

Institution: Edinburgh Napier University		
Unit of Assessment: UoA27 – English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Pioneering Approaches to Prison Education and Public Understanding of Imprisonment		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Anne Schwan	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor and PI	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2007 – ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 - 31 March 2021		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Research on prison narratives and prisoner identity initiated an award-winning partnership between the University's English degree and the Scottish Prison Service (an executive agency of the Scottish Government), and Fife College (the national prison education provider), benefiting prisoners and university students through collaborative learning. The partnership enabled access to additional reading and writing activities for prisoners, enhancing their self-esteem, while impacting students' post-graduation professional practice and their perceptions of prisoners. A second impact strand raised public understanding of prisoner identities and creativity in confinement, by engaging audiences through public events and media coverage on the BBC and in the national press.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Prisons are closed worlds, and few members of the public gain first-hand insight into life behind prison walls. Public misconceptions about prisons and the incarcerated abound, compounded by reductive and dehumanizing misrepresentations in popular culture which also negatively impact on prisoners' self-perceptions and self-esteem. Research conducted by Anne Schwan, at Edinburgh Napier since 2007 and now Professor in English, focuses on narratives about prisons and those inside to help demystify imprisonment, and to encourage a more complex understanding. The research also revealed restrictions on prisoner communication and limited access to reading and writing materials, in historical and contemporary contexts, as well as the benefits of creativity and reading and writing for prisoners. The latter remains vital in an underfunded prison system that continues to treat education as an add-on rather than a core service during an incarcerated person's journey.</p> <p>Schwan's original contributions to the interdisciplinary field of prison studies focus on historical and contemporary platforms for prisoners' voices. Her AHRC-funded [P1] monograph <i>Convict Voices</i> (2014) [O1], based on textual and archival research (involving ephemera in special collections at Oxford and Cambridge, and prison diaries and letters in the Women's Library and the Museum of London), identifies early accounts of female prisoners' voices as significant precursors of later writings on imprisonment, to illuminate historical changes and continuities in prisoner self-expression and educational opportunities for ex-prisoners. The monograph analyses self-representations of prisoners in nineteenth-century street literature, novels and prison autobiographies, early twentieth-century prison diaries and letters, and late twentieth-century historical fiction. The insights into historical conditions in women's prisons gained through this research were mapped onto the contemporary prison context to enhance prisoners' experiences through additional access to reading and writing activities.</p> <p>"<i>Bless the Gods for my pencils and paper,</i>" wrote imprisoned suffragette and artist Katie Gliddon in her secret diary in the margins of her illicit copy of the <i>Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>, fearing that "<i>If anyone discovers this book and pencil I shall die of sorrow</i>" (2013) [O2]</p>		

(p. 153; funded archival research) [P2]. While the research and impact work is mindful of historical and individual differences in the experience of imprisonment, recognition of this vital role of reading, writing and (artistic-creative) self-expression identified in Schwan's research [O1, O2] serves as the foundation for the impact activities. By bringing historical contexts in conversation with contemporary concerns about prisoner self-representation and penal conditions, the monograph evokes connections between prison scholarship, activism and practice to "*use institutional leverage and resources to create opportunities for prisoners*" [O1, p. 198].

Such connections between research and practice also motivate Schwan's edited special issue with introduction (2011) [O3], which presents reading and writing in prison as a space for radical pedagogy and transformation, "*not only for those 'inside' but also those going into prisons as facilitators, be they creative practitioners, academics, or university students*" [O3, p. 1]. The special issue showcases the multi-disciplinary study of prisoner autobiography, creative writing and reading practices, and partnerships between universities and penal institutions.

Research on *Stobsiade*, a camp newspaper produced by German internees at Stobs Camp in Scotland during the First World War, uncovers the function of creativity and humour for prisoners' own identities and wider public perception. This first extensive analysis of the entire run of *Stobsiade*'s German-language, military edition reveals how the internees negotiated censorship restrictions and re-shaped perceptions of their PoW identity for external audiences and themselves (2021) [O4]. The research on war-time internment – conducted during a Research Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) at the University of Edinburgh [P3] – and the research on imprisonment in historical and contemporary contexts, is conceptually linked by Schwan's commitment to shedding light on socially marginalised experiences and identities, and a desire to generate new understanding of perspectives by and on the incarcerated.

The research has identified and enhanced the significance of a long-standing literary and cultural tradition of giving voice to prisoners, and the ongoing struggle for access to reading and writing materials – a tradition which forms the historical basis for contemporary concerns with prisoner perspectives, creativity and access to literacy and learning in prisons.

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

O1, O2, and O3 have been through rigorous peer-review before publication. O1 and O3 have had multiple international citations. O4 followed a competitively peer-reviewed research fellowship.

[O1] Schwan, A. (2014) *Convict Voices: Women, Class, and Writing About Prison in Nineteenth-Century England*. Book. (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press).

https://scholars.unh.edu/unh_press/2/. Submitted to REF2.

[O2] Schwan, A. (2013) "Bless the Gods for My Pencils and Paper': Katie Gliddon's Prison Diary, Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Suffragettes at Holloway." Journal Article. *Women's History Review*, 22.1: 148-67. ISSN 0961-2025. DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2012.724917.

[O3] Schwan, A. (2011) ed. and introd., "Reading and Writing in Prison," special issue of *Critical Survey* 23.3. Journal. ISSN 0011-1570. <https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/critical-survey/23/3/critical-survey.23.issue-3.xml>

[O4] Schwan, A. (2021) "German Military Internees Writing the First World War: Gender, Irony and Humour in the Camp Newspaper *Stobsiade*." In: *Prison Writing and the Literary World*, Michelle Kelly and Claire Westall (eds.). Book chapter. New York: Routledge. 41-57. [published 27 October 2020; research conducted in 2017]. Can be supplied on request by HEI.

List of research-related grants and fellowships

[P1] AHRC Research Fellowship (Early Career), January – August 2011, £41,551

[P2] Carnegie Trust Travel Grant, January 2009, £520

[P3] Visiting Research Fellowship, IASH, University of Edinburgh, July – October 2017

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

Based on the research's findings on the vital role of access to reading and writing in prison, and the transformational potential of university-prison partnerships [O1, O2, O3], Schwan first launched a placement scheme at HMP Edinburgh in 2011, involving English literature students in literacy and creative work with prisoners. The scheme has impacted on educational practice and benefitted participating prisoners through access to additional educational opportunities, leading to changed perspectives on themselves and others; university students benefitted through attitudinal changes, and effects on their post-graduation professional practice. In a related, second impact strand, the research reached large audiences, leading to new awareness of prisoners' voices, conditions and creativity in confinement, through public events and media engagement.

Benefits to Prisoners and Students

Following a successful pilot at HMP Edinburgh in 2011, a revised, legally robust partnership agreement was implemented in 2015. In the census period, an estimated 100 prisoners and 46 students benefitted. Until spring 2019, students engaged in literacy work with prisoners 1:1 or in small groups, from basic literacy to advanced creative writing. Since autumn 2019, students have co-facilitated book discussion groups, working with small groups of prisoners. Placements occurred once weekly for six weeks. The placement runs in final year, alongside Schwan's research-led option *"Crime in Text & Film"* which most placement students take.

Anonymous testimonials from prisoners working with students 1:1 indicate the scheme's benefits for self-esteem, motivation, concrete progress with literacy skills, tasks such as essay- or playwriting, and social interaction. Prisoners commented that *"my self-esteem and wellbeing is a lot better"* and that the university peer's *"engagement and enthusiasm helped my self-confidence and her ideas positively influenced my work."* One said they had learned about *"friendship and being able to work with other people."* Another stated that *"working with the students has given me a sense of general wellbeing and that any age can learn new skills."* Signalling the scheme's ability to make prisoners feel heard and valued, a 66-year old said that *"It's nice when a 'bright young person' finds value in your work"* while a reading group participant saw a clear benefit in that the students *"didn't treat us like idiots"* [C1].

The collective book discussion format resulted in additional personal and social benefits, with prisoners reporting that they had become *"more open minded"* on book choice, had developed a more analytical approach to books (*"I'm now reading more into the books"*) and after participating in the group were *"able to debate books without starting an argument."* Highlighting the scheme's value in providing additional access to reading and writing opportunities, many testimonials ask for more or longer sessions of this kind [C1].

For logistical and confidentiality reasons, it is impossible to assess the longer-term impact on prisoners, but a 2020 survey of Edinburgh Napier graduates who had participated in the placement indicates a lasting effect on their confidence, social attitudes and professional practice. One graduate (participated 2016) who now works as a careers advisor, reports that the placement *"helped to emphasise the real-life people behind words like 'prisoner' or 'inmate'"* which shaped his *"holistic"* professional approach to people with convictions, concluding: *"I really feel that the placement played a role in helping to shape the passion for social justice which is key to my professional identity and has supported me in my work since then."* Another (participated 2016) who now works as a secondary school teacher says that the placement *"changed [his] views" on prisoners and "has enabled [him] to be more critical when confronted with discussions or ideas about prisoners, prisons, and crime."* This new perspective is now informing his *"many conversations with students and colleagues about [his] prison placement."* One graduate (participated 2017) commented on the new understanding gained on module and placement: *"I had (ignorantly) never really thought of writing and the arts in prison much before. The module content paired with the prison placement made me appreciate that great literature and creativity can really come from anywhere!"* [C1].

Impact on Prison Education Practice, Capacity Building and Related Awards

In 2017, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) introduced Annual Learning Plans for each prison, listing approved learning opportunities. According to the Head of Learning and Skills at SPS, the Edinburgh Napier placement features “as a core aspect of our Annual Learning Plans at HMP Edinburgh as it undoubtedly contributes to the enhancement of self-esteem and confidence of learners through tailored provision and person-centred educational support” [C2]. This highlights Schwan’s impact on social welfare through improved access to educational opportunities for a particularly disadvantaged group of individuals.

UK-wide awareness of this innovative educational model was raised through an article on Edinburgh Napier’s partnership in the Prisoners’ Education Trust eNewsletter/website (October 2014) [C3]. As a result of the research and ensuing partnership, in 2016 Schwan was invited to serve on the National Advisory Group on Prison Education chaired by the SPS’s Head of Learning and Skills with responsibility for all of Scotland’s prisons [C2]. In 2015, Schwan co-organized a workshop with the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program’s founder Lori Pompa (Temple University, Philadelphia) which was attended by educational practitioners and participants from the arts, government and voluntary sector in Scotland [C4]. The workshop led to the founding of the Scottish Universities-Prisons (UP) Network in 2016. As co-founder and co-convenor, Schwan initiated this national capacity-building platform for advice and good practice, now reaching over 50 members. Alongside a JISC mailing list, the Network created a webpage; Schwan co-hosted its first conference attended by 51 people (practitioners, ex-prisoners and academics) in March 2019, which was valued as “a safe platform to reflect candidly” and for its “Mix of university and prison personnel” [C5].

In 2017, Schwan convened and co-delivered a training seminar at the 2017 European Prison Education Association (EPEA) Conference in Vienna, demonstrating her international reach. The session introduced critical perspectives, e.g. the limitations of “bibliotherapy” as a model, and promoted the benefits of aspirational, collaborative learning to 19 people (educational and criminal justice professionals) from countries including Austria, Belarus and the USA; Schwan’s invited session report in the EPEA’s magazine reached the Association’s entire international membership [C6]. Schwan’s research and outreach are thus informing prison education practitioners in Scotland and internationally. According to the SPS’s Head of Learning and Skills, her initiative “has been cited and recognised in an international context ... as an example of educational innovation in the recent report of prison education by an international Expert Group and presented to the Council of Europe in October 2019” [C2].

Schwan’s partnership with SPS and Fife College won the 2016 *Herald* Higher Education Partnership Award, with the judges commenting that “this is a fantastic and brave project demonstrating a strong, sustained three-way partnership” [C7]. The original partnership has built capacity, leading to new links between two additional subject areas and other prisons (Edinburgh Napier colleagues were subsequently awarded the 2017 *Herald* Higher Education Award for Widening Access for the HMPYOI Polmont Media Project).

Schwan was invited by the SPS’s Head of Learning and Skills to co-organise the 2016 International Prison Education Day at HMP Barlinnie – attended by prisoners, practitioners and academics – for which she secured funding to facilitate creative work with prisoners [C8]. The event won the European Prison Association Prize for best International Prison Education Day, providing a model of good practice to professionals across Europe [C2].

Enhancing Public Understanding through Talks, Performances and Media Coverage

Talks on historical and contemporary prisoner self-representation and prison education reached cross-generational audiences, including an invited presentation at Exeter University’s “Reading for Life” (April 2017), predominantly for members of the University of the Third Age. As a then member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s Young Academy of Scotland, Schwan gave invited schools talks organized through the Royal Society in 2017, reaching 150 pupils aged 11 to 18 and one school’s entire student, staff and alumni population through publication in the school magazine [C9]. Following a sold-out event at the National Library of Scotland (January 2020; capacity: 60) on nineteenth-century execution broadsides, a type of street literature sold at

public hangings, which was informed by Schwan's monograph [O1], attendees reported enhanced understanding of convict self-representation in this popular genre, with one noting that *"It hadn't occurred to me that the broadsides might give the 'criminal' a voice"* [C10].

In 2018, Schwan was Co-Investigator and Edinburgh Napier team lead for collaborative AHRC follow-on funding for impact and engagement (with Aston University; Edinburgh Napier share c. GBP35,000), to raise awareness of First World War internment. Building on Schwan's research expertise on prison history, prisoners' voices and creativity in confinement [O1, O2, O4], she oversaw a performance as it would have been staged at Stobs Camp in the Scottish Borders, and served as consultant for an education resource on internment, which was distributed to Scotland's thirteen publicly managed prisons [C11]. Sold-out performances, with an accompanying leaflet [C11] and exhibition panels, reached 280 people (audience members) in three different cities, with an additional 176 views of the performance recording on YouTube [C12]. Following the performances, audience responses indicated new awareness of internment conditions (*"learnt about internment in WWI in the Borders"*), with attendees reporting that they *"had never put any thought into British PoW camps before today"* and another highlighting new insight into the human experience of internment: *"Really enjoyed the men in Stobs being portrayed as real people. We are used to dealing with the emptiness of Stobs."* [C13]. Schwan additionally contributed an invited "lockdown" lecture on *"Creativity Behind the Barbed Wire"* to the virtual "Stobs Week" conference organised by Archaeology Scotland's Stobs Camp Project in September 2020 (44 views) [C14].

Large audiences were reached through media coverage in 2018, in *The Scotsman* (19,000 print-run; website 138,000 visitors/day), *The National* and the BBC website (9,600 hits); Schwan further raised awareness of internment in interview on BBC Scotland's flagship "Good Morning Scotland" (28th February 2018), which typically attracts 120,000-150,000 listeners a day, and an AHRC blog entry (co-authored with Davie) (298 views) [C15].

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

[C1] a+b Corroborating evidence in the form of prisoner and graduate testimonials.

[C2] Testimonial from Head of Learning and Skills at Scottish Prison Service, January 2020.

[C3] Case study report in Prisoners' Education Trust eNewsletter/website, *"HMP Edinburgh supports learning through literacy and creative writing volunteers."*

[C4] Report *"Universities & Prisons Engagement."* Glasgow, Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, March 2015. <http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Universities-Prisons-report-Mar-2015.pdf>

[C5] UPNetwork@jiscmail.ac.uk; <https://upnetworkblog.wordpress.com/universities/>; UP Network conference participant feedback sheets.

[C6] Invited contribution to European Prison Education Association magazine, epub, pp. 4-5.

[C7] Judges' Comment available in email from Senior Events Executive Herald and Times Group; see also <https://www.napier.ac.uk/about-us/news/heraldawardwinner2016>

[C8] Report on Prison Education Day in Scottish Prison Service Education Newsletter (February 2017), p. 27.

[C9] Reprint of School Talk in Merchiston Castle School Magazine [hard copy on request].

[C10] National Library of Scotland event audience feedback sheets.

[C11] a+b AHRC-funded prison education pack; AHRC-funded programme leaflet accompanying performances.

[C12] Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTaQ5_4x4Q4&feature=emb_logo

[C13] "A Night at Stobs" performance audience feedback sheets.

[C14] Talk on project website/YouTube: <http://www.stobscamp.org/talks-and-lectures/>

[C15] Media coverage: <https://www.scotsman.com/news-2-15012/exhibition-on-first-world-war-internment-camps-in-scotland-1-4697697>; <https://www.thenational.scot/news/16053060.century-old-stobs-camp-pow-plays-to-be-adapted-for-modern-stage/>; BBC News, *"German Prisoner of War Theatre Shows Revived,"* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-43210547>; <https://ahrc-blog.com/2018/08/03/military-men-in-drag-theatre-and-music-in-world-war-one-internment-camps-in-britain/>