

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Sheffield Hallam University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: The Management of Diversity in Prison</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This impact case study emanates from two ESRC grants. The impacts yielded by it are theoretical, in that they advance thinking in relation to identities, penal theory and research methodology; policy related in that they have already impacted on National Offender Management Service (NOMS) prison related policies; and practical, in that they have changed the practices in the prison where the research was undertaken.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This case study has emerged as part of a collaborative project between Professor Malcolm Cowburn, Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), and Dr Victoria Lavis, University of Bradford. Professor Cowburn started employment at SHU on 1st September 2008 as a Principal Lecturer in Criminology, and he was awarded a personal Chair in Applied Social Science in February 2010. He took early retirement in March 2013, but assumed the title of ‘Emeritus Professor of Applied Social Science’ on retirement. The underpinning research was conducted between March 2009 and July 2010 whilst he was in full time employment at the University.</p> <p>Two ESRC funded projects are central to the research underpinning this case study (Grants 1 and 2). The first study in 2009 (Grant 1) developed from Professor Cowburn’s work as a member of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at Her Majesty’s Prison Wakefield, where he became aware of staff discontent with official ways of ‘measuring the quality of prison life’ because they were considered to lack depth and ignored good work within the prison. Grant 1 facilitated a pilot study with two aims: (i) to explore positive and negative aspects of prisoners’ life in one Wing of the prison, using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology; and (ii) to test the suitability of AI as a methodology for exploring prisoners’ responses to policies and practices in relation to diversity. The study had four means of data collection: (i) documentary analysis; (ii) AI interviews with a sample of prisoners; (iii) an AI informed survey of all the prisoners on the pilot Wing; and (iv) two AI informed focus groups with prison staff. Professor Cowburn and Dr Lavis contributed equally to this collaborative project and both undertook the research, with some additional support from a research assistant (Bird, employed at SHU for the project duration) under their joint supervision.</p> <p>Research insights from this project are theoretical - they found AI to be a successful methodology for exploring the experiences of prisoners from minority diversity groupings (Ref 1, Source 1). AI reduced the suspicions of prison staff and enabled both prisoners and prison staff to talk more freely about their experiences (Ref 1, Source 1, Source 2), both good and bad, of living and working in prison. Moreover, the project highlighted the importance of understanding prison identities (in-mate and staff) as intersectional, multi-layered and contingent on both place and time (Ref 2, Ref 4, Ref 5). Research insights were also policy-related and practical in that the project identified a range of positive and negative practices of prison staff and highlighted policy implications for improving life in prison (Ref 3, Source 1, Source 2 and Source 3)</p> <p>Grant 2 addressed issues highlighted by Grant 1 through four interactive workshops with staff and prisoners: (i) the role, tasks and identities of the Diversity specialist staff and how they related to the ‘safer prisons’ unit (Prison staff); (ii) the nature of identity and the importance of intersectional identities in being a prisoner representative (Prisoners); (iii) sensitive searching of diversity-minority prisoners (Staff); (iv) understanding and managing sexualities and (trans) gendered prisoners (Staff).</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references) (all available on request from Sheffield Hallam University)

Ref 1. Cowburn, M. and Lavis, V. J. (2013, forthc.) 'Using a prisoner advisory group to develop diversity research in a maximum-security prison: a means of enhancing prisoner participation or participatory research?' *Groupwork*. 23 (3). (Special Edition)

Ref 2. Cowburn, M. and Lavis, V.J. (2010a) 'Race relations in prison: Managing performance and developing engagement' *British Journal of Community Justice*. 7, (3), 77-89 (<http://www.cjp.org.uk/bjci/volume-7-issue-3/>)

Ref 3. Cowburn, M., Lavis, V., and with Bird, H. (2010b). Appreciative Inquiry into the Diversity Strategy of HMP Wakefield: Full Report available on ESRC website (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-3441/read>).

Ref 4. Cowburn, M. and Lavis, V. J. (2010c) 'Resistance, reluctance or rejection: Theorising BME prisoner non-participation in prison offending behaviour programmes'. *Ethnicity, Crime and Justice; Contemporary and Historical Perspectives Conference*. Open University. June 2010 (www.open.ac.uk/Arts/history/.../Ethnic_conf**Program_DRAFT.doc** Available from Sheffield Hallam University).

Ref 5, Cowburn, M. and Lavis, V. J. (2009) "Uncle Toms' or respected identities: theorising prison offending behaviour programmes'. *ASC Conference*, Philadelphia. November 2009 (Available from Sheffield Hallam University).

G 1. GRANT 1 ESRC, small grant, (PI Cowburn) *Appreciative Inquiry into the Diversity Strategy of HMP Wakefield* Award number: RES-000-22-3441, 01 March 2009 - 30 Nov 2009, £74,800 (Grade: Good)

G 2. GRANT 2 ESRC knowledge exchange small grant (PI Lavis, Co-I Cowburn) *Opening up communicative space: towards a collaboratively generated impact in responding to Diversity in HMP Wakefield*. Award number: RES-192-22-0047, 07 October 2010 - 06 July 2011, £3,888

G 3. GRANT 3 Dec 2012 ESRC: Research Grant *An Appreciative Inquiry into the response to diversity in three Yorkshire Prisons*. Award number: ES/K005049/1 Cowburn as **Co-investigator**. Principal Investigator Dr Victoria Lavis: University of Bradford; initially awarded November 2012 (3 year project not yet commenced) £649,152. Research contract has been revised following Cowburn's early retirement. Following award, Cowburn will now act as a member of the Project Advisory Group.

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

The social impacts of the research were primarily related to how the research prompted positive change within Wakefield prison and more widely within the Prison Estate of England and Wales (Sources 1, 2, 3 and Ref 3). The report for Grant 1 (Ref 3) pointed to areas where prison practices were in need of improvement and the prison management was keen to address these issues and work with the research team. They collaborated with the research team in a successful ESRC research application (Grant 2). This grant enabled issues highlighted during Grant 1 to be addressed through a series of interactive workshops with staff and prisoners. The local impacts of these grants derive from highlighting the inadequacy of categorising and responding to prisoners on the basis of only one strand of identity (e.g. ethnicity or faith; age or sexuality) (Source 3). This was most marked in the prisoner workshop where prisoners explored their own intersecting identities and considered the implications of this for how they would work with prisoners in the future. The workshop helped the prison move to a unitary/amalgamated system of prisoner reps.

The Governor states:

'The workshop enabled the reps to explore how [the amalgamated system of prisoner reps] might be achieved and develop their understanding of other areas of diversity. Following the workshops a new training package was developed to assist prisoner reps in this important work.' (Source 3)

Linked to this was, initially, a local change in how the prison chose to report 'incidents' triggered by diversity-minority identities. Prior to the research the prison only officially recorded 'racial incidents'. Following recommendations arising from Grants 1 and 2 the reporting form was redesigned to reflect all aspects of diversity and was known as the 'Diversity Incident Reporting Form' (DIRF).

At a national level, impacts have occurred with regard to policies, procedures and practices (Source 1 and Source 3). The Head of NOMS Equalities Unit (HoEq), a member of the initial project's advisory committee, states that the on-going work associated with Grant 1 and the resulting reports have influenced the Equalities Unit in shaping the new national 'Equalities Framework' (PSI 32/2011) (Source 1). Research findings have also underpinned NOMS' decision to commission good practice guidance for prisoner equalities' representatives and to develop a national training package in relation to diversity related issues (Source 1). The diversity incident reporting form (DIRF) developed at Wakefield was introduced into all prisons in England and Wales (Source 1). This change was implemented in January 2011 (subsequent visits to HMP Wakefield have confirmed that implementation has taken place) (Source 1). Additionally, research findings from Grants 1 and 2 highlight much uncertainty in relation to transgender prisoners, with the issue of searching prisoners being seen as particularly sensitive.

Following our research, the HoEq notes,

'A final example [of impact] is the request for guidance in relation to the treatment, including searching, of transgender prisoners. Revised national policy on the searching of trans prisoners has been issued, and a draft of a Prison Service Instruction on the care and management of trans prisoners produced as part of the equalities policy framework.' (Source 1).

Additionally the Lead National Trainer in relation to transgender issues has acknowledged the impact of the workshops (Source 2). Furthermore, HoEq (Source 1) notes that the research helped him to re-think how his Unit supports individual prisons in relation to diversity related issues. In particular, Ref 3 highlights how prisoners distrust official means of resolving problems (e.g. the complaints system and the racial incident reporting system) and prefer to work with their 'reps' to resolve issues informally. Prison staff also pointed to the very positive role that prisoner 'reps' had in informally resolving issues.

In the light of this HoEq notes how the research developed:

'our growing sense of the importance of face-to-face interactions between staff and prisoners in ensuring fairness in prisons. This ... contributed to our decision to develop a project to introduce structured communications techniques in the prison setting, which we are piloting in three prisons ...'(Source 1)

Finally, in relation to research practice in prisons, research findings arising from Grant 1 confirmed that AI was suitable for use in High Security settings.

HoEq notes:

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'Seeing that the researchers were able to take the Wakefield prisoners through the discovery, dreaming, designing and destiny phases to generate some positive feedback about the prison and to identify some practical suggestions as to how things could be made better for them has provided helpful impetus to us to find other ways of doing prisoner consultation.'
(Source 1)

In 2011 Prof Cowburn (and his Colleague Dr Lavis) were short-listed for the Howard League Research Medal for their ESRC-funded research. The Howard League for Penal Reform celebrates the work of academics and researchers whose work offers genuine new insights into the penal system. The award of its Research Medal acknowledges high quality research that has succeeded, or can demonstrate that it has the potential, to have an impact on non-academic audiences (Source 4).

The present projects mark a successful beginning to what is a longer term endeavour. Grant 1 was a pilot and Grant 2 was a KE project; taken together they have had significant applied impact within NOMS, particularly within the secure prison estate. In brief the impact can be described as humanitarian. The findings of Grant 1 and the learning processes embodied in Grant 2 have enabled penal practices with diversity minority prisoners to become both more aware and more respectful and thus more effective. However, these projects are only a beginning. The ESRC, taking into account the impacts of the projects, has now funded a larger three years study in three prisons (Grant 3), it is anticipated that this work will build on the impacts of the two projects reported here.

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

- Source 1. National impact (National Offender Management Service -HoEq)
- Source 2. National impact (Head of Operations HMYOI Werrington – Lead Trainer for NOMS in relation to the management of transsexual offenders)
- Source 3. Local impact (HMP Wakefield– Governor)
- Source 4. ESRC award of standard grant for 'An Appreciative Inquiry into the response to diversity in three Yorkshire Prisons' ES/K005049/1 (Dr Victoria Lavis PI & Prof M. Cowburn CI) – The grant has been awarded for a three year project (c. £600k). This is testimony, at the highest level, of the academic impact that our early work has made. Having been employed full-time at Sheffield Hallam University until this date, in March 2013, Professor Cowburn took early retirement, continuing to be involved in the ongoing project in an advisory capacity.
- Source 5. 2011 short-list for the Howard League Research Medal
<http://www.howardleague.org/research-medal-2011/>