

Institution: Keele University
Unit of Assessment: C22 Social Work and Social Policy
Title of case study: Women offenders and criminal justice: challenging conventional wisdom and improving access to justice
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Critical historical, empirical and theoretical research on women offenders is deeply embedded in the culture of criminology at Keele. Research undertaken by Anne Worrall and colleagues at Keele since 1993 (and for a decade before) has contributed towards changing attitudes and practice in the treatment of women offenders locally, nationally and internationally. The impact of our research is long-standing and has been sustained across several generations of researchers. Its significance lies in our ability to challenge conventional wisdom about women offenders, inform and stimulate practitioner debate, influence CPD, influence practice for a specific group, improve access to justice and give a voice to those affected by our research.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Raising the visibility of women in a male-dominated criminal justice system and challenging traditional myths about women as offenders, victims and workers has preoccupied many researchers in the past 30 years and has led to the development of what has been termed ‘feminist perspectives’ in criminology. Keele criminologists have been at the forefront of these developments and much of their work has arguably now become part of the intellectual landscape to the point where it has been normalised (and continues to shape the debate). This case study focuses specifically on the work of Keele criminologists in respect of women <i>as offenders</i>, where research has been concerned as much with asking the right questions and challenging official assumptions as with conventional ‘findings’.</p> <p>The specific research underpinning this case study (by Professor Anne Worrall; Professor Pat Carlen (at Keele until 1996 then Visiting Professor 2001-2004); Anette Ballinger, Lecturer; Mary Corcoran, Lecturer; Julie Trebilcock, Lecturer; and Claire Fox), consists of: Carlen and Worrall’s separate and joint research throughout the 1990s and their collaborative European research on ‘Women, Integration and Prison’ under the EU Framework 5 initiative (2002-2005); Ballinger’s historical research on women and capital punishment (2000, 2004); Corcoran’s research on female political prisoners in Northern Ireland (2006); and three evaluations of community provision for women offenders which were undertaken between 2008 and 2013 by Worrall and Corcoran in collaboration with third sector organisations. The involvement of Fox in one of these evaluations and a further study on short-sentenced women prisoners, undertaken by Trebilcock for the Howard League, demonstrate the sustainability of our impact – both were ECRs who have since moved to other universities.</p> <p>Our work has contributed to the wide body of knowledge about women offenders that has traced discriminatory attitudes through the 19th and 20th centuries to the early 21st century. At its most basic, this research has established that: women offenders experience discrimination in the criminal justice system and the media; women’s pathways in and out of crime differ from those of men; women experience and respond differently to criminal justice interventions from men, especially imprisonment (and historically capital punishment); research on women offenders and female offending struggles to be taken seriously by mainstream criminology; and, despite numerous reports by academics and NGOs, and supportive government statements, the same concerns about the treatment of women offenders exist now as did 30 years ago (and are not confined to any single jurisdiction), leading to a constant need to engage in critical public debate, reiterating the principles that underpin good practice in working with women offenders and pointing to a lack of political will to provide the sustained funding needed to provide effective and co-ordinated women-focused services.</p>

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While research on women's imprisonment is now widespread (and we collaborate regularly with researchers at other institutions), the significance of Keele's unique contribution has been its ability to contextualise the treatment of women offenders within four other distinct (and gendered) discourses: 20th century attitudes to capital punishment; state responses to politically motivated offending; supervision of offenders in the community; and the role of the voluntary sector in criminal justice. Specifically: Ballinger and Corcoran have exposed state violence towards transgressive women who commit serious crime; Worrall and Corcoran have argued that non-custodial provision for women offenders is essential in keeping women out of prison but also has punitively discriminatory potential; and Ballinger has given a voice to executed women and their descendants. By making the theoretical insights of feminist perspectives accessible locally, nationally and internationally we have equipped, encouraged and supported policy-makers, practitioners and women offenders (and their families) to challenge 'malestream' orthodoxies in their lives and workplaces.

3. References to the research

Ballinger, A. (2000) *Dead Woman Walking: executed women in England and Wales 1900-1950*, Dartmouth: Ashgate. (Monograph).

Ballinger, A. (2007) 'Masculinity in the dock: legal responses to male violence and female retaliation in England and Wales 1900-1965' *Social and Legal Studies*, 16, 4, 459-81. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0964663907082731>. (Journal Article).

Carlen, P. & Worrall, A. (2004) *Analyzing Women's Imprisonment*, Cullompton: Willan Publishing. (Book).

Corcoran, M. (2006) *Out of Order: the political imprisonment of women in Northern Ireland 1972-1999*, Cullompton: Willan. (Monograph).

Corcoran, M., & Fox, C. (2013) 'A seamless partnership? Developing mixed economy interventions in a non-custodial project for women', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 13, 3, 336-53. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1748895812454750>. Submitted to REF2. (Journal Article).

Worrall, A. & Gelsthorpe, L. (2009) 'What works with women offenders: the past 30 years', *Probation Journal*, 56, 4: 329-346. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0264550509346538>. (Journal Article).

Grants:

Ballinger, A. (2004) *Relieving domestic abuse victims in capital cases in England & Wales 1900-1965*, Nuffield Foundation, £5,100.

Carlen, P. & Worrall, A. (2002-2005) *Women, Integration and Prison*, EU Framework 5 Programme, £67,000

Corcoran, M., Fox, C. & Worrall, A. (2009-2011) *Evaluation of Chepstow House community provision for women offenders*, Brighter Futures, £10,000.

Corcoran, M. & Worrall, A. (2012-14) *Evaluation of Youth in Focus 'Sisters' mentoring project*, Spurgeon's. £35,000

Worrall, A. (2008) *Evaluation of Adelaide House Outreach for Women Offenders*, Butler Trust, £3000

4. Details of the impact

The reach and significance of the impact claims fall broadly under two headings:

Changing attitudes to the treatment of women offenders locally, nationally and internationally

Anne, Mary and Anette have well-established reputations for their expertise on women offenders. Raising public awareness through the media, Anne was interviewed about her research by the *United Nations Womenwatch Newsletter* in 2008 (Source 1) and was interviewed on women's imprisonment by Charlotte Gill in *Fabulous* magazine (Part of the *Sun on Sunday*), in May 2012 (also available online – Source 2). In 2008, Mary was interviewed about her research on women political prisoners in Northern Ireland on BBC Radio 4's *Thinking Allowed*. Mary was also an invited participant in the consultation on *Volunteering across the Criminal Justice System*, convened by Baroness Julia Neuberger, where Mary convened and minuted a discussion group for the consultation's report published in 2009 by the Office for the Third Sector. Anette has been contacted (separately) by the families of three executed women thanking her for giving them a voice through her research. She has remained in contact with one descendant who has written her own non-academic autobiography and has told us that 'through meeting Anette and reading her research, I was able to understand so much more about the injustice of what happened to my great-grandmother...I was [also] able to gain insights and a deeper understanding of how the discrimination and poverty of those post-industrial times impacted so disastrously on her and her family'. (Sources 3 and 4).

Engaging with practitioners, Anne can point to the popularity of her 2009 article (co-authored with Gelsthorpe) in *Probation Journal*, a peer reviewed journal but with a largely practitioner readership. The article was in the top 20 'most read' online articles from the journal for three years and reached number 10 in November 2012 (Source 5). Since 1998, Anne has been invited regularly to teach a postgraduate module on 'Women, Crime and Criminal Justice' at the Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia (UWA). Students on this Masters and CPD programme are predominantly regional, national and international legal and criminal justice practitioners and policy makers. UWA also appointed Anne as a 'Professor-at-Large' between 2006 and 2008 to promote inter-disciplinary and community collaboration, resulting in closer relationships between UWA and local criminal justice agencies (Source 6). She conducted workshops with Community Corrections personnel and organised a conference 'stream' specifically for non-academic female criminal justice practitioners at the 2009 'Engendering Leadership' conference run by the UWA Business School. This work goes beyond teaching and dissemination and demonstrates an influence on long-term changes of attitude and practice. In May 2013 Anne was invited to join an inspection team by the Custodial Inspector of Western Australia as part of a State Government enquiry into a riot at a mixed-gender youth detention centre. The report, which she co-authored (in draft June 2013) will be presented to the WA Parliament and is an excellent example of the application of feminist perspectives to a 'real-life' problem (Source 7).

Supporting local policy and provision for women offenders through evaluation of voluntary and statutory provision in collaboration with research users

Following the Corston Report on vulnerable women offenders in 2007, Anne was approached and funded by the Butler Trust to undertake an evaluation of the work of Adelaide House Outreach Programme for women offenders in Liverpool. In carrying out this work in collaboration with Adelaide House staff, Anne also engaged a recently released female parolee as her research assistant, thus assisting the latter's rehabilitation and providing her with career development opportunities. The resulting research report, entitled *Giving them back their dignity*, was published and disseminated by the Butler Trust in 2008, raising awareness of, and giving credibility to, the excellent practice developed in Liverpool (Source 8).

In 2009, Anne and Mary were approached by a large local voluntary organisation, Brighter Futures, to conduct an evaluation of a new one-stop shop provision for women offenders in North Staffordshire. This was conducted in close collaboration with the research users and the preliminary report informed a parliamentary question raised by the MP for Stoke Central, Tristram Hunt in Jan 2011 (Source 9). The final report was published on the Brighter Futures website and contributed to the project securing further funding. Subsequently, Mary was invited by the Trustees of the Brighter Futures charity to develop their strategic plan for extending services for women offenders in the West Midlands (Source 10). The report also resulted in the Stoke-on-Trent

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Community Safety lead advising Staffordshire Police to employ Anne and Mary to evaluate their Integrated Offender Management programme (2013-2014).

In 2012, Anne and Mary were approached by the voluntary organisation, Spurgeons, and HM Prison Drake Hall for advice about setting up and evaluating a mentoring programme for young women prisoners. Subsequently, they were successful in obtaining a grant to undertake the evaluation, which will be completed in 2014 (Source 11). Initial findings about the relationship between mentors and mentees are likely to both inform and challenge the development of mentoring programmes which are currently being promoted by the Government. At this early stage, we suggest that while individualised work with women offenders can be a vehicle for 'healing', empowering and supporting them to navigate their way through and out of risky behaviours that are deemed to be associated with crime, it can also license 'soft' forms of social control through maternalistic social relationships.

In sum, this historical, empirical and theoretical research has challenged official discourses about the control and needs of women offenders and the discrimination they experience within the criminal justice system and the media. Specifically, in the period 2008-2013, Anne, Mary, and Anette have supported local and national policy and practice for women offenders through the evaluation of voluntary and statutory provision in collaboration with research users. This research continues to raise awareness and influence practice internationally, for example, by regular teaching, workshops, conferences and expert advice involving practitioners and policy makers in Australia. Finally, this research has quietly made impact on those most closely affected by the treatment of women offenders.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Anne Worrall interviewed for UN Womenwatch Network Newsletter (2008).
2. Anne Worrall quoted several times in article by Charlotte Gill on women's imprisonment in 'Why are we jailing so many women?' *Fabulous* magazine (in the *Sun on Sunday*), 13 May 2012 – also reproduced on internet:
<http://fabulousmag.thesun.co.uk/?s=worrall&submit=Search>
3. Davis, F. (2011) *Guard a silver sixpence*, Pan Books
4. Correspondence between Anette Ballinger great-granddaughter of an executed woman.
5. Anne Worrall's 2009 article on women offenders remains in the top 'most read' Probation Journal online articles (largely practitioner readership).
6. Written evidence from Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Western Australia.
7. Evidence in Report by Inspector of Custodial Services, Western Australia.
8. Written evidence from Butler Trust.
9. H Commons Debs 11 Jan 2011: Column 140 Tristram Hunt and Crispin Blunt on Chepstow House.
10. Evidence from Brighter Futures.
11. Evidence from Spurgeon's.
12. Evidence from Howard League of report by Julie Trebilcock presented to All-Party Parliamentary Group.