature was undertaken by identifying the lead researcher and contacting them to see if they had published anything publicly available in relation to their submission to the RAEC. This identified an additional three written outputs, that were all from studies with more than one output relating to an individual submission.

17. Scottish Prison Service. 2017. First two Community Custody Units for women announced. <http://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/News/News-5137.aspx>

18. Scottish Prison Service. 2017. Corporate Plan 2017-2020. Edinburgh, Scottish Prison Service.

19. McVie, S. 2017. Social Order: Crime and Justice in Scotland. *The New Sociology of Scotland*. D. McCrone, Sage. Morrison, K. S., R. SPARKS, R. 2016. Research, Knowledge, and Criminal Justice in Scotland: the Scottish Experience. *Crime, Justice and Society in Scotland*. H. Croall, Mooney, G., Munro, M. Abingdon, Routledge: 30-44.

20. Each of the three authors are SPS staff, one of whom (Matthew Maycock) is a sitting member of the RAEC.

21. The RAEC was originally a sub-committee of the SPS Research Strategy Group, and has existed in its current form since the mid-1990s.

22. Dawidowicz, P. 2010. *Literature reviews made easy: a quick guide to success*, Charlotte, N.C., Information Age Publishing. Machi, L. A. & McEvoy, B. T. 2012. *The literature review: six steps to success*, London, Sage Publications Ltd. Ridley, D. 2012. *The literature review: a step-by-step guide for students*, London, Sage.

## Findings

The literature review identified 19 papers, reports and publicly available PhD dissertations that were based on a submission to the RAEC. This represents an 7 per cent return in relation to the 255 original submissions, during the 5 years considered in this paper.

### Analysis of the 19 publications

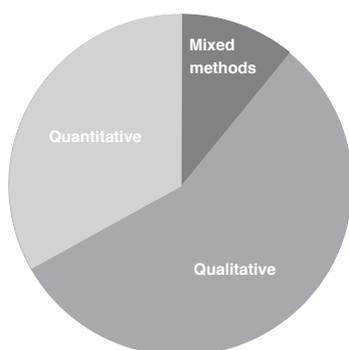
In this section of the paper we summarise and analyse various aspects of the 19 identified publications. This analysis begins with exploring aspects of the methods used within the studies.

#### Methods used in the studies

##### Qualitative/ Quantitative / Mixed methods studies

Slightly over half (10) of the studies identified in the literature review utilised qualitative methods, with only two of the studies utilising mixed methods:

**Figure 2—Methods used in studies**

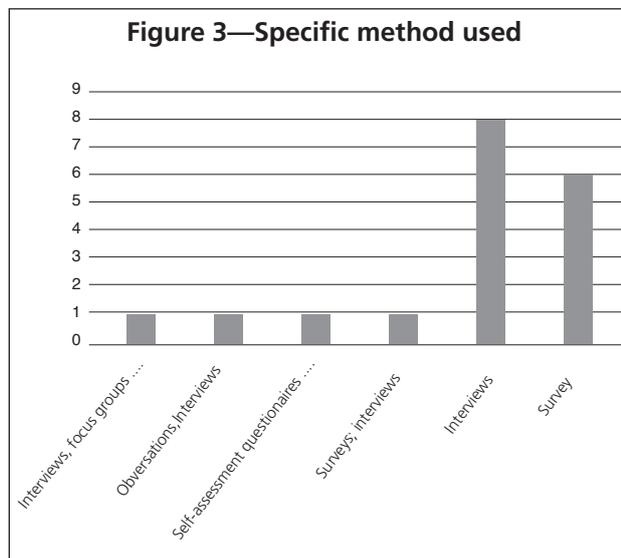


That there were so many studies (n=6) utilising quantitative methods (principally surveys) is somewhat surprising, given that in the social sciences qualitative methods are predominant. For example, within British Sociology (where many studies of prison would be located disciplinarily) Payne, Williams, and Chamberlain, suggest:

*...only about one in ten papers in the mainstream journals used quantitative methods at the bi- or multivariate level.<sup>23</sup>*

Furthermore, it is surprising that there were so few studies that used mixed method, given the rise of mixed methods studies in the social sciences.<sup>24</sup> Although as the section below illustrates there were a number of studies that utilised a mixture of qualitative methods, but there were only two that mixed both quantitative and qualitative methods.

**Figure 3—Specific method used**



Analysing the studies at this more detailed level, indicates that interviews and surveys were the preferred methods by researchers. Along with the two mixed methods studies (using both qualitative and quantitative methods), figure 3 illustrates that two of the studies mixed a range of qualitative methods. This indicates that published research undertaken within Scottish prisons used in some senses a quite narrow range of possible methods. For example, despite recent substantial work on ethnographic approaches to prison research,<sup>25</sup> only 2 of the studies utilised observational methods, although this was alongside other qualitative methods. Additionally, there appears to be limited engagement in the identified studies with both participatory methods adapted for prison<sup>26</sup> as well as convict criminology more widely.<sup>27</sup>

#### The prison focus of the studies

In Scotland there are 15 prisons (13 SPS run, and 2 privately run). There is significant diversity in prison architecture across the Scottish Prison Service Estate.<sup>28</sup>

23. Payne, G., Williams, M. & Chamberlain, S. 2004. *Sociology*, 38, 153. P159.

24. Creswell, J. W. 2003. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. *Ibid. Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*.

25. Drake, D. H., Earle, R. & Sloan, J. 2015. *Palgrave handbook of prison ethnography*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

26. Fine, M., Torre, M. E., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D. & Upegui, D. 2004. Participatory action research: From within and beyond prison bars. *Working method: Research and social justice*, 95119, Fine, M. & Torre, M. E. 2006. Intimate details: Participatory action research in prison. *Action Research*, 4, 253-269.

27. Earle, R. 2016. *Convict criminology: inside and out*, London, Policy Press, Ross, J. I. & Richards, S. C. 2003. *Convict criminology*, Belmont, Calif. ; London, Thomson/Wadsworth.

28. Historic Environment Scotland 2015. *Scotland's Prisons – Research Report 2015*. Edinburgh: Historic Environment Scotland.

Furthermore, local communities that have a formative influence prison culture,<sup>29</sup> through for example, shaping engagement with the voluntary sector local to each prison.<sup>30</sup> Despite these locally shaped aspects influencing the experience of, and culture within specific prisons, the studies included in this literature review focus on quite a small range of prisons in Scotland. When the study was explicit about the specific study within which the research was undertaken, this tended to mention either HMYOI Polmont (3) HMP and YOI Cornton Vale (3):

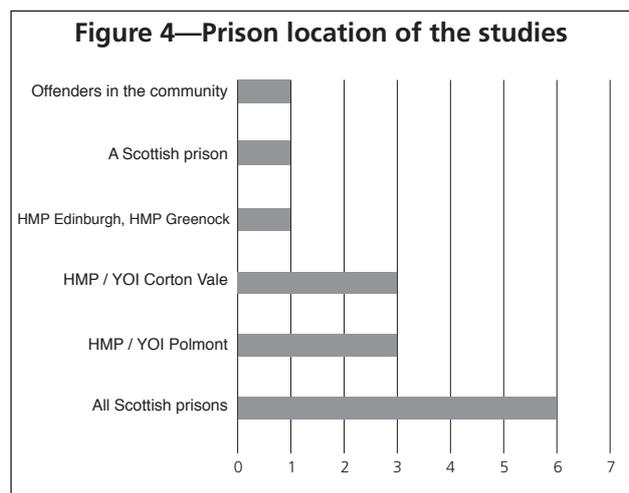
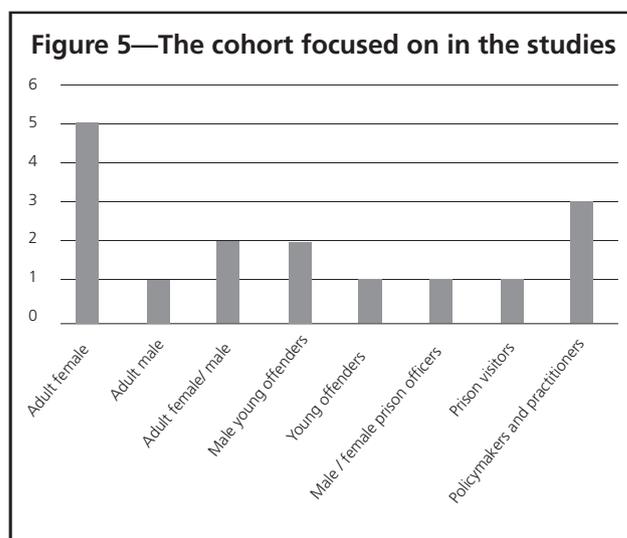


Figure 4 illustrates that research insights into aspects of imprisonment in Scotland the are likely to be quite partial, given that 11 of the 15 prisons have not been the explicit focus of study within the published research between 2012-2016. That the studies are so focused on two groups of people in the custody (female prisoners and young offenders) in HMYOI Polmont HMP and YOI Cornton Vale respectively, despite these groups being minority groups within the wider prison population in Scotland, is explored in more detail below.

### Prison cohort studied

On 4th August 2017, the SPS had 7,453 people in custody. Of these, 53 were 16 or 17 years old and, 294 were aged 18 to 21, equating to a young offender population of 4.7 per cent. Despite young offenders constituting only constituting under 5 per cent of the prison population, they were the focus of 3 (Or 17 per cent) of the studies included in this review:



This overrepresentation of young offenders in the research included in this interview review, raises questions about the connection of prison research in Scotland to various prisoner cohorts within prisons in Scotland. In relation to gender our review also raises a number of issues. Between 2016-2017, the daily average population within SPS Establishments was 7552, 7185 (or 95 per cent) were male and 366 (or 5 per cent) were female. Figure 6 below illustrates the gender focus of the studies in our review:

Figure 6—gender of the prison cohort considered in the studies

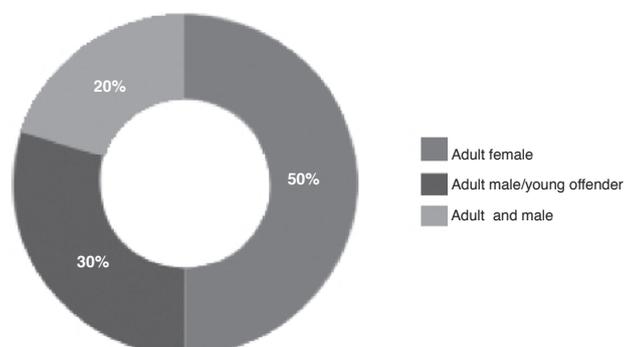


Figure 6 indicates that while female people in custody constitute around 5 per cent of the Scottish prison population (resonating with a global figure of 3 per cent of the worlds prison population being female[1]),<sup>31</sup> 5 studies (or 50 per cent) focused of female prisoners in our review (where the study was explicit about the gender of the cohort examined). Despite this, we were unable to identify any studies

29. Irwin, J. & Cressey, D. R. 1962. Thieves, Convicts and the Inmate Culture. *Social Problems*, 10, 142-155, JACOBS, J. B. 1977. *Stateville : the penitentiary in mass society*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, Morenoff, J. D. & Harding, D. J. 2014. *Incarceration, Prisoner Reentry, and Communities. Annual review of sociology*, 40, 411-429.

30. Abrams, L. S., Hughes, E., Inderbitzin, M., Meek, R 2016. *The Voluntary Sector in Prisons. Encouraging Personal and Institutional Change*, London.

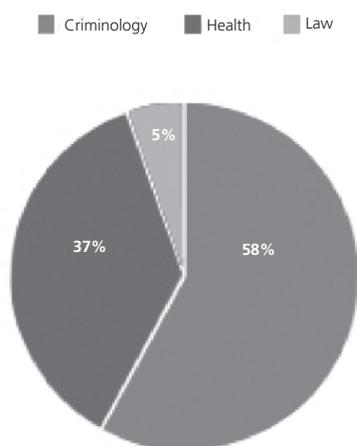
31. Warmsley, R. 2016. *World Prison Population List (eleventh edition)*. London: The Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR).

that explicitly focused on female young offenders (women under 21 years old). That such a high proportion of the studies included in this review focus on adult female people in custody alongside a relative lack of focus on adult male people in custody, raises questions relating to the drivers of these research projects. Is this reflective of funders orientations, or perhaps reflective of aspects of reform of the female custodial estate in Scotland<sup>32</sup> attracting significant research interest?

### Discipline the study is located

Prison studies are consistently diverse and are located in wide range of disciplines.<sup>33</sup> Based on a consideration of the journal in which the publication was published and the faculty of the lead author, we conducted an analysis of the discipline in which the study was located. This indicated that the majority (11) of the studies were based in criminology and published in criminology related journals:

**Figure 7—Discipline the study is located**



That so many studies are located within health, broadly defined is significant, given that prison health in Scotland has been through some substantial transitions in recent years.<sup>34</sup> However, that the 19 studies in this review are so dominated of two disciplines, is perhaps not reflective of the wider disciplinary diversity in the penal studies more broadly.<sup>35</sup>

### Gap analysis and resultant ethical considerations

The above analysis of the 19 papers identified points towards a number of gaps in the published literature relating to the SPS between 2012-2016. In particular the majority of papers utilise qualitative methods and are located in two prisons and focus on two minority cohorts within the wider prison population. This exposes certain issues with the published prison research on and in the SPS, indicating that some prisons have had very little research undertaken within them.

There is a longstanding ethical debate relating to research in prisons,<sup>36</sup> that highlights the importance of people in custody being able to take part in studies that they might expect to participate in, in community settings.<sup>37</sup> However, that the research in this literature review is so heavily focused on two prisons, raises ethical concerns relating to the research burden amongst the female people in custody and young offenders who participate in research, as well as for the staff who have to facilitate access. To contextualise the focus on these women and young people in custody more widely, a subsequent analysis of the 255 submissions to RAEC was undertaken. This substantiates the gaps identified through the focus on young offenders and female people in custody in the published research. 34 out of the 255 studies (or 13 per cent) either had young offender or HMP YOI Polmont mentioned in the title of the study. Additionally, 20 (0r 8 per cent) of the 255 submissions mentioned female people in custody or HMP Cornton Vale in its title, further consolidating the finding that research conducted within the SPS is in some senses quite narrow.

While there appear to be no overt ethical issues with any of the research undertaken in prison included in this review (unlike some historical analysis of prison research in the US),<sup>38</sup> research burden of research participants at HMYOI Polmont HMP and YOI Cornton Vale deserves further scrutiny and should be carefully considered in future research projects. This also raises ethical issues relating to people in custody in the majority of Scottish prisons not having the opportunity to take part in research projects. In one sense this

32. Scottish Government 2012. Final report. Scottish Government Commission on Women Offenders, Scottish Government 2017. Justice Vision and Priorities. Delivery Plan 2017-18.: Scottish Government. Scottish Prison Service. 2017. First two Community Custody Units for women announced. <http://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/News/News-5137.aspx>

33. Jewkes, Y., Crewe, B. & Bennett, J. 2016. *Handbook on prisons*, London, Routledge.

34. RCN 2016. Five Years on: Royal College of Nursing Scotland review of the transfer of Prison Health Care from The Scottish Prison Service TO NHS Scotland. Scotlan: RCN.

35. Henry, S. & Lukas, S. A. 2017. Recent developments in criminological theory: toward disciplinary diversity and theoretical integration. *International library of criminology, criminal justice and penology Second series*. Place of publication not identified: Routledge,.

36. Pope, A., Vanchieri, C. & Gostin, L. O. 2007. *Ethical considerations for research involving prisoners*, National Academies Press, Brewer-Smyth, K. 2008. Ethical, Regulatory, and Investigator Considerations in Prison Research. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 31, 119-127, Overhllser, J. C. 1987. Ethical issues in prison research: A risk/benefit analysis. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 5, 187-202.

37. Warr, J. 2017. Quid Pro Quo in Prison Research. Available from: <https://www.compen.crim.cam.ac.uk/Blog/blog-pages-full-versions/blog-18-jasonwarr>.

38. Hornblum, A. M. 1997. They were cheap and available: prisoners as research subjects in twentieth century America. *BMJ : British Medical Journal*, 315, 1437-1441, Hornblum, A. M. 1998. *Acres of skin : human experiments at Holmesburg Prison : a true story of abuse and exploitation in the name of medical science*, London, Routledge.

represents a weakness of the published prison research in Scotland, however, this also indicates that there is significant potential for original and innovative research in a wide range of prisons outside of Scotland's central belt, on adult male people in custody, and utilising a wider range of methods. Finally, that people in custody themselves seem to have had limited influence on the research undertaken on them within prison (as indicated by a lack of discussion of participatory methods for example), represents another opportunity to shape future prison research around research questions that are important to people in custody and prison staff.

### **Limitations of the study**

While the findings of the literature review has illuminated a number of gaps, there are a number of limitations with the study methodology. The RAEC only considers research applications from PhD and established researchers, so this literature review will have omitted any research at undergraduate, masters level or research undertaken in non-academic settings (such as research undertaken by research consultancies). Furthermore, there may have been prison related studies conducted in the community which will have not been submitted to the RAEC. Additionally, there may be studies published on or about the Scottish Prison Service Estate that did not entail primary data collection from within the SPS prison estate. The timed nature of the literature review raises a number of issues, particularly in relation to the sometimes lengthy period between the submission of an article and it being published.<sup>39</sup> This lag in publication may result in some papers based on

research undertaken within the reporting period to be published after this review was conducted. Ultimately, it is evident that while many studies were submitted to the RAEC, permission granted to undertake the research and the data collection having taken place, much of this research is not publicly available.

### **Conclusions**

As we have identified, there is a distinct penal context in Scotland and has both shaped and been influenced by a distinct research community and engagement. Within this context, we have used access to SPS Research Access and Ethics Committee agendas to shape an analysis of published research on the SPS. The literature review undertaken of RAEC agendas between 2012-2016, identified 19 publicly available papers and dissertations. The analysis of these publications illuminates important aspects of the experience of prison in Scotland. The analysis also illuminates a range of gaps in the published research, that could form the basis for future prisons research in Scotland. That so many studies are focused on two prisons (HMYOI Polmont HMP and YOI Cornton Vale) and two cohorts within those prisons (young people and female people in custody), represents a significant opportunity for future prison research in Scotland. It is hoped that this literature review points towards future research engagement between the SPS and academia that is more impactful, broader in its reach, and that will illuminate aspects of imprisonment in Scotland that have not been fully considered in recently published research.

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39. Björk, B.-C. & Solomon, D. 2013. The publishing delay in scholarly peer-reviewed journals. *Journal of Informetrics*, 7, 914-923.

# Reviews

Book Review

## ***Peace Inside — A Prisoner's Guide to Meditation***

By: Sam Settle (ed)

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

ISBN: 978-1-78592-235-0

(paperback)

Price: £12.99 (paperback)

In this friendly and accessible book, Sam Settle, Director of the Prison Phoenix Trust (PPT), provides a beginner's guide to the principles of meditation. Containing a foreword by the poet and PPT patron Benjamin Zephaniah, and featuring helpful illustrations by Pollyanna Morgan, *Peace Inside* combines concise instructions with candid prisoner testimony.

The book is split into two parts. The first, divided into five chapters, deals with the practicalities of meditation. Chapter 1 explains what meditation is and isn't, by dispelling some of the fallacies associated with the practice. Of particular use to beginners is an explanation of the links between meditation and religion, assuring us that while many religions allow and encourage meditation, faith is by no means a prerequisite for experiencing its benefits. Chapter 2 offers simple step-by-step instructions on how to meditate, including an explanation on the particulars of breathing and descriptions of related exercises requiring different levels of difficulty. Information is given on how to arrange the posture, eyes and hands, and on how to manage a wandering attention. The following two chapters expand on this theme by including information on external distractions, providing advice on how to maintain the correct approach when meditating and listing principles known to help individuals stay on track. Particular emphasis is placed on the value of simply accepting whatever thought or emotion is dominating the mind, before brief explanations are given about the specific benefits which this acceptance engenders.

If one criticism could be levelled at *Peace Inside* it would be that Chapter 4, which lists the more conventional distractions associated with meditation, reiterate the points discussed in the previous chapter. The section would arguable read better if the chapters were combined or even switched, as, confusingly, Chapter 3 offers solutions to issues which are then expanded on in Chapter 4. This is a minor criticism, however, and Part one concludes with a brief essay on meditation in day-to-day life in which Settle describes the benefits of how meditative principles can affect everyday perceptions. He assures the reader that by harnessing the proper temperament and a hyper-sensitivity of our senses, the sights, smells and sounds of our daily life can render our environment a much more rewarding place in which to live.

Part two of *Peace Inside* is easily the larger portion of the book. Epistolary in format it is comprised of correspondences between volunteers from the PPT, and individuals in prisons and secure hospitals. The letters are sectioned into six categories: 'Anger'; 'Hope'; 'Love'; 'Being with the Blues'; 'Out of the Madness' and 'Gratitude', each of which Settle prefaces with an insightful narrative into how meditation can impact on prisoners' lives. As expected, meditation is indeed an invariable theme woven throughout the exchanges, although the accounts of the men and women at the heart of these undoubtedly give *Peace Inside* an appeal and a value far surpassing that of a simple meditation guidebook. In parts edifying and amusing, in others brave and cathartic, part two catalogues some of the issues familiar to many prisoners who are struggling to make sense of an often alien and uncooperative system. Correspondents discuss themes ranging from drug addiction and sexual abuse to the

ostensibly trivial gripes of withheld mail and cell sharing—one man recounts the frustration of living with an inconsiderate cellmate, while another describes finding serenity and contentment despite having to share his Bangkok cell with 50 other men. Many of the correspondences span lengthy periods, enabling the reader to follow the prisoners' journey of recovery and self-discovery, and, in the case of Darren, his progression through the system from Wakefield's infamous Cage to his eventual graduation from a PIPE (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment) unit.

Ultimately, *Peace Inside* succeeds both as a practical introduction to meditation and as a journal of the ways in which the practice has benefited individuals' lives. Settle's uncomplicated style ensures that the instructions in part one are clear and easy to follow, while Pollyanna Morgan's illustrations provide a charming supplement to the text. The correspondences in part two, featuring testimony from prisoners, reflect the kindness of the PPT volunteers who greet their struggles with friendship and support, together providing a connectivity and a resolution for prisoners who might be experiencing similar issues. Refreshingly, the book does not promote meditation as a panacea, instead opting to underscore the dedication required to allay the frustrations the practice evokes in even the most experienced practitioner; nor is it a guide about yoga, a point that Settle is quick to highlight, with the PPT already providing free books and CDs on this discipline. It primarily being aimed at prisoners, *Peace Inside* is a simple and engaging guide suitable for anybody interested in learning about how meditation can affect their life.

**Casper Thigpen** is a resident of HMP Grendon.

Book Review

**Sexual Offenders—Personal Construct Theory and Deviant Sexual Behaviour**

By James Horley

Publisher: Routledge (2008)

ISBN: 978-1-58391-735-0

Price: £40.00

The spectre of the sex offender and the matter of sexual assault has remained prominent in society, media, law and politics for many years. Today it is arguably one of the most important issues being faced by the criminal justice system, not just in the UK, but across the globe. Largely this is due to the disclosures from hundreds of victims of Jimmy Savile, the ensuing criminal investigation into historic child sexual abuse 'Operation Yewtree' and the subsequent arrests of high-profile celebrities, politicians and public servants. Therefore, any text that helps to shed light and understanding onto the nature of sexual offending and those who commit such offences, is of great importance.

Despite being written in 2008, Horley's book is potentially more important to scholars and policy makers than at its inception. The shift in academic and criminal justice focus has enabled this book to explain alternative views about the nature of sexual offending. It starts with an explanation of populist views of sex offenders and why and how they commit their crimes. Horley explains that not all sex offenders should be labelled as the same, controversially stating that the creation of the 'Other' (child sex offender/paedophile) is potentially damaging and isolates the offender further (p. 23). Furthermore, he posits how the social view of the 'Other' is incorrect and that sexual offenders offend for a multitude of reasons, that create individualisation of onset of offending. With this he says, 'we should probably avoid categorical views that force 'Us' to view 'Them' as different and frightening creatures. They are us, and we are them' (p. 23).

*Sexual Offenders* is a significantly important book, because of the alternative approach the author takes to develop the readers understanding of how to treat these offenders, often in a clinical setting. Through the use of Personal Construct Theory (PCT), Horley uses knowledge, experience and real-life cases to paint a picture of the damage that labelling and stigma can have on people who commit sexual offences. He explains that sexual offenders often want to remain offence free and move away from the cycle of abusive behaviour, but they are often limited as their own self-image and self-worth is negative. The PCT approach, acknowledges that a person has a choice to desist from sexual offending, they just need to understand how to unlock this choice.

Overall, this book is a fascinating, complex and intelligent read. It will be of use to academics, students with an interest in the dynamics of sexual offending, clinicians, practitioners, policy makers and those involved in the criminal justice system.

**Darren Woodward** is Programme Leader for BA Criminological Studies at the University Centre Grimsby and a PhD Student at the University of Hull.

Book review

**Improving Criminal Justice Workplaces: Translating theory and research into evidence-based practice**

By Paula Brough, Jennifer Brown and Amanda Biggs

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 978-1-138-01946-1

Price: £90.00

Given the much discussed issue of recruitment and retention of prison staff in English and Welsh prisons, it is apt that this book aims to be a practical guide to improving well-being for criminal justice workers. Improving well-being in the

workplace can certainly aid the retention of staff. This text aims to help managers achieve this by bridging the gap between practical best-practice solutions and the vast (and sometimes dense) academic literature on organisational behaviour. Uniquely, the advice proffered is based on what works in the criminal justice field, with a strong bent towards the public sector. The authors certainly cite what they describe as the 'widespread demoralisation' of criminal justice workers caused by 'increased austerity' as key to making use of the evidence-based policies that they propose. Although the authors have a strong Australasian foundation, both Paula Brough and Jennifer Brown have made significant occupational academic and consultative contributions to criminal justice within the UK, and the book has been explicitly written for an international audience.

This book forms part of the Routledge frontiers of criminal justice series and has been designed along the lines of the strategic foresight framework.<sup>1</sup> This future orientated framework comprises of six steps namely: framing the issue, scanning the environment, forecasting alternative scenarios, visioning the preferred scenario, planning for this scenario and taking action. Based on this framework the book is subsequently divided into three parts. Part one concerns framing issues; this mainly concerns describing the key aspects that underpin criminal justice organisational behaviour, including employee engagement and procedural justice amongst others. Part two provides an explanation of tools that can be used to provide empirical evidence. Finally, part three links a few key organisational problems with solutions and addresses the main aim of the book; namely to translate research into implementable strategies.

Most usefully, this book clearly identifies some of the key issues that most large organisations face,

1. Hines, A and Bishop, P. (eds) (2006) *Thinking about the future: guidelines for strategic foresight*. Washington DC: Social Technologies.

such as effective communication and combating bullying and discrimination, but appear to be more pertinent in the criminal justice field. Crucially, towards the end of the book, the authors have linked these key issues with pioneering international examples of criminal justice agencies who have overcome each problem fairly successfully. There is also some discussion regarding the tools to assess organisational behaviour and a call for closer links between criminal justice agencies and

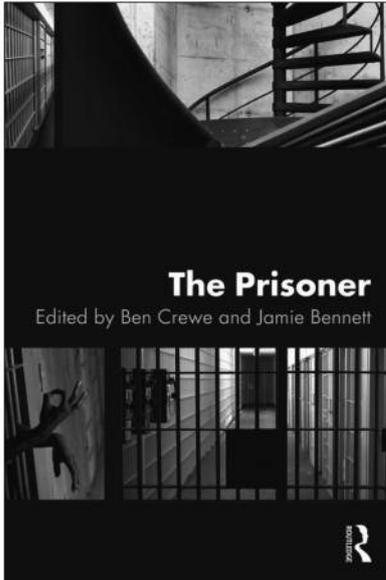
universities, something that has certainly gathered pace in the UK in recent times. As the authors note it is key that managers across the criminal justice sector stay informed of the developing issues facing their workforce, but this may mean that despite this book taking advantage of being topical, it could quickly become dated.

Overall, this book achieves its aims of providing a clear link between evidence and practice. It is certainly useful to practitioners who may have specific organisational

goals or problems to solve, as well as students looking to enter the field, as it is clearly laid out and relatively simple to digest. However, it may quickly become dated and therefore hopefully will prompt continued contributions from academics and closer ties between their institutions and criminal justice agencies around the world.

**Paul Crossey** is Deputy Governor at HMP Huntercombe

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# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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The editor is responsible for the style and content of each edition, and for managing production and the Journal's budget. The editor is supported by an editorial board — a body of volunteers all of whom have worked for the Prison Service in various capacities. The editorial board considers all articles submitted and decides the outline and composition of each edition, although the editor retains an over-riding discretion in deciding which articles are published and their precise length and language.

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