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'The learning happens in the interaction': exploring the 'magic' of the interpersonal in Learning Together

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'I think it [Learning Together] gives you the tools to do it if you want to do something, and it gives you the words to use when you try to understand how you're feeling. I think what makes me want to act is not the learning as much as the interaction. The learning happens in the interaction.' (Elinor, Learning Together university-based student)

'While a traumatic past may increase our risk of bad things happening [in the future], we are not destined to crash and burn. Adversity doesn't mean that we're destroyed. […] [Research] tells us that we can rescue one another. It is in our relationships with one another that we can all find healing and a better path forward.' (Vivek Murthy, *Together*) [2]

Prisons and universities are public institutions seeking to support individual learning and change for broader social good. This article explores qualitative and quantitative data collected in the first two phases of a five-year evaluation of Learning Together at the University of Cambridge, describing one of the key findings from that research, namely that the transformative potential of Learning Together resides in the magic of interpersonal. Building from existing literature, and drawing on data from the first phase of the evaluation (2014-16), we explain the development of measures employed in the second phase of the evaluation (2017-19). These measures were designed to capture the changes students described as they learned together: changes in perspective-taking, self-esteem, self-efficacy and interpersonal-efficacy. Our findings show the central role of interpersonal-efficacy in predicting increases in self-efficacy, and how increasing perspective-taking and self-esteem can enhance the magic of the interpersonal. We argue that increasing self-efficacy should be an important goal for prisons and universities to enable students to reach their potential. We conclude by considering what these findings might mean for the work of these important social institutions.

Learning Together builds communities of learning in which students who are currently under criminal justice supervision, often resident in prisons, and students who are currently resident in universities study higher education courses together. The practices and pedagogy of Learning Together are grounded in research about positive transformations through learning, including the role of education in supporting movements away from crime (desistance).[3] Learning Together has been evaluated from its outset, striving to understand not just 'what' happens as we learn, but how it happens, and the long term significance of these happenings.

We begin by describing the intellectual and pragmatic background of Learning Together, sharing the story of how qualitative learning from the first phase of our evaluation led to a theoretical and methodological 'undoing' and the development of new, broadened research instruments in the second

phase of research, which included quantitative measurement. We continue by describing the methods of data collection and analysis underpinning this paper[4]. A description of our findings follow, and in the final section of the paper we conclude by discussing how these findings might advance understandings of the role and significance of interpersonal relationships, we argue, as does Murthy does in the quote introducing this article, that the interpersonal elements of learning may be key to individuals forging 'a better path forwards'. In closing, we reflect on some of the structures, policies and practices that might enable or frustrate the unleashing of the 'magic' of the interpersonal through education in our prisons and universities.

Learning Together: pragmatic and intellectual foundations

Learning Together was founded at the University of Cambridge in 2014 with a master's level introductory course in criminology convened by the first two authors of this paper, together with Dr Rebecca Docherty, an educational psychologist.[5] It was delivered in partnership with HMP Grendon, with the enthusiastic participation of many colleagues from the Cambridge Institute of Criminology. Since then, Learning Together has grown substantially at Cambridge. By 2019/20, Cambridge had partnered with three prisons (of varying size, function and performance), providing a syllabus of learning opportunities across a wide range of disciplines, including creative writing, criminology, law, literary criticism, maths, philosophy and ethics, theology and sociology. Beyond Cambridge, Learning Together has grown to become a national and international network of partnerships — the Learning Together Network — comprised of over 50 higher education and criminal justice institutions, working together towards a common vision, mission and values statement and toolkit of shared practices.[6]

The roots of Learning Together lie in intersecting pragmatic and intellectual interests. Pragmatically, our work is animated by interest in the potential of experiential, participatory and critical learning communities, that cross 'borders', with a view to widening participation within our higher education institutions.[7] Also central to our work, is an effort to broaden the nature of existing educational provision within prisons beyond functional skills and distance learning, to include higher education and learning with others, and to broaden learning within universities beyond depoliticised and disembodied 'ivory tower' experiences (recognising that some universities, and some prisons, are better at this than others).[8] We have written elsewhere about the wealth of existing evidence that describes the promises of higher education for personal and social development, noting however that prisons and universities can sometimes be both exclusive and excluding in their approaches to learners and learning, in ways that cause them to fall short of their ambitions. In thinking about how prisons and universities might better achieve their goals, we

> Learning Together was founded at the University of Cambridge in 2014 with a single master's level course in criminology convened by the first two authors of this paper, together with Dr Rebecca Docherty, an educational psychologist.

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4. Our participatory methods are explained in greater depth in Armstrong, R. and Ludlow, A. (2020) 'What's so good about participation? Politics, ethics and love in Learning Together', *Methodological Innovations*, May-Aug: 1-10.
5. See www.psychologyfoundations.co.uk.
6. See further www.learningtogethernetwork.co.uk.
7. There is underrepresentation of certain groups at higher education levels, and also differing experiences and outcomes of higher education for those from underrepresented groups. On admissions see Jerrim, J. & Parker, P. (2015) 'Socioeconomic inequality in access to high-status colleges: A cross- country comparison' *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility,* 4: 20-32; Office for Fair Access (2015) *OFFA Topic Briefing: BME Students,* London: OFFA. On experiences and outcomes see Stevenson, J. (2012) *Black and Minority Ethnic Student Degree Retention and Attainment,* London: The Higher Education Academy; Social Mobility Advisory Group (2016) *Working in Partnership: Enabling Social Mobility in Higher Education*, London: Universities UK; and Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). *Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes*, London: Higher Education Funding Council for England.
8. For example, the contested Teaching Excellence Framework implemented by the Department for Education assesses teaching provision in universities, and includes the ability to engage and support students from diverse backgrounds to achieve their aspirations in this assessment, illustrating different levels of provision: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/tefoutcomes/. In prisons, while the Coates Review highlighted a dearth of higher education provision across the estate, the report acknowledged exceptions and variation in provision, see Coates, S. (2016) *Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison,* London: Ministry of Justice.

position them as uncomfortable, but productive, collaborators — institutions that could increase their positive impact by working more closely together.[9]

Intellectually, Learning Together has been catalysed by theoretical intersections between processes of 'going straight' following conviction for a criminal offence (desistance) and processes of transformative learning. Literature on both processes emphasises the importance of agency in context and the development of skills and attitudes that enable autonomous decision-making.[10] Broader research explores how personhood and potential interact with social context to be mutually constituted,[11] and these same threads run through educational and criminological understandings of individual, institutional and broader social transformations.[12] In education literature, research on the interactions between individual agency and complex social environments has been identified as one of the most important developments over the recent decades,[13] exploring both pragmatic[14] and socio-political[15] implications. In criminological literature, a different kind of learning — learning to live a crime free life — is similarly recognised as a psycho-social process in which individuals construct their identities and seek to make meaning within social contexts.[16] Desistance is described as a process that does not happen in a vacuum, but rather in 'community' — contexts in which people can begin to feel they have a 'stake in conformity'.[17] 'Transformation' can often sound, and be recounted, as a positive movement from down to up, worse to better, bad to good, excluded to included. But research shows that processes of change and growth, especially movements away from crime, are often fragile and painful.[18] While most people move away from offending over the life course, the process varies in length and in speed[19] and, as with transformative learning, desistance is more likely to be sustained with the benefit of others who can provide connections, possibilities and encouragement.[20]

Within this broad theoretical terrain, Learning Together is particularly interested in themes of difference, stigma and inclusivity — how the 'edges' of our learning communities, as reflected in our practices of inclusion, exclusion, and coming together, shape experiences and possibilities for individual and social development. We know, for example, that perceived or

9. Ludlow, A., Armstrong, R. and Bartels, L. (2019) 'Learning Together: localism, collaboration and reflexivity in the development of prison and university learning communities' *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry,* 6(1): 25-45.

10. See, for example in desistance literature, the foundational work of Maruna, S. (2001) Making Good, Washington, DC: APA Press, and more recent developments arguing for a more central role for agency and identity in desistance theory; Paternoster, R., Bachman, R., Bushway, S. et al. (2015) 'Human agency and explanations of criminal desistance: arguments for a rational choice theory' *Journal of Development of Life Course Criminology,* 1: 209–235; and in educational literature, see the foundational work of Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, and more recently, Stetsenko, A. (2019), 'Radical transformative agency: continuities and contrasts with relational agency and implications for education', *Frontiers in Education: Hypothesis and Theory*, doi:10.3389/feduc.2019.00148.

11. See, for example, the work of Smith, C. (2010) *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K. and Paloniemi, P.H.S. (2013) 'What is agency?' *Educational Research Review* 10: 45-65.

12. See for example Dweck, C. (2007) *Mindset: Changing the Way You Think to Fulfil Your Potential,* New York City: Random House Publishing Group; Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Akers, R. (2001) 'Social Learning Theory' in Paternoster, R. and Bachman, R. (eds) *Explaining Criminals and Crime: Essays in Contemporary Criminological Theory,* Los Angeles: Roxbury, pp.192-210.

13. Sawyer, K. (2007) 'Introduction: the new science of learning,' in K. Sawyer (ed) *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1–18.

14. Sannino, A., Engestrom, Y., and Lemos, M. (2016) 'Formative interventions for expansive learning and transformative agency' *Journal of Learning Science* 25: 599–633.

15. See Stetsenko, n.10.

16. For a case study exploration of this theme in men's narratives see Gadd, D. and Farrall, S. (2004), 'Criminal careers, desistance and subjectivity: interpreting men's narratives of change' *Theoretical Criminology* 8(2): 123-156. For exploration of women's narratives of desistance see Wright, S. (2017) 'Narratives of punishment and desistance among repeatedly criminalised women' in Hart, E. an Van Ginneken, E. (eds) *New Perspectives on Desistance: Theoretical and Empirical Developments*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

17. Historically this term comes from the work of Toby, J. (1957) 'Social disorganization and stake in conformity: complementary factors in the predatory behaviour of hoodlums' *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 48(1): 12–17. The role of 'community' and a 'stake in conformity' in the desistance process runs through more recent scholarship with different language and emphasis, including Sampson, R. and J. Laub (1990) 'Crime and desistance over the life course: the salience of adult social bonds' *American Sociological Review* 55(5); Farrall, S. and Calverley, A. (2006) *Understanding Desistance from Crime,* London: Open University Press; and Weaver, B. (2015) *Offending and Desistance: The importance of Social Relations,* London: Routledge.

18. Halsey, M., Armstrong, R. and Wright, S. (2017) 'F*ck It!': Matza and the mood of fatalism in the desistance process' *The British Journal of Criminology* 57(5): 1041–1060; Nugent, B., & Schinkel, M. (2016) 'The pains of desistance' *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 16(5): 568–584.

19. Walters, G. (2017) *Modelling the Criminal Lifestyle: Theorising at the edge of Chaos,* Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, especially at p.235.

20. For evidence from criminological research see Giordano, P.C., Cernkovich, S.A. and Rudolph, J.A. (2002) 'Gender, crime, and desistance: toward a theory of cognitive transformation' *American Journal of Sociology* 107(4): 990-1064; Farrall, S. (2005) 'On the existential aspects of desistance from crime' *Symbolic interaction* 28(3): 367–386; Maruna, S. and Farrall, S. (2004) 'Desistance from crime: a theoretical reformulation', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie,* 43: 171–94, and in education literature see especially Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Sawyer, K. (2007), *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

experienced prejudice or stigma among people who leave prison can frustrate movements away from crime[21] and students' hopes of completing a degree at university.[22] But we know, too, that bringing people together across differences and under the right conditions, which enable 'meaningful encounters',[23] can reduce perceived or experienced prejudice or stigma[24] and can also improve learning.[25]

From its inception, then, Learning Together has been conceived as an action research initiative[26] — an attempt to put key existing theoretical and empirical knowledge into practice in the hope of contributing pragmatically to improved educational experiences in higher education and criminal justice institutions, while contributing intellectually, through the evaluation of our action, to enrich underpinning knowledge. Delivering on these hopes has been challenging. Bringing together individuals and institutions aiming for some similar things, but unaccustomed to working together to achieve them, requires creativity and persistence. Learning Together has opened us up to previously unknown heights of joy and hope as well as deepest depths of frustration and despair, the latter manifesting most devastatingly in the tragedy of 29 November 2019 at a Learning Together alumni event, in which a former student attacked and killed fellow Learning Together community members Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt, and injured many others. It feels impossible to put into words the grief and trauma felt across our community, particularly for the loss of Jack and Saskia, two extraordinary, determined and treasured people. Through this event, we have felt ever more keenly the pains of crime — the actions of people who are part of our community but hurt and deeply

> It feels impossible to put into words the grief and trauma felt across our community, particularly for the loss of Jack and Saskia, two extraordinary, determined and treasured people.

damage others who are also in that community. Social and criminal injustice hurt, deeply. We are determined to continue to play our part in striving for better. We hope the findings described below will contribute to this by enriching the development of the kinds of education that help out prisons and universities deliver on their missions.

Theoretical and methodological development

Phase 1 — beginnings

The first Learning Together class was held in January 2015, in B wing's community room at HMP Grendon. Over six weeks, 10 MPhil students from the Cambridge Institute of Criminology studied alongside 11 students from HMP Grendon, exploring topics that included legitimacy and desistance theory, social justice and imprisonment and processes of getting into and out of prison. Students prepared by reading and thinking about weekly readings and study sheets. They listened to a short lecture from a leading academic and broke off into small, facilitated discussion groups made up of students from the prison and university. To complete the course, students submitted a 1500 word essay.[27]

Evaluation of Learning Together began with this first course.[28] All students were given the option to participate in the evaluation; everyone chose to do so. Evaluation was framed fairly narrowly theoretically and methodologically. While we always aimed to include all students equally in the evaluation, our understanding of change had a strong criminological focus, especially in relation to outcomes. Our working hypothesis was

21. LeBel, T., Burnett, R., Maruna, S., & Bushway, S. (2008) 'The "chicken and egg" of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime' *European Journal of Criminology* 5: 130-158.
22. See for example Quinn, J. (2004) 'Understanding working-class 'drop-out' from higher education through a sociocultural lens: cultural narratives and local contexts' *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 14(1): 57-74 and Benuto, L.T. (2020) *Prejudice, Stigma, Privilege, and Oppression*, Switzerland: Springer.
23. Valentine, G. (2008) 'Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter' *Progress in Human Geography* 32(3): 323-337.
24. See, for example, Hirschfield, P. and Piquero, A. (2010) 'Normalization and legitimation: modelling stigmatising attitudes towards ex-offenders' *Criminology* 48(1): 27-55, and Pettigrew, T. F., and Tropp, L. R. (2006), 'A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(5): 751–783.
25. Shaw, G. (2005) *Tertiary Teaching and learning: Dealing with Diversity,* Darwin: CDU Press.
26. For a critical and political perspective on action research see the work of Michelle Fine, especially Fine, M. (2016) 'Just methods in revolting times' *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 13(4): 347-365 and Fine, M., & Torre, M.E. (2019) 'Critical participatory action research: a feminist project for validity and solidarity' *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 43(4): 433–444.
27. Results from the pilot study are reported in our earlier publication, see n. 3 above.
28. Funded by the British Academy, grant Pf150089.

that bringing students from university and prison to learn together would increase social bonds, develop civic virtues, and reduce perceptions of stigma and social distance and we expected the presence of these factors to increase the likelihood of desistance from crime. Methodologically, we conceived of our work as mixed methods. We adapted and piloted narrowly desistance and intergroup contact focused scales[29] to capture change as a result of participating in Learning Together and students completed these before and after the course, alongside in depth post-course interviews.

Learning from phase 1 — 'undoing'

In the first phase of evaluation, students described how Learning Together had led to positive changes in 'being, belonging and becoming' — they reported positive developments in their self-identities, perceived connectedness with others, and their ideas and aspirations about their futures. Learning Together gave students an 'expanded sense of belonging', 'reshap[ing] their understandings of self and open[ing] up new routes of personal growth and a sense of becoming with newly broadened horizons'.[30] In many cases, the experience of Learning Together also prompted the revision of existing ideas about similarity and difference between people both in the classroom, and beyond. New 'improbable friendships' emerged between students who started to think they may have previously over-stated their differences and under-stated their similarities. But students rarely talked about moving away from crime — whether based in the prison or the university (brushes with the law were not unique to prison-based students). We found that the fuller nature of the growth that students described was not captured by our narrowly theoretically informed quantitative measures. Beyond irrelevance, students told us that our questions, (and the criminological frame of reference they imported) felt stigmatising, and that our methods were out of step with our co-produced approach to teaching and learning. Our students felt included and enlivened in the classroom, but somewhat ignored and objectified in our research. We listened.[31]

Transitioning to phase 2 — broadening and reforming

Throughout our 2016 course at HMP Grendon,[32] we built on this feedback alongside analysis of first year data, broadening our theoretical framework and redesigning our methods to take a more participatory, inductive and creative approach.[33] While leading us down rabbit holes sometimes, our more inductive and open approaches began to help us to see new things, which led us to new, broader literatures, particularly from education, human geography and sociology.[34]

Working with our students and broadening our frames of reference led us to identify four recurrent themes in students' descriptions of their growth through Learning Together: (i) students' abilities to make friends, relate to others and seek support from them; (ii) students' abilities to consider others' points of view; (iii) students' sense of self-worth; and (iv) students' self-confidence in their ability to achieve the things they set out to do. We wanted to understand more. Our students had started to tell us 'what' was going on for them. We wanted to develop measures that would enable us to explore how different aspects of growth interacted. Eventually, through longitudinal research, we hoped to explore changes over time and the role they play in long-term outcomes, including through interaction with different social contexts.[35]

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29. Drawing particularly on Bottoms, A. and Shapland, J. (2011), 'Steps towards desistance among male young adult recidivists' in Farrall, S., Hough, M., Maruna, S., et al. (eds) *Escape Routes: Contemporary Perspectives on Life After Punishment,* London: Routledge, pp.43–80; Farrall, S., Bottoms, A. and Shapland, J. (2010) 'Social structures and desistance from crime' *European Journal of Criminology* 7(6): 546-570; Farrall, S., Hunter, B., Sharp, G. and Calverley, A. (2014) *Criminal Careers in Transition: The Social Context of Desistance from Crime,,* Oxford: Oxford University Press; LeBel et al in n.21; and Hirschfield, P. and Piquero, A. (2010) 'Normalization and legitimation: modelling stigmatising attitudes towards ex-offenders' *Criminology* 48(1): 27-55.
30. Armstrong and Ludlow in n.3 at p.14.
31. Described in greater detail in Armstrong and Ludlow, n.4, above.
32. HMP Grendon is a therapeutic community (TC) prison. While many prisons in England and Wales now have TCs or PIPEs (psychologically informed prison environments), HMP Grendon is the only prison to operate wholly as a TC. When we began this work people often said to us it was only possible because we were working in a TC. We can see aspects of the work that were influenced by this environment. However, our experience as we have grown the Learning Together Network across the prison estate has been that the TC elements of HMP Grendon have some benefits and drawbacks. At the end of the paper we acknowledge that the data from prison-based students in this paper is taken from three very different prisons, and that until we have greater numbers in our quantitative data set we cannot explore the data by prison/university.
33. As above, see n.4.
34. See especially by Sennett, R. (2012) *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation,* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Weare, K. (2000) *Promoting Mental, Emotional and Social Health: a Whole School Approach,* London and New York: Routledge; and Valentine, G. (2008) 'Living with difference: Reflections on geographies of encounter', *Progress in Human Geography,* 32(3), 323-337.
35. The longitudinal research is now underway, funded by the Cambridge Humanities Research Grant Scheme with two phases of data collection complete and a forthcoming paper in draft looking at interactions between students' experiences of social cohesion and their self-assessments of individual change over time through repeat administration of the measures underpinning the data in this paper.

Phase 2 — broadened frameworks for action and sense-making

As we moved towards broader measures and frames of reference, we found that the things students highlighted as important in their learning were well recognised in existing literatures. The four themes listed above mapped onto four well-established constructs — interpersonal-efficacy, perspective-taking, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Education research establishes that a sense of self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their own agency and ability to achieve specific goals, predicts an individual's motivation to learn,[36] their ability to set and achieve academic goals,[37] cope with stress,[38] and pursue prosocial goals.[39] However, self-efficacy doesn't increase in a vacuum. At an individual level, a positive relationship between self-esteem (self-worth) and self-efficacy is well established.[40] When investigating the link between self-esteem and self-efficacy in relation to educational performance, Di Giunta and colleagues confirmed that self-esteem predicted self-efficacy beliefs and this influenced academic performance in young adults.[41] If an individual has a positive image of themselves, or feels confident about themselves, it will be easier for them to believe in their abilities and to set and achieve their goals. Looking more broadly at the relationship between individuals, research suggests a positive and direct relationship between a person's ability to understand others' perspective and their self-efficacy.[42] Many studies suggest that interpersonal skills,[43] high or positive self-esteem,[44] and the ability to consider other's perspectives,[45] are all related to increased self-efficacy. Beyond the individual and interpersonal, recent sociological understandings of transformative learning situate agency (for our purposes, akin to self-efficacy) as a reciprocal part of social contexts within and beyond the classroom. As Stetsenko argues, 'human beings cannot be considered as existing separately and autonomously not only from other people but also from reality.'[46] This argument is supported by research which shows how broader learning environments can play a mutually reciprocal role, shaping and being shaped by self-efficacy.[47]

Criminological research about movements away from crime (desistance) is not dissimilar — it also shows that self-efficacy plays as an important role in positive transformations. In early work on desistance Maruna compared people convicted of offences who persist in offending with those who desist, and found that desisters needed what he called a 'tragic optimism' in order to forge crime free lives in social circumstances that made this extraordinarily difficult.[48] Self-efficacy is understood as an element of agency,[49] related to choices made on a range of alternatives in different social circumstances in the aim of securing a desired outcome.[50] But, as Stetsenki argues in relation to

36. See Bandura, A. (1997) *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman) and Zimmerman, B. J. (2000) 'Self-efficacy: an essential motive to learn' *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25(1): 82-91.

37. Weiser, D. A., & Riggio, H. R. (2010) 'Family background and academic achievement: does self-efficacy mediate outcomes?' *Social Psychology of Education* 13(3): 367-383.

38. Kalkan, M., Odacı, H., & Koç, H. E. (2011) 'Self-efficacy, coping with stress and goal-orientation in nurse managers' *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences* 6(3): 118–125.

39. Carlo, G., Basilio, C. D., & Knight, G. P. (2016) 'The associations of biculturalism to prosocial tendencies and positive self-evaluations' *Journal of Latina/o Psychology* 4(4): 189–201, which found that positive self-evaluations (increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy) mediates pro-social tendencies.

40. Kohn, A. (1994) 'The truth about self-esteem' *Phi Delta Kappan* 76: 272-283.

41. Di Giunta, L., Alessandri, G., Gerbino, M. Luengo Karacri, P., Zuffiano, A. and Vittorio Caprara, G. (2013) 'The determinants of scholastic achievement: the contribution of personality traits, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy' *Learning and Individual Differences* 27: 102–108.

42. See, for example, Pérez-Fuentes M.D.C., Molero Jurado M.D.M., Del Pino R.M., Gázquez Linares J.J. (2019) 'Emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and empathy as predictors of overall self-esteem in nursing by years of experience' *Frontiers in Psychology* 10: 2035.

43. Bumann, M., & Younkin, S. (2012) 'Applying self-efficacy theory to increase interpersonal effectiveness in teamwork' *Journal of Invitational Theory & Practice* 18: 11-18.

44. Di Giunta, et al, n.41.

45. Pérez-Fuentes et al, n. 42.

46. See Stetsenko, n.10.

47. Schunk, D. H. (2012) *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective*, Cambridge: Pearson Publishing, sixth edition. Pearson and Schunk, D. H., & Dibenedetto, M. K. (2016) 'Self-efficacy theory in education' *Handbook of Motivation at School* 2: 34-54.

48. Maruna, n.10. Many other authors have confirmed and developed these findings on the role of agency in desistance, including, Laub, J.H. and R.J. Sampson (2001) 'Understanding desistance from crime', in M. Tonry (ed) *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, 26: 1–69, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; Bottoms, A., Shapland, J., and Costello, A., Holmes, D. and Muir, G. (2004) 'Towards desistance: theoretical underpinnings for an empirical study' *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 43(4): 368-389; Sampson, R. and Laub, J. (2005) 'A life-course view of the development of crime' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 602: 12-45; Vaughan, B. (2007) 'The internal narrative of desistance' *The British Journal of Criminology* 47: 390–404; Weaver, B. and McNeill, F. (2010) 'Travelling hopefully: desistance research and probation practice' in: J. Brayford, F. Cowe and J. Deering (eds) *What Else Works?: Creative Work with Offenders*, Cullompton: Willan, pp. 36-60; and Lloyd, C. D., and Serin, R. C. (2012) 'Agency and outcome expectancies for crime desistance: measuring offenders' personal beliefs about change' *Psychology, Crime & Law* 18(6): 543–565.

49. Bandura, A. (1989) 'Regulation of cognitive processes through perceived self-efficacy' *Developmental Psychology* 25(5): 729-740.

50. See Wikström, P.O., and Treiber, K. (2007) 'The role of self-control in crime causation: beyond Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime' *European Journal of Criminology* 4(2): 37–264 and (2009) 'Violence as situational action' *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 75-96.

education, criminological scholarship also acknowledges that agency doesn't exist in a vacuum. The reciprocal roles of agency and social structure (circumstances and networks) have been long recognised in literature on desistance.[51] Building from this in a recent paper, Johnston et al[52] found that self-efficacy — defined here as a person's confidence in their ability to desist — was related to reduced re-offending. This research also considered several factors expected to enable or constrain self-efficacy: perceived opportunities, self-control and resistance to peer influence were associated with increases in a person's self-efficacy to desist, while delinquent peer association and substance use dependency were associated with decreases in desistance self-efficacy. Significantly, for the purposes of this paper, Johnson and colleagues' research specifically examined the role of social ties on desistance self-efficacy, which they measured in terms of participation in employment,[53] post-secondary education[54] and unstructured socialising.[55] Surprisingly, in light of the body of research linking both education and employment to reduced reoffending,[56] their research found that the education and employment aspects did not mediate the effect of desistance self-efficacy through exerting significant effects on offending.[57] The authors acknowledge it is quite possible their measures of employment and education are poor measures of social ties because they fail to measure the quality of these relationships or the degree of commitment to them. Their study highlights that the role of self-efficacy is well established in relation to the kinds of outcomes our criminal justice institutions care about, and is mediated by environmental and relational contexts, and argues that further research is needed into the relationship between self-efficacy and social ties that may support or undermine its operation.[58]

Building from this existing research, and with qualitative data from the first two years of Learning Together courses at HMP Grendon, we worked with our students to adapt existing measures of the four identified constructs — interpersonal-efficacy, perspective-taking, self-esteem and self-efficacy.[59] In order to quantitatively assess the individual and interpersonal changes students had described in phase one. Based on the findings reported in previous literature and findings from phase one evaluation, we hypothesised that data from these measures would show:

1) significant self-reported increases for all students across all four measures — perspective-taking, self-esteem, interpersonal-efficacy and self-efficacy — following participation in a Learning Together course;

2) increases in perspective-taking predict increases in self-efficacy;

3) increases in self-esteem predict increases in self-efficacy;

4) increases in interpersonal-efficacy predict increases in self-efficacy, and;

   a) greater increases in perspective-taking in combination with greater increases in interpersonal-efficacy are related to greater increases in self-efficacy;

   b) greater increases in self-esteem in combination with greater increases in interpersonal-efficacy are related to greater increases in self-efficacy.

We were also interested to explore whether, and how, these changes and associations across the four measures varied depending upon whether students resided in prison or at university.

51. See for example, Farrall, S. and Bowling, B. (1999) 'Structuration, human development and desistance from crime' *The British Journal of Criminology* 39(2): 253-268; Sampson, R. and Laub, J. (2005) 'A life-course view of the development of crime' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 602: 12-45; LeBel et al, n.21; Farrall, S., Bottoms, A. and Shapland, J. (2010) 'Social structures and desistance from crime' *European Journal of Criminology* 7(6): 546-570; Weaver, B., & McNeill, F. (2015). Lifelines: desistance, social relations, and reciprocity *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 42(1): 95–107; and Weaver, B. (2016) *Offending and Desistance: The importance of Social Relations,* Oxford: Routledge.

52. Johnston, T.M., Brezona, T. and Crank, B.R. (2019) 'Agency, self-efficacy, and desistance from crime: an application of social cognitive theory' *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* 5: 60-85.

53. Measured by number of weeks employed.

54. Measured by enrolments in post-secondary education.

55. Measured by amount of time spent in unstructured activities with e.g. staying out late, going to parties.

56. For a review of the evidence on this see Ford, J.A. and Schroeder, R.D. (2010) 'Higher education and criminal offending over the life course' *Sociological Spectrum* 31: 32-58, and Nguyen, H., and Loughran, T.A. (2018) 'On the measurement and identification of turning points in criminology' *Annual Review of Criminology* 1: 20.1-20.24.

57. They did find that decreasing unstructured socialising increased desistance self-efficacy and was associated with decreases in offending. This confirms findings in other research, see for example Farrall, S., Hunter, B., Sharpe, G. and Calverley, A. (2014) *Criminal Careers in Transition: The Social Context of Desistance from Crime,* Oxford: Oxford University Press; and Segev, D. (2020) *Desistance and Societies in Comparative Perspective,* London: Routledge.

58. See, for example, Brezina, T. (2019) 'Freedom of action, freedom of choice, and desistance from crime: pitfalls and opportunities in the study of human agency' *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* (published online 26 April 2019: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40865-019-00111-w).

59. For exploration of participatory approaches to survey design see Parrado, E., McQuiston, C. and Flippen, C.A., 'Participatory survey research: integrating community collaboration and quantitative methods for the study of gender and HIV risks among hispanic migrants' *Sociological Methods and Research* 34(2): 204-239 and for different approaches to survey question adaptation with research participants through cognitive interviewing see Priede, C. and Farrall, S. (2011) 'Comparing results from different styles of cognitive interviewing: 'verbal probing' vs. 'thinking aloud' *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 14(4): 271-287.

Methods

Participants

A total of 230 students completed a Learning Together course during phase two of our research (January 2017 to May 2019). Of those 230 students, 182 elected to complete questionnaires before they began their Learning Together course and 152 completed these questionnaires again following completion of their course. Overall, 132 of these students (57.4 per cent of the 230 students that completed a course and were eligible to participate) provided quantitative pre and post-course data. This data is included in the analysis below.

Our qualitative data set includes a total of 252 post-course qualitative interviews, 129 of which took place in phase two (97.7 per cent of the 132 students who completed pre-post measures also completed a post-course interview). The remaining 123 interviews were conducted in phase one of the study (academic years 2014-15 and 2015-16). All research participants

were invited to choose a first name by which they could not be identified for use in research publications.[60]

Courses took place in the context of Learning Together partnerships led by the University of Cambridge in partnership with HMPs Grendon, Whitemoor and Warren Hill. Table 1 displays the breakdown of students by course. At the time of participation 57 of the 132 total students in this data set were enrolled in degree courses at the University of Cambridge (42 females, 15 males, mean age 20.09[61] and 75 were prison residents (all males, mean age = 26.30).[62] [63] In the combined student sample, 14.4 per cent of all students self-identified as black[64] (n=19), 65.2 per cent as white (n=86), 11.4 per cent as Asian[65] (n=15), 5.3 per cent as mixed heritage (n=7) and 3.8 per cent as other (n=5).[66] As Table 1 also shows, the length of each course varied from 7 to 14 contact sessions (mean=10) with an 80 per cent attendance requirement.[67] The total completion rate across all courses was 90.4 per cent.[68]

Table 1: Participant breakdown by Learning Together course

Course	Total students enrolled (n)	Completion rate (per cent) evaluation (per cent)	Students completing pre and post	Number of sessions
Criminology 2016/17	23	23 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	10
Criminology 2017/18	23	20 (87.0)	19 (82.6)	10
English Literature 2016/17	21	19 (90.5)	11 (52.4)	10
Good life and Good Society 2016/17	26	26 (100.0)	11 (42.3)	10
Good life and Good Society 2017/18	20	19 (95.0)	12 (60.0)	10
Good life and Good Society 2018/19	21	19 (90.5)	18 (85.7)	10
Butler Law Course 2017/18	20	15 (75.0)	12 (60.0)	9
Butler Law Course 2018/19	26	22 (84.6)	6 (23.1)	10
French Film and Literature 2018/19	24	23 (95.8)	15 (62.5)	7
Law Justice and Society 2018/19	26	22 (84.6)	5 (19.2)	14
Total	**230**	**208 (90.4)**	**132 (57.4)**	**Mean=10 SD=1.61**

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60. See Armstrong and Ludlow, n.4
61. University-based student participant mean age = 20.09, SD = 5.61. The university-based students were slightly older and included more females than the overall student population at the University of Cambridge, probably due to the overrepresentation of women within the particular subjects available as Learning Together courses, and the fact most Learning Together university-based students are second or third year undergraduates or post-graduates. For demographics of University of Cambridge students see https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/13884.
62. Learning Together prison-based student participant mean age = 26.30, SD = 9.28, slightly younger than the median age of the male prison population which is between 30-39. All of our prison-based students were male. Over 95% of the prison population in England and Wales is male, and even higher levels considering that all of our prison-based students were men serving sentences of four years and above. Prison population data is taken from House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number CBP-04334, 23 July 2019, UK Prison Population Statistics.
63. Independent samples t-tests comparing the scores of prison-based and university-based students revealed no significant differences on any of the assessed variables prior to Learning Together (at baseline).
64. This category includes black, African, Caribbean, black British.
65. This category includes Asian, Asian British.
66. Broken down by institutional affiliation, within the prison 22.7% of students self-identified as black (n=17), 54,7% as white (n=41), 10.7% as Asian (n=8), 8% as mixed heritage (n=6) and 4% as other (n=3); within the university 3.5% of students self-identified as black (n=2), 45% as white (n=78.9), 12.3% as Asian (n=7), 1.8% as mixed heritage (n=1) and 3.5% as other (n=2).
67. Contact session mean = 10, SD = 1.61. The number of contact sessions = induction + # taught sessions + end of course celebration.
68. Preliminary analyses suggested no significant differences on any of the measured pre and post-course variables between the students who were included in the analyses compared to those who were not included because they only completed pre- or post-measures.

Data collection

As described above, an iterative mixed-methods approach was taken to evaluation, in which data from phase one informed the development of questionnaires that accompanied further qualitative data collection in phase two. All students taking part in Learning Together and electing to participate in the evaluation completed end of course interviews. The interview schedule was structured by way of 10 broad semi-structured questions, which focused on students' experiences of Learning Together (including high points and low points/challenges, learning environment and pedagogy), motivations for taking part, feelings about themselves and others, and plans for the future. Interviews were conducted by two researchers, often involving a course convenor and one of the research team talking with a student together. Most interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. With consent, interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, anonymised using agreed pseudonyms, and inductively coded. Interviews took place in private, either on a prison wing or in a university office. Occasionally, two students elected to be interviewed together.

All students were also offered the opportunity to complete questionnaires to self-assess their attitudes to learning at the start and end of each course. Completed questionnaires belong to students and are available through Learning Together's digital learning platform. This gives students the opportunity to see what is being measured and how they have assessed themselves. On completing post-course measures, students can also see any changes in their self-assessments. At this stage, students can elect to keep their individual findings private, solely to support their own personal and learning development, or they can choose to submit them anonymously to the overall Learning Together evaluation. Students electing to submit their data to the research, and students

> All students were also offered the opportunity to complete questionnaires to self-assess their attitudes to learning at the start and end of each course.

taking part in an interview, sign a form to indicate their informed consent and choose a name by which they cannot readily be associated and would like to be known in any publications. This can be their own first name or any other first name.

As introduced above, the questionnaire we developed with our students for use in phase two of this research includes measures of the four identified themes of perspective-taking, self-esteem, interpersonal-efficacy and self-efficacy. The questionnaire was developed by adapting validated measures used in previous research. Our measure of perspective-taking comprised three items (=.82 and .72, pre and post, respectively) adapted from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index.[69] Self-esteem comprised four items (=.75 and .64) from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale.[70] Our measures of self-efficacy and interpersonal-efficacy were adapted from a similar measure by Sherer, et al.[71] Following Bandura's recommendation that self-efficacy scales should be specifically tailored to the area of functioning being assessed,[72] we incorporated references to the learning context, using familiar language taken from phase one qualitative data and we re-phrased some of the items of the original scale from negative to positive. Our resulting measure of self-efficacy in a learning context comprises 13 items, such as 'I can try doing a task even if it seems complicated at first glance' and 'I can face difficulties in learning' (= .94 and .93). Our measure of interpersonal-efficacy in a learning context comprises seven items, such as 'I can build relationships that help me to work with people who seem different to me' and 'I can share my ideas confidently with other people' (= .90 and .91). All items for each measure are rated on a 10-point scale from 0 ('cannot do at all') to 10 ('highly certain can do'). The internal consistency of all scales was high to acceptable based on Cronbach's 's (as above) both at baseline (pre) and at the follow-up (post) assessment, suggesting reliability of the measured constructs.[73]

69. Davis, M. H. (1980) 'Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI). A multidimensional approach to individual differences in empathy' JSAS *Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology* 10: 85-95.
70. Rosenberg, M. (1965) 'Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE): Acceptance and commitment therapy.' *Measures Package* 61(52): 18-29.
71. Sherer, M., Maddux, J. E., Mercandante, B., Prentice-Dunn, S., Jacobs, B., and Rogers, R. W. (1982) 'The self-efficacy scale: construction and validation' *Psychological Reports* 51(2): 663-671.
72. Bandura, A. (2006) 'Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales' in F. Pajares and T. Urdan (eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents,* Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
73. Our study sample did not allow us to carry out a factor analysis. However, we are currently working on a validation paper of our study measures based on a much larger university sample. This will include a factor analysis to demonstrate the distinctiveness and consistency of each of the constructs.

Data analysis

Analysis of qualitative data collected across both phases of the research (n=252) was conducted using Atlas-ti software. Following inductive analysis of phase one interviews (n=123), a coding framework was established. All phase one and phase two interviews were included in the analysis.

For quantitative analysis of the pre and post-course questionnaires preliminary and descriptive analyses, as well as paired samples t-tests (utilised to test changes between baseline and post course scores on all of the key study variables) were carried out in SPSS statistical analysis software.[74] Linear regression analyses were carried out to assess whether changes in perspective-taking, self-esteem and interpersonal-efficacy predict changes in self-efficacy. Calculation was carried out utilising G* Power 3 software[75] to determine the required sample size.[76] Moderation analyses were carried out with the PROCESS macro for SPSS using the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates.[77] The 95 per cent confidence interval of the indirect effect was obtained with 5000 bootstrap resamples. All analyses were carried out on the change scores (post-course score — pre-course score) to explore how the changes in the studied variables following course participation related to each other. Analyses were also carried out with the post-course scores, while controlling for pre-course scores and these yielded similar findings.

Findings

In this section we draw on the findings from our qualitative and quantitative analysis to explore each of our hypothesis in turn. Within each section we comment on any differences observed between prison and university-based students.

Do students report significantly higher levels of perspective-taking, self-esteem, interpersonal-efficacy and self-efficacy following participation in a Learning Together course?

During post-course interviews themes of growth through changes in perspective-taking, self-esteem, self-efficacy and interpersonal-efficacy were common. Students told us they began to think and feel differently about things in general, about themselves, about what they wanted and thought they could achieve in life and about who they were connected with on this journey and why that mattered.

Comments on perspective-taking often related to ideas of similarity and difference between the two groups of students, and how Learning Together had challenged simplistic notions of similarity and difference. For example, when asked 'What do you think that you learned on the course?' Lewey, a prison-based student, responded:

I learned that I used to think my situation was unique, and it's not that. Everyone's got — even though you come from different areas and different experiences, there's certain things that are shared.

While Ben, a university-based student, identified the most important thing about the course for him as:

[T]he coming together of people from different backgrounds, because if you do that, that's going to bring up differences between people and it's going to make you realise that actually a lot of those differences are flatter and smaller than you think. That said, there's no point pretending that everybody is on a completely level equal footing when some of us get in a coach and go home at the end of

> During post-course interviews themes of growth through changes in perspective, self-esteem, self-efficacy and interpersonal-efficacy were common.

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74. Difference scores were calculated and zero-order correlations utilised to assess the relations between the change scores; and whether changes in any of the variables are related to changes in the other variables. All the correlations were significant at p< .001, with the exception of one, which was p< .05.

75. Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., and Buchner, A. (2007) 'G* Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences' *Behavior Research Methods* 39(2): 175-191.

76. The calculation suggested that a single moderator model would require a minimum sample of 73 participants to detect small effects (f2=.15) and 55 participants to detect medium effects (f2=.20); both with a standard power level of .95, and alpha of .05. Thus, the sample sizes were sufficient to detect moderation effects on combined sample as well as separately for the sub-samples of university-based (n=57) and prison-based (n=75) students.

77. Hayes, A. F., & Rockwood, N. J. (2017) 'Regression-based statistical mediation and moderation analysis in clinical research: observations, recommendations, and implementation' Behaviour Research and Therapy 98: 39-57.

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the day and some of us are going to be in prison for another 30 years or whatever it might be. But what is special and what's good about the space for me comes primarily from compressing people who normally don't come into contact with one another and making them think about where the differences really are.

Students explained how the Learning Together classroom presented opportunities for social and academic stretch, and how these opportunities appeared to relate to growth in other areas. Speaking about his experiences of giving a speech at the end of course celebration, Gareth, a prison-based student, explained how it boosted his self-esteem:

[F]or a lot of my life, I had this, sort of, like, guilt complex, when I was little, and that manifested itself in sort of, like, self-esteem was basically nothing, you know, and I'd cover that up with sarcastic arrogance and stuff like that, just to try and keep people away […] I actually felt really proud of myself up there […] people were sharing the fact that actually I was, you know, standing up. I knew when I was writing [my speech], [I thought] as long as I can deliver this, I'll be alright. These people are really going to understand what I'm saying, and that's exactly the comments I got back. I was, like, you know, I told myself, this is what I want to do, and I did it. It was the most pure version of validation I think I could have from what I've done.

Students from the university also talked about changes in their self-esteem, but in slightly different ways to the prison-based students. University students explained how the Learning Together class was distinct from their University of Cambridge experiences in its diversity (socio-economic, gender, ethnicity, educational history and other life experiences), as well as its pedagogy which prioritised personal engagement with academic content. Qualitative data for all students suggested a growing self-confidence, but whereas for prison-based students that self-confidence often related to realising they could 'hold their own' (and feel part) in a 'Cambridge' classroom, for university-based students self-confidence often manifested in a realisation they were 'good enough' just as they were; that they had some skills and knowledge with real world currency, and didn't have to be perfect.

Elinor (a university-based student) described herself as struggling with perfectionism and saw her growth as coming to realise 'I'm OK' and 'it's OK that I'm not 'the best''. Claudia (a university-based student) discussed the social paralysis she often feels when interacting with people she doesn't know, but described how 'while I was getting to know people, the confidence was coming back,' as a result of which she said, 'I felt better' and found herself 'interacting more and being less self-conscious of whether 'am I doing this right or am I doing this wrong?'.' Claudia specifically attributed this growth in self-confidence to the interactions she had in her small group within the Learning Together classroom:

I felt that my group had grown around me, actually, and this is something that happened quite soon [early in the course] and it gave me a lot of confidence, and I feel that these bonds have grown more throughout the course.

William describes something similar in relating his own growth in confidence to his experience of a different learning environment and a sense of his place, utility and purpose within the group:

No one was very sort of 'humble' and they were all very willing to listen to each other. No one was intimidating or anything like that, so that was good, and there was no one desperately trying to prove themselves or anything like that. So maybe some of the negative things you'd get in the learning environment in Cambridge weren't there at Whitemoor. I think I became more confident, definitely, because — it was great to actually be sharing ideas with other people and talking about them and it actually working, people responding and registering what they are saying and surprising you and saying interesting things in response. That was definitely a confidence boost, because you feel like you are doing something that's making a difference for the people there.

> Students from the university also talked about changes in their self-esteem, but in slightly different ways to the prison-based students.

This growth in self-esteem seemed, in turn, to boost self-efficacy. For many prison-based students, like Rosca, Learning Together was their first positive experience of an educational environment. Rosca linked this to a growing sense of self-efficacy — feeling different about himself and his future:

R: To be honest with you, my experiences of learning even when I was in school and things like that has always been shit. I've always been picked on because I was different and I didn't speak the language well and I came from here and I came from there, so everyone used to try their best to pick on me. So me going into [Learning Together], I think it was massive for me because I haven't been in that environment learning with people in a classroom or doing anything. Even in prison I've always stayed away from education, just because of my experiences in the past.

I: So who is Rosca now?

R: Confident. I would like to say confident. Although I still have doubts every now and then in my mind, but I think everyone has doubts, it's just knowing that, actually, yes, I can do this. If I want to learn I can learn. If I want to do rapping, I can rap. Anything I want to do, I can actually do it. So I'm more confident. I think Learning Together has played a massive part in that.

For others, such as James, another prison-based student, increased self-esteem through Learning Together didn't just influence what he thought he could do in life, but also with whom he thought he could do it:

I came to prison when I was 18. I've been in for nearly 14 years now, and I'm not going to lie, there's been periods where I've thought, do you know what, it's over, I've fucking, I've disseminated my life, it's done, I've ruined it as well as ruining other people's. […] And then, things like this can, like I say, reignite that fire in my belly and give me a desire to get out — it's a self-esteem booster and it's kind of, I'm

going to get stuff out of it for me, you know? It's about realising my life is not over and I can still make something of myself. I can still get out, find love, have a family, have a good job, have good friends, not fucking criminals. Yes, it's about that.

University-based students narrated similar changes in self-efficacy but, once again, these often related more to translating academic competence into 'real world' currency or capacity. Zoe, for example, attributed her increased certainty about what she wanted to do, and the sense she could do it, to a less pressured learning environment, encouragement from fellow students and the confidence boost and broadened career options that had come from being around other people who didn't feel they had to have an entire life plan sorted:

I think I'm a bit surer of my plans for the future. I think meeting all the different people in Grendon and then having a conversation with them about the stuff that I want to do and all those sorts of things, and they are actually all very encouraging — and meeting people sort of outside of your realm of being in uni, where everyone has got a plan, and getting encouragement from people that are completely different or that are inside is quite validating, I would say. But also, my focus has shifted more to prisons and police law, away from broadly criminal stuff.

For others, changes in self-efficacy related more to learning real-life transferrable skills which could be put to use in a chosen career. Jane was training to be a curate in the Church of England. She talked about how she would now 'feel more confident' about building a diverse congregation. The interviewer then asked her 'What if you had a whole bunch of parishioners that said 'That person can't be in our church?", to which she replied:

Well, I'd feel much more like, part of me will want to say, 'That's a load of rubbish, and you need to change what you think!', but also, having been through this process, and

understood more about mentoring in the community and the process of learning in prison, realising more that you can't just say that. You've got to take them through that process as well. I think I'd feel more confident being able to do that.

Running through all of this data about the more individual aspects of perspective-taking, self-esteem and self-efficacy, is the role of the interpersonal — the group. As Elinor, a university-student put it, 'the learning happens in the interaction.' Learning, and learning gain, can sometimes be viewed quite individualistically — what did one student learn or gain — but in interview our students seemed to describe a movement beyond individual gain, towards a mutuality inherent in achieving shared goals. The African philosophy of 'Ubuntu' — literally, 'I am, because we are' — seems to sum this up well.

Students recognised their individual contributions were important not in and of themselves, but as a part of a larger whole. One university-based student, Laura, a keen rugby player, related her experiences of Learning Together to being part of a team, where it's not about you as an individual, but your contribution is nevertheless vital:

For me […] it's something that's not about you, because it happens without you there, but part of it is also you, you have to be there for it to happen too, so it's kind of not all about you, but you are also part of it. There's a lot of parallels with [the rugby team name] environment and Learning Together. You're giving everything because the best thing is for everybody to have a good experience and for you to win the match. […] I don't want to win rugby matches because I want to win them, I want to win them because I want to play the best I can for my friends. So, it's about your goal not being about self-gain, I think, so you're not trying to gain anything for yourself.

This sense of mutuality and interdependence was often narrated in future oriented terms. Earlier in this

article we quoted Lewey, a prison-based student who explained how his perspective shifted over the course from thinking his situation was unique, to realising many things were shared. In his interview he went on to explain:

I must admit at first, when I first joined the course, I was thinking, 'You're only here to pick our brains, to use us as guinea pigs to see what you can gain from us. It's an opportunity for you to just come into a prison and meet prisoners.' But after a while, that went away. You could see that they were genuine good people […] you could see that it's not like that. We both were sharing our experiences. It wasn't one-sided. It was both sided. It was good.

When asked about the most important thing he'd learned on the course, he said:

That [other people] are compassionate. They don't just see us as criminals, the lowest of the low, and that they want us — to see us do well in the future.

Lewey's learning was not just about how he saw others, but also about how others saw him and, confirming prior research findings about the impact of perceived stigma,[78] he links this to a more positive imagined future, not just the one he imagines for himself, but the one he thinks others might also imagine for him. He indicates a sense of shared ownership of future hopes and dreams — from 'I am because we are' to 'I can be, because we are.'

When we examined these patterns through our quantitative data, we found that students' narratives of change were supported statistically. We began by running paired sample t-tests to assess differences between the scores of all students at baseline (pre-course) compared to their scores following completion of a Learning Together course (post-course). These analyses suggested significant increases across all four aspects for the combined sample (see Figure 1)[79] as well as for the university-based and prison-based students separately (see Figure 2). In other words, all students reported significantly more perspective-taking, self-

Running through all of this data about the more individual aspects of perspective-taking, self-esteem and self-efficacy, is the role of the interpersonal - the group.
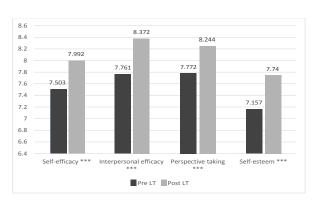
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78. See LeBel et al, n.21
79. Self-efficacy [t(131) = -4.899, p < .001], interpersonal-efficacy [t(131) = -6.350, p = < .001], perspective-taking [t(131) = -4.540, p < .001], and self-esteem [t(131) = -5.287, p < .001].

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esteem, interpersonal-efficacy and self-efficacy following completion of a Learning Together course as compared to their self-assessment at baseline (pre-course).
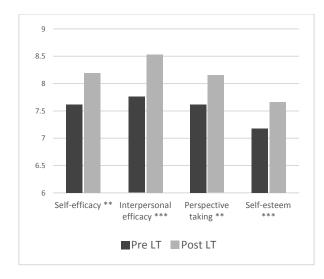
Figure 1: Pre-post Learning Together course differences on all key variables (n = 132).

Note: *** p < .001

Figure 2: Pre-post Learning Together differences on all key variables by institution.

a) Prison-based students (n = 75)

b) University-based students (n = 57)
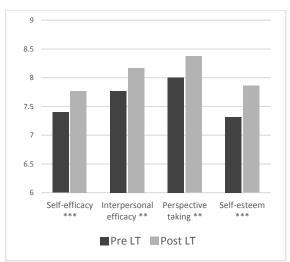

Note: *** p < .001; ** p < .01

We used independent sample t-tests to compare pre-post-course change scores between prison-based and university-based students. This revealed that all students reported statistically significant increases from pre to post course, and that the rate of these increases were similar between the two groups. The one exception to this was the pre to post-course increase in interpersonal-efficacy, where prison-based students reported significantly higher increases than their university-based counterparts.[80]

Our quantitative analysis thus corroborated findings from qualitative data analysis, indicating growth across all four measures as students learned together. However, in the qualitative data, students were not simply describing increases across these four aspects of change; they also seemed to describe directional links between them. For example, in the quote below Adam, a prison-based student, relates his increasing self-esteem to the kinds of vulnerabilities it is possible to risk in a supportive group learning situation (interpersonal-efficacy). He connects this, in turn, with how he thinks about his future and what he can achieve (self-efficacy):

I: What would you say you learnt from Learning Together?

A: I learned a fair bit about criminology, but I'd say that was quite a distant second to [wells up with tears] [...] What's the matter with me? I think you kind of put in front of us a range of challenges that were much broader than I'd expected, and I kind of learned that I was able to step up and meet those

challenges. So, I learned that I'm a lot more capable than I thought I was.

I: What did that feel like?

A: It feels really good, yes. It's just really changed the way I see the future. I wouldn't rule myself out of anything really now. For a long time, I was dogged by these confidence issues, I've ruled myself out of so much, but [now] there's nothing literally that I would

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80.   [t(130) = -1.964; p = .052].

limit myself in doing, which is really different. To you guys [speaking in public] probably seems like something that's just a completely matter of course, but that's the kind of thing that frightens me, but I did it, and I did it fine. From then on, all the little challenges that come along, especially the group project, I had to do some work in my group with that because I was worried about it. It was one of those things where the potential for feeling silly or exposure felt quite high, but I was really, really amazed at how it went. You put the pressure on us, you said, 'You've got 90 minutes or so in this new group, to come up with something meaningful and come up with a presentation,' and it's scary but we came up with something that I was proud of. Doing it on the day of the graduation as well, it meant a lot to me. It did.

On the basis of our qualitative findings, as encapsulated in the way Adam narrates his change above, coupled with the previous empirical studies we described in the literature at the beginning of this paper, we expected that increases in perspective-taking, self-esteem and interpersonal-efficacy would all predict increases in self-efficacy. We were also interested in self-efficacy as an outcome variable because, as the literature we described above shows, it is empirically related to the kinds of outcomes prisons and universities care about. Below we report our findings from exploring these associations.

Do increases in perspective-taking predict increases in self-efficacy?

In order to explore this association quantitatively, we carried out a linear regression analysis on the full sample and the two sub-samples (of prison and university-based students) independently. On the combined prison and university sample the findings suggested that perspective-taking was an independent and significant predictor of self-efficacy.[81] This remained the case when we ran the analyses on the two sub-samples of prison based and university-based students separately.[82] In our qualitative data, students like Lewey had told us that their perspectives were changing, that this made a difference to the kinds of things they wanted to do with their lives and their sense they could achieve them. This was confirmed in our quantitative findings. Above, we drew on Zoe's interview to describe the ways in which many university-based students found themselves developing broader and different

ideas of what they might want to do in the future and how they might do it. This was often linked with new confidence in the skills they now recognised which could help them to achieve their goals. Zoe explicitly linked changing her perspective on people who are in prison to a broadened sense of where and how she might use her skills to affect change:

I had a change of heart over the year about what I want to do. I kind of went into it [the MPhil in criminology] very police oriented. [Now] I wouldn't rule it out [joining the police], but I would like something where I'm doing more to promote social justice. But I'm not quite sure yet.

I: What does 'more social justice oriented' mean?

Z: Sort of helping vulnerable people in some way. Maybe directly, maybe indirectly, but having a career where I have an impact on that.

I: And do you think your experiences of Learning Together played into that?

Z: Definitely.

I: Why or how?

Z: I think because I went into it with the whole policing idea, I'd already branded people criminals. Does that make sense?

I: Mmm

Z: Of course, we need policing, but it was just kind of a revelation to see it from another, coming at it from another angle, which is hard, like prevention, and thinking about how to help people who are vulnerable from maybe entering a criminal lifestyle.

I: Pre-policing?

Z: Pre-policing, something like that. I'm not saying for definite, but it's something I'm more open to now. The only thing I would say is that I used to think I definitely couldn't work in prisons, [but now I think] why not, basically? But then I just think that maybe Learning Together is like the best of the best

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81.   F(1,131) = 24.896; p < .001.
82.   Prison-based students F(1,74) = 13.634; p < 0.001; University-based students F(1, 56) = 10.382; p = 0.002.

of prisons and I don't want to be naïve about it and think that it would always be like that. But that's still a possibility.

Learning Together had expanded Zoe's understanding of the social justice issues entwined with criminality, and she had grown to view people in prison differently as they learned together.[83] As a result, she also began to think of her own skills differently and to realise that while she might well be a good police officer, and because prisons were not just full of 'criminals' but broader social problems, she might also be able to work in prisons. So, our quantitative findings confirmed the directionality apparent in our qualitative data — that as students learned together their perspective-taking skills increased, and this drove an increase in their perceived self-efficacy — what they wanted to achieve and the sense they could achieve it.

Do increases in self-esteem predict increases in self-efficacy?

We ran the same tests as described above for perspective-taking to examine whether increases in self-esteem also predicted increases in self-efficacy. In the combined sample, the quantitative data analysis confirmed that changes in self-esteem predict changes in self-efficacy.[84] When we ran the analyses on the two sub-samples of prison and university-based separately, we found support for this link in both.[85] As with perspective-taking, these quantitative findings were also consistent with what students such as James, Rosca, Claudia and William told us in interview, namely that as they learned together they began to feel more positive about themselves, which led to increased self-confidence in their abilities to achieve their goals. George put the link most clearly when he explained what seemed different for him since taking part in Learning Together:

[What is different now is] my outlook on education. Because just before — I only literally started doing education last year. I left school with a spelling age at 16 of a 7 year old, and I came to prison when I was 18, and

I never did anything in prison. I did two and a half years before I was 21, no qualifications or anything. Got out — I was only out five weeks. Got lifted off when I was 21, and even up until coming here [current prison], I still never did no education, and it was Nick [prior Learning Together student], remember him? He sort of strong armed me into education, forced me on this big meeting in here [What is Learning Together? information session on the wing], and I never thought I had the ability or capability to do it because the rest of my life, when I was a kid and that, I got told I wouldn't be able to do nothing. I've got dyslexia and that, so — but doing Criminology — even the level ones and level twos [entry level maths and English available in the prison] are good but they're not really — you know what I mean? They're just basic aren't they, but doing this — I got a merit, you know what I mean, on my essay! And I thought if I got a merit — this is putting none of the Cambridge lot down, yeah? — [but] those people on there [the Learning Together course] only got passes, and I thought, 'Wow, I can do this.' You know what I mean? I'm on par with these people.

I: And how does that make you feel?

G: It feels good. I've got drive now to think I've got a little path in life I can go down.

In George's explanation, his self-esteem is raised as he realises he has some skills 'on a par' with students from Cambridge and he directly links this to increased 'drive' and a belief that he has 'a little path in life he can go down'. Three years on since this interview, George is on his way to completing his undergraduate degree.

What is the role of interpersonal-efficacy?

Throughout the qualitative data, the role of the interpersonal appeared to be a central force

> As they learned together they began to feel more positive about themselves, which led to increased self-confidence in their ability to achieve their goals.

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83. Zoe's understanding of her own shift in perspectives about people with criminal convictions and her underpinning assumptions about social justice and police/prison work are interesting reflections on different public perceptions of police and prisons work and perhaps on how and by whom they are taught, but are beyond the scope of this paper.
84. $F_{(1,131)} = 40.323$; $p < .001$.
85. Prison-based students $F_{(1,74)} = 22.924$; $p < 0.001$; University-based students $F_{(1, 56)} = 16.703$; $p < 0.001$.

encouraging the gains students described. As the quotes above show, students often spoke about the importance of interactions with each other as they learned, but sometimes, as with Jason (a prison-based students) it was an interaction with a lecturer that really made him think about himself and his future differently:

When Nicky Padfield [Professor of Law and retired Judge] came in, I remember she'd come in before we spoke. She came in and sat down and I was asking her questions and she was asking me questions and it was the first time I thought to myself, 'Hang on, I'm sitting down with a judge here!' She was so down to earth, and I probably have made loads of judgments — and then I remember after she finished [lecturing] she came back and found me and we sat down and we spoke again and she asked me what I thought after what she had said, and it was just nice to be able to put my side across, and I could see she was interested in how I thought about things. I think that was one of the most enjoyable days on the course for me. […] So I suppose that's what's given me, the confidence to, like I said before, to write to the Longford Trust and ask for help [to fund further education]. [Before Learning Together] I would have thought, 'They've got no time for me. I'm not their kind of person.' But I suppose that's what Learning Together has taught me. It kind of stands for what it says. It's about learning together regardless of your background, colour, your religion.

> But I suppose that's what Learning Together has taught me. It kind of stands for what it says. It's about learning together regardless of your background, colour, your religion.

In this quote we can see how Jason links the impact of an interaction with 'a judge' who was 'interested in how I thought about things' made him reconsider his own judgements [perspective-taking] and it boosted his self-esteem to the extent that he began to think of himself as the 'kind of person' [self-confidence] who could successfully apply for help with funding for further education [self-efficacy].

Similarly, Josh, a university-based student, described how the interactions involved in taking part in Learning Together had 'empowered' him to work in a refugee camp in Greece over the Easter break, and influenced the charitable work he took up immediately after completing his degree in Cambridge. He described how his experiences on the course 'really helped me develop my own capacity for empathy' which he was careful to distinguish as not 'kind of patronising, like I have empathy for them because they're here [in prison] and I'm there [free], but […] empathy […] that means really seeing the goodness and the complexity in people who are in very difficult circumstances and to not use that as a constraint or as a constraining factor but to use that as something that kind of compels me to do meaningful things in the world and to work towards social justice'. Josh went on:

I think empathy is tough because I think in many ways, it draws divisions too, […] but it's acknowledging those divisions and working towards a more just and equitable world as a result of it. So a couple of weeks ago I was in Greece, I was volunteering at a refugee camp for a couple of weeks, and it was on the back of this course and it was in light of it too, but I found a very similar kind of experience as with Learning Together. I think it was maybe in part because of the course that I felt capable of having really meaningful interactions with people, not shying away from interacting with people for fear of being patronising, and being able to put myself out there even with people who are in very, very difficult and very different circumstances than I am, and use that as personally empowering.

For Josh, his interactions with others on the Learning Together course had taught him a more complex version of empathy (perspective-taking), which he experienced as underpinning both his belief that he was capable of working in challenging circumstances (self-esteem), his decision to do that work, and sense that he did it well (self-efficacy).

To explore whether this directional relationship was also reflected in our quantitative data we tested the effect of interpersonal-efficacy on self-efficacy. We also examined the role of interpersonal-efficacy as a moderator of the link between changes in perspective-taking and changes in self-efficacy, as well as between changes in self-esteem and self-efficacy. In other words, we tested our hypothesis suggesting that the effects of the increases in self-esteem and perspective-taking on increases in self-efficacy will be exacerbated by

Table 3: Moderation effects of interpersonal-efficacy on the link between perspective-taking and self-efficacy; and self-esteem and self-efficacy.

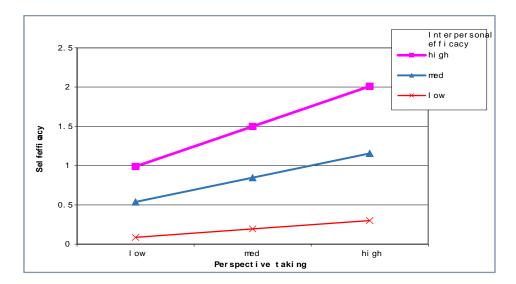| Sample	Predictor	R^2	Estimate	SE	t-value	p	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Combined	Perspective-taking	.459	.164	.068	2.415	.017	.0298	.300
	Interpersonal-efficacy		.5194	.0765	6.787	<.001	.368	.670
	Perspective-taking x interpersonal-efficacy		.153	.050	3.015	.003	.052	.353
Prison	Perspective-taking	.466	.179	.091	1.960	.053[86]	-.003	.362
	Interpersonal-efficacy		.574	.116	4.892	<.001	.338	.802
	Perspective-taking x interpersonal-efficacy		.153	.065	2.329	.022	.022	.285
University	Perspective-taking	.432	.166	.110	1.511	.136	-.054	.387
	Interpersonal-efficacy		.449	.089	5.016	<.001	.269	.629
	Perspective-taking x interpersonal-efficacy		.080	.130	.613	.542	-.182	.342
Combined	Self-esteem	.480	.242	.064	3.790	.002	.116	.369
	Interpersonal-efficacy		.534	.073	7.275	<.001	.389	.679
	Self-esteem x interpersonal-efficacy		.144	.055	2.625	.009	.035	.254
Prison	Self-esteem	.491	.286	.089	3.185	.002	.107	.465
	Interpersonal-efficacy		.574	.109	5.238	<.001	.355	.792
	Self-esteem x interpersonal-efficacy		.158	.077	2.047	.044	.004	.312
University	Self-esteem	.453	.173	.093	1.848	.070	-.014	.361
	Interpersonal-efficacy		.446	.099	4.497	<.001	.247	.644
	Self-esteem x interpersonal-efficacy		.065	.085	.7641	.448	-.106	.237

increases in interpersonal-efficacy. That is, increases in both will evidence a greater effect on increases in self-efficacy (see Table 3).

Our findings on the combined sample suggested that both perspective-taking and interpersonal-efficacy were independent and significant predictors of self-efficacy. However, the interaction effect in this model was also significant. This suggests that students with higher reported changes in either perspective-taking or interpersonal-efficacy also reported higher changes in

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86. This finding is taken as statistically significant but is to be interpreted with some caution as it is only less than .05 after rounding down.

Figure 3. Moderation — perspective-taking predicting self-efficacy when moderated by interpersonal-efficacy in the combined sample.

their self-efficacy. In addition, those who were scoring highest on both perspective-taking and interpersonal-efficacy scored highest on self-efficacy (see Figure 3).

When we separated out the moderation analysis to look at the interaction effects within the sample by institution (prison/university), for prison-based students we found the same pattern of findings as for the overall sample. Increases in perspective-taking predicted increases in self-efficacy, and importantly, changes in interpersonal-efficacy were even more effective in predicting changes in self-efficacy where changes in perspective-taking were also high (see Figure 4(a)). In contrast, when looking at university-based students alone (see Figure 4b), only changes in interpersonal-efficacy predicted changes in self-efficacy.

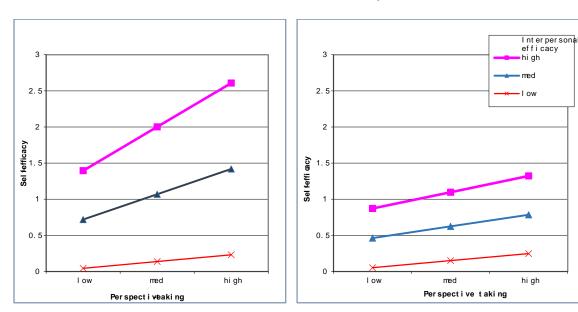Prison-based students   University-based students

Figure 4. Moderation — perspective-taking predicting self-efficacy moderated by interpersonal-efficacy in the sample separated by institution (prison/university).

We next tested whether the link between changes in self-esteem related to changes in self-efficacy differed at different levels of interpersonal-efficacy. For the combined sample, findings were similar to those for perspective-taking, (see Table 3; Figure 5) — both changes in self-esteem and changes in interpersonal-efficacy predicted changes in self-efficacy. Similar to the findings above, the interaction effect was also significant

Figure 5. Moderation — self-esteem predicting self-efficacy moderated by interpersonal-efficacy in the combined sample.
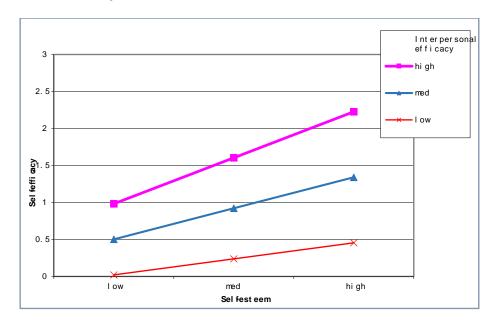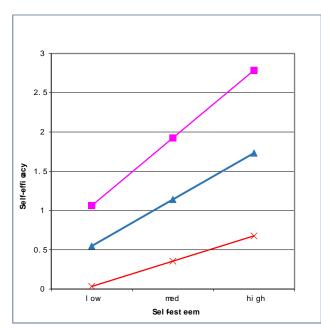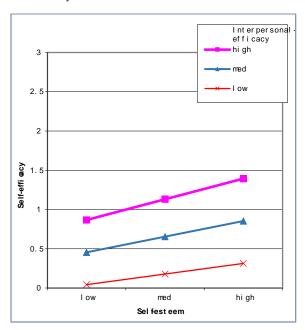

Figure 6. Moderation — self-esteem predicting self-efficacy moderated by interpersonal-efficacy in the sample separated by institution (prison/university).

Prison-based students

University-based students

suggesting that students reporting the greatest changes in self-esteem and interpersonal-efficacy also reported the greatest increases in their self-efficacy. The same pattern of findings was found when looking at the prison-based students only (see Figure 6a). When looking at university-based students only (see Figure 6b), once again, only changes in interpersonal-efficacy predicted changes in self-efficacy.

So what?

We will never forget those early meetings in 2014 with students at the University of Cambridge and students at HMP Grendon where we explained to them our hope to build and evaluate a community of learners, and asked them if they might be interested to work with us. Over the five years since then they, and the many students who have followed, have taught us so much. In their book *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Miles

Horton and Paolo Freire argue, 'What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.'[87] The findings presented in this article support the broader research that suggests we become ourselves in relationship with others who provide connections, possibilities and encouragement.[88] The hypotheses we outlined above were designed to help us understand if, and how, individual and social factors of growth changed through learning together and how they interacted in this process of 'becoming'. Specifically, because of previous research suggesting that perceptions of self-efficacy are important to the outcomes prisons and universities care about, we wanted to understand how changes in perspective-taking, self-esteem and interpersonal-efficacy interacted with our students' sense of changes in self-efficacy. We have done so, and our findings suggest that to 'become ourselves' most fully — to experience ourselves as effective — we need one other.

Looking first at the main findings for all of our students together, we see that their sense of self-esteem, perspective-taking, interpersonal-efficacy and self-efficacy all increase from before to after taking part in Learning Together. Learning Together is not a neutral experience and is not simply a higher education qualification. Students say the process of completing a course together changes how they feel about themselves and their futures. Based on prior research findings, we expected that across all of our participants increasing self-esteem, perspective-taking and interpersonal-efficacy would predict increases in self-efficacy. Looking at all of the qualitative and quantitative data together, this seems to be the case — students' perceptions of their own abilities to achieve their goals (self-efficacy) were strengthened as a result of self-reported increases in perspective-taking, self-esteem and interpersonal-efficacy. But because our interviews highlighted the particular importance of interpersonal engagement in bringing about these changes, we also explored what happens if interpersonal-efficacy was added into the statistical 'mix'. We wanted to understand the joint influence of

> Our findings suggest that to 'become ourselves' most fully - to experience ourselves as effective - we need one another.

increases in self-esteem and interpersonal-efficacy, and the joint influence of increases in perspective-taking and interpersonal-efficacy in terms of raising self-efficacy. What we found, is that increases in interpersonal-efficacy are at the heart of the ways in which all of these factors interact to predict increases in self-efficacy. Because previous literature notes positive relations between increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy, [89] and perspective-taking and self-efficacy[90] increasing these elements in isolation can often be a goal of education. Our findings suggest these gains will be maximised by putting the interpersonal at the heart of learning. We discussed earlier how previous research in education and criminological literature highlight psycho-social processes of identity construction and meaning-making.[91] While Horton and Freire put the role of 'the educator' at the heart of students 'becoming themselves', our findings broaden this out to include everyone in the classroom — the transformative 'magic' is found in us all learning together, with and from each other.

Because our qualitative data suggested some potential differences between prison and university based students in relation to how different aspects interacted with self-efficacy, we also separated our quantitative data by group to explore our hypotheses. When looking at the university students alone, while changes were significant across self-esteem, perspective-taking, interpersonal-efficacy and self-efficacy, when we looked at what predicted changes in self-efficacy, we found that interpersonal-efficacy was not just the most important predictor, it was the only significant predictor. For university-based students alone, only increases in interpersonal-efficacy predicted increases in self-efficacy. In light of previous research,[92] we expected that increases in self-esteem and increases in perspective-taking to also predict increases in self-efficacy, and it may be that with higher numbers of university-based students data included in future analysis these links become significant.[93] At present, our data for university students suggests that broadening participation in higher education could be important not only for those individuals who might not

87. 1990, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p.181.
88. See above, n.20.
89. See Kohn, n.40.
90. See Perez Fuentes, n.42.
91. See notes 13, 14, 14, 15, and 16.
92. See above n. 40 - 45.
93. Due to the relatively small sample size, our findings for university-based students should be interpreted with some caution.

otherwise attend university, but because a diverse classroom broadens the potential for the development of interpersonal-efficacy in all students, and this relates to the transformative effect of learning. We all learn more when we learn together.

When we looked at the data from prison-based students alone we found two differences that we think are pertinent in light of the research we reviewed above. First, just like the university-based students, the data on prison-based students alone showed statistically significant increases pre to post-course across all four of our measures. There were no significant differences between the baseline measures between groups, but when we compared the increases across the separate groups, we found that prison-based students reported increases in interpersonal-efficacy that were significantly greater than those reported by the university-based students. We think this finding is especially interesting because we know from research on the process of desistance that building a new non-offending life after being involved in a criminal lifestyle is incredibly difficult. In his review of the literature, Anthony Bottoms begins by stating the fact that 'most offenders [sic], even persistent offenders [sic], eventually desist from crime, and to a significant extent they do this on their own initiative'.[94] And in his study exploring differences between those who fall back into crime and those who manage to move away, Shadd Maruna found that this process involved what he called 'tragic optimism' — a sense of self-efficacy that was not dampened by the extreme difficulties encountered in trying to rebuild one's life.[95] This could be interpreted very individually — those who make it are those who can make it on their own. But our findings suggest that crucial to developing and increasing one's 'own initiative' — the sense you can achieve what you intend to — is the interpersonal — a belief in one's ability to form meaningful relationships and work with a wide range of others. Perhaps our prison-based students' more pronounced increases in interpersonal-efficacy reflect their perceptions of how much they will need these relational connections to secure the success they desire and, perhaps more

> We know from research on the process of desistance that building a new non-offending life after being involved in a criminal lifestyle is incredibly difficult.

importantly, their increasing recognition that they are able to build such connections and relationships. In future research it will be important to follow up with these students to see if they have managed to maintain this increased sense of interpersonal-efficacy, to act on it by building relationships and working effectively with others as they move through the prison estate and into life post-release, or as they move on from university, and to explore how their experiences in different social contexts support or diminish these gains.

The second difference between prison and university-based students strengthens this argument. While for university-based students, interpersonal-efficacy was the only predictor of increasing self-efficacy, for prison-based students increases in perspective-taking and self-esteem also predicted increases in self-efficacy, and when we included increases in interpersonal-efficacy into the mix, it enhanced their positive impact on self-efficacy. In the literature review above we highlighted the important role of self-efficacy in desistance from crime and noted especially recent work by Johnson and colleagues which included exploration of interactions between social ties and 'desistance self-efficacy'. Looking at enrolments in post-secondary education courses, they found this 'social-tie' did not increase self-efficacy, and highlighted the need for further research in this area.[96] Our findings in this area question whether enrolments in education really capture what is important about these activities for their relationship with self-efficacy. Of course, getting into 'college' might boost one's self-esteem, and experiences of learning might broaden perspectives. But enrolling in higher education might also be a disappointment, and might not boost self-efficacy in expected ways, especially if experiences do not in fact provide social ties that enhance students' beliefs in their ability to form relationships and rely on others to achieve their goals (interpersonal-efficacy). More nuanced measures of the nature of the social ties developed through educational participation, and how these interact with other areas of individual self-belief might tell a different story about the kinds of education through which we are formed and in turn form others

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94. Bottoms, A., (2014) 'Desistance from crime' in Ashmore, Z. and Shuker, R. (eds.) *Forensic Practice in the Community,* London and New York: Routledge, p.251.
95. See Maruna, n.10.
96. See Johnson, n.52

and the world around us — or to use Freire's words, what kinds of education might be either 'the practice of freedom' or a 'pedagogy of the oppressed'.[97]

Interesting as these differences are, they should not obscure the main message of the findings in this article, which is that for both prison and university-based students interpersonal-efficacy was doing the work, albeit through slightly different paths. For all of our students, Learning Together enabled them, to believe that they can form positive relationships and engage relationally in their learning, through networks, and this was the most important predictor of increased self-efficacy. Perspective-taking and self-esteem were also important for increasing self-efficacy (especially for our prison-based students) and their power was also enhanced through students' beliefs in their interpersonal abilities. As Elinor suspected in the quote with which we introduced this paper, 'The learning [really does] happen[s] in the interaction.'

These findings pose interesting questions and challenges for some of the policies and practices that currently define the delivery of education in our criminal justice and higher education institutions in England and Wales. The delivery of education in our prisons has, for many years, been individual learner centric — focused on quantifiable certificated achievement, with a 'tick box' approach to educational attainment to reduce individual criminogenic risk. This has often come at the cost of a broader, and more nuanced, focus on what might be learned and experienced through education, including learning that happens outside formal educational settings or accredited qualifications.[98] Skills-based 'training' is often conflated with education.[99]

> Higher education opportunities in prison are scarce and are delivered exclusively at a distance, without a strong sense of community through which students can learn and feel part.

Higher education opportunities in prisons are scarce and are delivered exclusively at a distance, without a strong sense of community through which students can learn and feel part.[100] A longstanding lack of technological provision in prisons means that opportunities for creating learning communities virtually have not yet been exploited,[101] though we welcome the emergence of some new urgency and possibility in this direction as a result of Covid-19. As we have argued elsewhere,[102] somewhat similar criticisms have been levied at how some of our universities conceive and deliver higher education, including highly individualised pedagogical approaches and narrow focuses on quantifiable outcomes at the expense of broader philosophies and measures of learning gain.[103]

In their recent book on the purposes and practices of universities, Ed Byrne and Charles Clarke argue that universities should be 'engines of change and social justice' but are, in many ways, failing to live up to those ambitions.[104]

Our findings, with their emphasis on the social, do not easily align with predominant atomistic and individualistic ways of thinking that shape public policy generally,[105] and that shape higher education and prison education in some of the ways we have described above.[106] If the 'magic' of education really is unlocked by enabling students to form and mobilise social relationships and networks, then serious consideration might need to be given to how we 're-socialise' learning. This should include consideration of what is offered as much as how (including with whom) it is offered, and the ways in which we measure and understand indicators of 'success' in our prisons and universities. This prompts further critical reflections

97. Freire, P. (1973) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd: London.
98. See, for example, Coates, n.8 and Ludlow, Armstrong and Bartels, n.9.
99. G. Czerniawski (2020) 'Prison education: a Northern European wicked policy problem?' in Albertson, Corcoran and Phillips (eds) *Marketisation and Privatisation in Criminal Justice,* Bristol: Policy Press, pp.273-291 at 275.
100. Though see also E. Hughes (2012) *Education in Prison: Studying through Distance Learning*, London: Routledge, and R. Earle and J. Mehigan (eds) (2020) *Degrees of Freedom*, Bristol: Policy Press.
101. See Coates, n.8.
102. Ludlow, Armstrong and Bartels, n.9.
103. See especially Vermunt, J.D., Ilie, S. & Vignoles, A. (2018) 'Building the foundations for measuring learning gain in higher education: a conceptual framework and measurement instrument', *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 3:1, 266-301, and references above n. 8.
104. E. Byrne and C. Clarke (2020) *The University Challenge: Changing Universities in a Changing World,* Pearson Education Limited: Harlow.
105. See e.g. R. Sennett (2006) *The Culture of the New Capitalism,* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
106. See generally Garland, D. (2002) *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. On the impact of these ideologies on prison education, see especially G. Czerniawski (2016) 'A race to the bottom: prison education and the English and Welsh policy context' *Journal of Education Policy,* 31(2): 198-212.

about the current capacities and resources of our institutions to support this relational work and equip people to do it well. Building interpersonal-efficacy, developing students' beliefs that they can build relationships and work in meaningful ways with a range of others, requires significant skill and a carefully considered pedagogy, with social justice at its heart. This is especially true when navigating relationality across 'difference', of which combined prison-university classrooms are just one example, where there are risks of entrenching and compounding prejudice and stigma, and ignoring (rather than reducing) underpinning inequalities.[107] Learning how to form and nurture social ties within diverse communities is 'messier' work than the 'banking model' of education, which Freire described as a system that deposits 'facts' into students who passively receive and regurgitate them in individual assessments.[108] Our data, combined with a growing wealth of research from a range of different fields from mental health to employment, suggest that these skills are potent and essential for wellbeing and human flourishing.[109] With that in mind, it feels essential that prisons and universities lean into those challenges. Of course, prisons and universities do not work in a policy vacuum, and political decisions can make it easier or more difficult to make these institutions more or less inclusive or excluding. We have noted elsewhere the international variation in policy approaches to welcoming people with criminal convictions to universities,[110] and argued that if prisons are to be agents of positive individual and social change it could be more sensible to locate them at the heart of communities rather than making them as geographically and politically isolated as possible.[111]

Finally, our findings also underscore the importance of understanding the qualitative value and personal development taken from learning experiences.

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They remind us of the need to advance and measure the mechanisms that support positive personal change. Such insights might well be transferrable and measurable across different institutional 'interventions', beyond education.[112] They might point us in new directions, encouraging us to resist the temptation to assume that all education or all employment is inherently positive, or positive in the same ways, for all people. Education can transform a person's sense of self, and their hopes and prospects for what they want and are able to achieve in the world. But education that is poorly conceived or executed, including without the benefit of research to guide its aims and practices, or evaluation to understand its mechanisms as well as its outcomes, might miss important opportunities to do good through, for example, failing to consider the social dimensions of learning. Less optimistically, education of this kind might cause harm, by creating systems and practices that narrow ambitions, close off opportunities and fracture fragile hopes. Implicit then in our findings about the power of the interpersonal, is a broader cultural challenge for criminal justice and higher education about how we remain empirically curious and creatively open to a more critical re-politicisation of how we are thinking about, delivering, and evaluating education and the sorts of outcomes we are — and should be — caring about.

Having said all of this, like all studies this study has its strengths and limitations. With respect to limitations, first, throughout our paper we attributed changes we assessed following Learning Together to this programme. Depending on methodological epistemology (what kinds of evidence people think is needed to be able to make a claim that is defensible), it could be argued that without a control group, these conclusions need to be taken with some caution.[113] The

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107. These considerations are just as relevant for broadening participation in universities more broadly. On the potential negative impacts of perceived stigma and prejudice see especially Valentine, G. n.23 and for processes of desistance see LeBel et al. n. 21.
108. See n. 96.
109. See for example, Hari, J. (2018) *Lost Connections: uncovering the real causes of depression – and the unexpected solutions*, London:Bloomsbury; and also Murthy, V. n.2.
110. See Ludlow, Armstrong and Bartels, n.9.
111. Armstrong, R. and Maruna, S. (2016) 'Examining imprisonment through a social justice lens' in S. Farrall, B. Goldson, I. Loader and A. Dockley, *Justice and Penal Reform: reshaping the penal landscape*, Oxford:Routledge.
112. See also, for example, offender behaviour programmes in prisons which focus on perspective-taking. Might a focus on building interpersonal connections magnify their potential contribution for positive transformation?
113. Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1994) 'What works in evaluation research?' *The British Journal of Criminology,* 34(3): 291–306.

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extent of qualitative data underpinning and corroborating the quantitative analysis presented in this paper goes some way towards mitigating this limitation. Having said that, our aim for the next steps of the evaluation is to include a quasi-experimental design that will allow us to isolate the causal impact of Learning Together. It will allow a direct comparison of those who took part in Learning Together with those who did not on key outcomes while controlling for important confounding variables. Future studies may also include multi-information assessments, including direct observations, third party reports and official records. We were also not able to examine any gender/sex differences in our findings due to the unequal distribution of males and females among our prison-based (all male) and university-based (majority female) students, so these findings apply only to men in prison and should not be taken to hold for the 5 per cent of the prison population who are women. This gender imbalance may be remedied in future studies by including data from Learning Together partnerships with prisons holding women,[114] and through including courses delivered by university departments with a higher proportion of male students. Over time, continued data collection will expand our sample size to enable us to detect even small effects and also to disaggregate the data to look at experiences by individual prison/university and by gender, comparing, for example, the experiences of male university-based students with male-prison based students. Ideally, evaluation would also have more time points to enable greater understanding of the temporal sequence of change. We are currently in the process of completing a longitudinal evaluation which introduces subsequent assessment points that will allow us to explore the relationship between individual changes, social (and institutional) contexts, and longer-term outcomes.

While it is important to acknowledge these limitations and the paths for future research they indicate, one of the key strengths of this study is that it is the first attempt to not only understand, but also measure, the experiences of all of the students taking part in a prison and university educational partnership.

It builds on previous qualitative, theoretical and opinion pieces[115] through adopting a mixed methods iterative design whereby initial research questions and measures were generated by reference to existing research evidence, but then 'undone' and more expansively reframed by close collaborative working with our participants. A mixed methods design maximises the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative research and allows for more reliable conclusions particularly when consistency of findings, such as in our case, is reached. While self-report questionnaire data provides important quantifiable information, the risk of answering questions in a socially desirable way is relatively high. It is therefore important that we were able to support these findings with interview data to provide a consistent and coherent picture.

At the start of this paper we cited a quote from Vivek Murthy's book, Together, which describes the importance of the interpersonal for building more positive futures, based on the author's work and experiences as former Surgeon General of the United States. In closing this paper, we return to that work, drawing on Murthy's words that '[i]t is in our relationships that we find the emotional sustenance and power we need in order to thrive.'[116] This perfectly sums up the key message we hope is taken from this paper — that the interpersonal and social dimensions of learning are critical for maximising the transformative potential of education. Writing, as we are, in the wake of our community's tragedy on 29 November 2019 at Fishmongers Hall on London Bridge, the personal truth of Murthy's words is striking. In the face of utter devastation only by holding tightly to each other have we been able to find the hope, courage and love to keep putting one foot in front of the other. With broken hearts, we remain determined to play our part in honouring the goals that Jack and Saskia cared so deeply about and lived out bravely and brilliantly in their all too short lives — maximising the potential for good and reducing the potential for harm in a world where we are equally afforded opportunities to thrive, rather than merely survive.

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114. The University of Surrey with HMP Send and Royal Holloway, University of London and Leicester De Montfort University partnerships with HMP Bronzefield.

115. See for example Weil Davis, S. and Roswell, B. (2013) *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A pedagogy of transformation for community-based education,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Karpowitz, D., (2017) *College in Prison: Reading in an age of mass incarceration,* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; and the articles in the Special Issue of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry* (2019) 6:(1) 'Critical reflections on Higher Education in Prison'.

116. See n. 2 at p 51.