

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 18		
Title of case study: Reconfiguring long-term and high-security imprisonment		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009-present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
(a) Professor Alison Liebling	(a) Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice	(a) 01.12.1992-present
(b) Professor Ben Crewe	(b) Professor of Penology and Criminal Justice	(b) 01.10.2001-present
(c) Dr Susie Hulley	(c) Senior Research Associate	(c) 12.11.2007-present
(d) Dr Serena Wright	(d) Research Associate	(d) 15.10.2012-31.08.2016
(e) Dr Ryan Williams	(e) Research Associate	(e) 11.07.2012-31.12.2014 & 05.09.2016-25.06.2018
(f) Dr Ruth Armstrong	(f) Senior Research Associate	(f) 01.11.2012-present
(g) Dr Richard Bramwell	(g) Senior Research Associate	(g) 21.10.2013-31.08.2015 & 09.02.2016-30.06.2016
(h) Ms Helen Arnold	(h) Research Associate	(h) 2000-2011
(i) Ms Christina Straub	(i) Research Assistant	(i) 10.08.2009-31.03.2011
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>A programme of research on long-term and high-security imprisonment undertaken by Professor Liebling (with Drs Williams, Armstrong, Bramwell, and Ms's Arnold and Straub), and Professor Crewe (with Drs Hulley and Wright) in the Prisons Research Centre (PRC) at the University of Cambridge has had a very significant impact on the management of high-security prisons and long-term prisoners in England & Wales. In particular, it has led to the reconfiguration of re-categorisation and parole processes, and sentence management practices, and to improvements to staff-prisoner relationships (implementation of a 'rehabilitative culture'). It has also influenced political and legal discussion of the use of joint enterprise sentencing, and the award of a major National Lottery funded project undertaken by the Prison Reform Trust on long-term sentences.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The underpinning research largely comprises three main studies (one Home Office and two ESRC-funded):</p> <p>(i) Liebling's Whitemoor study, <i>Vulnerability and power in prison: Updating the findings from HMP Whitemoor ten years on</i> (April 2009-November 2010)</p> <p>(ii) Liebling's ESRC Transforming Social Science grant, <i>Locating trust in a climate of fear: religion, moral status, prisoner leadership, and risk in maximum security prisons</i> (September 2013-February 2015), which followed on from this study; and</p> <p>(iii) Crewe's ESRC-funded <i>Experiencing long-term imprisonment from young adulthood</i> (July 2012-November 2014).</p> <p>The Whitemoor study found a transformed social climate in a high security prison [R1, R2, R3] and identified the significance of trust and recognition to prison life, as both declined significantly as sentences increased and population demographics changed. The aim of Liebling's follow-up study was to explore the role of trust, risk, religion, religious and moral identity, and leadership in high-security prisons, and to capture the dynamics that encourage human flourishing, rather</p>		

than damage to character, within such settings, and the expression of faith identities linked to religious belief rather than power. Its ground-breaking methodology combined appreciative inquiry with ethnography-led measurement of key dimensions of prison life, as a way of diagnosing and describing the moral and cultural environments of two high security prisons [R1]. These methods helped identify fundamental differences in the moral climates, forms of risk-discourse, and flow of trust in apparently similar high security prisons and the links between these moral climates and outcomes [R1]. In particular, these differences led to significant variations in levels of anger and alienation ('political charge') and shaped the types and expressions of faith being expressed by prisoners in each environment. The study was able to describe and theorise differences between 'disabling' environments that damage well-being and character, and 'enabling' environments that support human flourishing, and help in the reduction of risk [R1].

Professor Crewe et al's study, *Experiencing long-term imprisonment from young adulthood*, took lengthening sentences (particularly at a young age) as its key theme, and is the largest piece of qualitative research on long-term imprisonment ever undertaken, involving 147 in-depth interviews and 330 surveys with male and female prisoners serving mandatory life sentences across the prison system in England & Wales. The aims of the research were to describe the main problems and challenges of long-term imprisonment; how these problems and challenges are experienced and managed by prisoners at different sentence stages [R4 and R5]; the ways in which long-term prisoners, sentenced when relatively young, seek to construct a life within the confines of the prison; and how they feel about the legitimacy of their situation. The research provided particular insight into a number of issues [R1], including: the acute and affective nature of the pains of the early phase of the sentence, produced by the various contextual and existential discontinuities that resulted from being convicted of the specific offence of murder and sentenced to a very long period of custody; the differential experiences of male and female long-termers [R6]; the ways in which, over a number of years, prisoners found forms of hope, meaning and control, often through forms of faith, education and therapy; and the relevance of shame and reflexive moral deliberation in prisoners' adaptations to their sentences.

Together, Liebling and Crewe's research programme constitutes a highly significant and complementary body of work on matters relating to the experience and institutional determinants of long-term and high-security imprisonment. This work is of particular relevance at a time when an increasing number of prisoners are serving very long sentences, in conditions that are significantly different from those described in the 1970s and 80s, when studies of long-term imprisonment were more common.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Liebling, A. (2015). Appreciative inquiry, generative theory, and the 'failed state' prison. In J. Miller and W. Palacios (Eds.), *Qualitative research in criminology (Advances in criminological theory Vol 20, Chapter 13)*. Routledge. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R2] Liebling, A and Williams, R. (2018). The new subversive geranium: Some notes on the management of new troubles in maximum security prisons. *British Journal of Sociology*, 69(4), 1194-1219. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R3] Liebling, A., Williams, R. and Lieber, E. (2020). More mind games: How 'the action' and 'the odds' have changed in prison. *British Journal of Criminology*, 60(6), 1648-1666. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R4] Crewe, B., Hulley, S. and Wright, S. (2016). Swimming with the tide: Adapting to long-term imprisonment. *Justice Quarterly*, 34(3), 517-541. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R5] Crewe, B., Hulley, S. and Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: Adaptation, identity and time*. Palgrave Macmillan. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R6] Crewe, B., Hulley, S. and Wright, S. (2017). The gendered pains of life imprisonment. *British Journal of Criminology*, 57(6), 1359-1378 [\[DOI\]](#)

Scholarly recognition: Liebling was made a fellow of the British Academy in 2018, and was awarded a three-year Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship in 2020. R2, R3, R4 and R6 are in highly esteemed international peer-review journals.

Scale and continuation of research grant support:

1. PI Prof. A Liebling - Whitemoor study *Vulnerability and power in prison: Updating the findings from HMP Whitemoor ten years on*. - Ministry of Justice - 2009-2010 - GBP210,000.
2. PI Prof. A Liebling - *Locating trust in a climate of fear* - ESRC (ES/L003120/1) - Sept 2013-Feb 2015 - GBP196,553 + GBP50,000 to the University for research related activities.
3. Ongoing funding by NOMS/HMPPS to the Prisons Research Centre (GBP1.54m since 2012).
4. PI Prof. Ben Crewe, Co-I Dr Susie Hulley - *Experiencing very long-term imprisonment from young adulthood* - ESRC (ES/J007935/1) - Jul 2012-Nov 2014 - GBP248,232.85.
5. PI Dr Susie Hulley - *Conceptions of violence, friendship & legal consciousness among young people in the context of Joint Enterprise* - ESRC (ES/P001378/1) – Jun 2017-Dec 2019 - GBP330,466.
6. PI Prof. Ben Crewe - *Penal policymaking and the prisoner experience: A comparative analysis* - European Research Council (ERC-2014-CoG SH2) - EUR1,964,948.
7. PI Prof. Ben Crewe, Co-I's Dr Susie Hulley and Dr Serena Wright - *Life-imprisonment from young adulthood: A longitudinal follow-up study* - ESRC (ES/T005459/1) - Mar 2020-Aug 2022 - GBP682,000.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

As stated by the former Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and HM Prison and Probation Service, the research cited above 'has had a direct and profound impact on the development of operational policy and management of long sentenced prisoners across the prison estate' [S4].

Influence on the direction of high security prison management

In response to Liebling et al.'s 2011 ethnographic study *An exploration of staff-prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 years on*, NOMS initiated the 'Liebling Project', which aimed to redress problems specific to the high security estate and long-term prisoners (such as trust, recognition, and the understanding and policing of new faith identities) as highlighted in the research [S3, S4]. In 2013, the Project's high-level steering board (which included Liebling) began to develop operational practice and policy action points with the objective of improving and sustaining healthier prison cultures that promoted safety, inter-faith dialogue, and prisoner hope and progression, in an extremely high risk climate [S6]. Considerable work has been carried out since to identify and develop features of prison regimes that 'make a difference' to prisoners. This work is ongoing under the title 'rehabilitative cultures' ([S7] see also the Liebling Project summary) and has been rolled out across the prison system (i.e. beyond the high-security estate). Overall, the research has 'had a direct and lasting impact not only on the management of that individual establishment but also on policy and practice across the High Security Estate - particularly influencing our response to the increased risks in prisons linked to Islamic Extremism' [S4].

Influence on the management and progression of long-term prisoners

The Trust project led to a review of procedures leading to de-categorisation (significantly more attention paid to trust-building and educational and other accomplishments) and parole processes, as well as to a review of the treatment and experience of BME and Muslim prisoners, who are disproportionately represented in high-security prisons (2014-2016). 'Her [Liebling's] research in 2010/11, at HMP Whitemoor, developed understanding of radicalisation in prison and helped prevent the introduction of politically attractive but ill-advised policies that would have exacerbated the problem' [S8]. 'It was absolutely pivotal in shaping our approach to the threats created by extremist offenders [...] and was invaluable in providing the Prison Service with an evidenced based response to ill informed commentators' [S4]. Liebling hosted a day seminar on request as part of the Lammy Review of Racial Bias in the CJS.

Empirical evidence from a 2014 MQPL + research exercise linked to the Locating Trust project in one of these maximum-security prisons identified the outstanding moral and relational quality of life within a theoretically-informed 'enabling environment' or Psychologically Informed Planned

Environment (PIPE). This unit successfully operated according to a 'whole person approach' to prisoners in which personal development, care, and engagement was possible, despite the highly complex nature of its prisoner population. Following this work, a further policy-led research programme developed [S7]. In 2016, a NOMS working group was established to reduce the use of long-term segregation within the high security estate, to radically improve the culture of segregation units, and to ensure progression out [S3]. This work also built on findings from Crewe, Hulley and Wright's research, leading to a number of specialised, progressive units within the long-term and high-security estate, and to a reconsideration of the manner in which long-term prisoners are managed at different sentence stages, based on 'the specific needs of the long term prisoner group which you highlighted in your research' [S4]. Overall, Crewe, Hulley and Wright's study 'has been a major influence (indeed a driver) of change in the management of long term prisoners', including 'a fundamental restructuring of the long term prison estate', leading to the creation of a 'new expanded High Security and Long Term Prison Estate to cater for the now much larger group of younger long term prisoners' [S4], including 13 establishments overall. The recent establishment of an advisory group on 'Managing long-sentence men at the early stages of their sentence' draws directly on research findings from Crewe's study [S3]. Crewe et al's and Liebling et al's research findings provide the main basis for an internal HMPPS evidence summary of research on long term indeterminate sentences, with Crewe et al's findings also the basis of an infographic on how people experience and cope with long term prison sentences [S10]. Senior and operational practitioners are engaged with the team in active discussions of the new empirical-conceptual dimensions of 'intelligent trust' and 'political charge' to better understand their prison establishments, and so to improve outcomes. In 2019, members of the team were asked to return to HMP Whitemoor to evaluate its progress, and have reported our findings directly to senior managers in the Prison Service.

In this way, research by Liebling, Crewe and colleagues has assisted in empirically informing and shaping the effort to adopt 'rehabilitative cultures' in prisons with the intention of promoting the reduction of violence, and contributing positively to human survival, personal growth, and hope among long-term and high-security prisoners. It has also been 'central to re-thinking [the] strategic priorities' of the Prison Reform Trust [S1], and in helping them to obtain and plan a major, five-year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund (titled: *Realising potential: making sense of long-term imprisonment*) to fund a programme of research, advocacy, reform and public/political engagement in this area.

Influence on the direction and management of specialist prison units

Crewe and Liebling sit on a number of advisory groups whose decisions directly impact on the management of specialist units within the high-security and long-term prison estate. These include the advisory panels for the Close Supervision System, which holds around 60 prisoners deemed too difficult or dangerous to manage in normal high-security conditions, and the Separation Centres, which have recently been opened as a way of managing prisoners considered to represent a significant risk to other prisoners, prison order, or national security as a result of extremist activities.

Influence in relation to the operation of the common-law doctrine of joint enterprise

A high proportion of long-term and high-security prisoners have been convicted under the doctrine of joint enterprise. Work by Crewe, Liebling and colleagues has exposed the disproportionate number of black and ethnic minority prisoners who have been convicted using this doctrine, and the deep feelings of resentment and illegitimacy that joint enterprise sentencing produces. In 2014, based on findings from Crewe et al's research, Crewe presented evidence to the Justice Committee Second Inquiry on Joint Enterprise in Parliament (2014) [S2]. The data and evidence that he provided, through both written and verbal testimony, were widely cited in the report produced by the committee [S2], and were subsequently used by the appellants in the Supreme Court appeal *R v Jogee* [S5]. The case resulted in a unanimous ruling that the law had 'taken a wrong turn' in its interpretation of this doctrine, leading to changes in sentencing practices and a number of further appeals.

External recognition by end-users and policy-makers

Liebling received the ICPA Research Award in 2018 (see references by Porporino and Wheatley) and the Prison Service's Perrie Lectures Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016 [S9]. Liebling was invited to participate in a two-day event led by Lord Rowan Williams, in Dialogue with the Dalai Lama ('Growing wisdom, changing people') at the University of Cambridge, on the theme of Universal Responsibility, as a result of the findings of this study. Liebling, Crewe and other members of the PRC are frequently asked by HM Prison Service and other prison services to advise on matters relating to long-term and high-security imprisonment, for example, talks on trust, risk and building hope, International Prison Chaplaincy Conference (2017), Scottish Prison Service conference (2015). Liebling and Crewe are/have been both members of the HMPPS Rehabilitative Culture working parties, and are current members of the HMPPS Close Supervision System Advisory Panel, and the HMPPS Separation Centres Advisory Panel. Crewe is the only academic member of the HMPPS advisory group on 'Managing long-sentence men at the early stages of their sentence' and is a trustee of the Prison Reform Trust. Hulley has been appointed to the advisory board for the Prison Reform Trust's Building Futures project on long-term imprisonment.

Broader impact

A half hour documentary on Trust in prison was broadcast in 2016, and Liebling was interviewed for a 30 minute Social Science Bite podcast in 2018 and a 90 minute Justice Focus podcast in 2020. Substantial reference to the Whitemoor Report and research project was made (and acknowledged) in a novel by the prizewinning author Susie Steiner (*Missing, presumed*, p. 405-6) who cast one of her characters as a Cambridge postgraduate working on the study. Crewe, Hulley and Wright wrote the 'Long View' section to the Prison Reform Trust's highly influential Bromley Briefings in January 2020 on changes in sentence lengths for murder [S11]. The accompanying press release led to articles citing the authors/ university in the national broadsheet press (*The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Independent*) and *Inside Time*, the national newspaper for prisoners and detainees. The Bromley Briefings launch at the Houses of Parliament in February 2020 was attended by around 60 people, including a number of MPs and members of the House of Lords. Crewe was interviewed about his research project for the Justice Focus podcast series and the Growth Uncut podcast series. Crewe, Hulley and Wright were interviewed for a documentary on Joint Enterprise, being made by Movement in Media, and contributed a chapter to the Monument Trust's publication, *Crime and consequence* entitled *What should happen to people who commit murder?* A podcast version of this chapter, recorded by Crewe, was released by National Prison Radio in 2019, and Crewe spoke on this topic at the 2019 annual general meeting for Clinks, an umbrella organisation which represents the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system. In October 2020, Crewe, Hulley and Wright's online book launch was attended by over 350 people from practice and academia, in the UK and overseas [S12], while their 'HMPPS Insights' seminar in February 2020 was attended by over 70 practitioners working in prisons and probation.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[S1] Testimonial: Director of the Prison Reform Trust

[S2] House of Commons. Justice Committee. (2014). *Joint Enterprise: Follow up. Fourth Report of Session 2014-15*. [\[Link\]](#)

[S3] Testimonial: Executive Director for the Long Term and High Security Estate, HMPPS

[S4] Testimonial: Former Chief Executive, NOMS/HMPPS

[S5] Just for Law Kids Final Jogee Submission, R v Jogee (Appellant), Supreme Court, 2015

[S6] NOMS, Clare Orton (2013) 'Liebling Project: Final Report'. London: Home Office

[S7] Letter: Lead Psychologist, Long Term and High Security Estate Directorate, HMPPS

[S8] Letter: Former Director General, HMPPS and NOMS

[S9] Letter: Senior Partner/Criminal Justice Consultant, T3 Associates Training & Consulting Inc.

[S10] i) Box, G. (2018). *Long term indeterminate sentences* (HMPPS evidence summary).

HMPPS; ii) Infographic: *How do people experience and cope with long term prison sentences?*

[S11] [Bromley Briefing](#), Winter 2019.

[S12] Selected public engagement evidence.