Men in Prison: Con-viviality, Race and Culture

Thesis

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Men In Prison: Con-viviality, Race and Culture

“All men are here. Prison is made for all men”

Acknowledgments
There are a lot of people I want to thank for getting me to this point. The first person is Professor Jock Young – for changing his mind and thereby changing mine. He initially declined my application to study for a Master’s Degree in Criminology at Middlesex University in 1994 on the basis that I had no first degree and only evidence of fairly minimal criminological knowledge from my completion of a Certificate of Crime and Deviance at Birkbeck College’s evening classes. I appealed and was accepted after a short interview so I am forever in his debt for that change of mind, and incredibly lucky to have had the benefit of his intellectual generosity, depth of thinking and gentle demeanour as a tutor. He recommended I read *Life in Fragments* by Zygmunt Bauman for which I am now enormously grateful although at the time I felt he was making a rather astute but oblique, and unnecessary, comment on my state of mind and general well-being.

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preparation.
This PhD is dedicated, with love, to my mother and father. With children of my own I
now know some more of what I’ve put them through. Even though theirs was a
generation given much more to hope and faith in the future than the anxious
misgiving that grips my own, the distress I must have caused at various times, alluded
to herein, cannot have been easy. For that pain and any other, I am sorry. They have
expected nothing and been willing, it always seemed to me, to give everything, so this
is for them. They have learned me well.
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V. ‘Boys’ Zone Stories: Perspectives from a young men’s prison’, Criminology and Criminal Justice 11 (2) 129-143. (2011)


IX. ‘Ethnicity, multiculture and racism in a Young Offender’s Institution’, Prison Service Journal 197, 32-38, 2011


XII. ‘‘Muslim is the New Black’’: New Ethnicities and New Essentialisms in the Prison’, with Coretta Phillips, Race and Justice Vol 3. No.2. 114-129

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Introduction: The Old Days, The New Times

A personal journey

The body of work I present for a PhD by Publication is comprised of twelve carefully chosen papers. Below, in Part 1, I summarise each paper’s development and content seeking to show how they combine to form a coherent narrative that offers a substantial and original contribution to criminological knowledge. Part 2 comprises the published papers in the order they are listed in the Table of Contents above. In Part 3 I briefly conclude and reflect on the field of knowledge to which these papers are a contribution, namely criminology and studies of prison with an emphasis on gender, ethnicity and reflexivity in the research process.

The principal themes of this PhD submission arise from the relationships between identity and epistemology by way of a journey through a prison research project, and beyond. As with much else in my life, it is a project lived forward but understood better backwards. Its surface roots lie in two years fieldwork (2006-2008) with the ESRC-funded Identities and Social Action Research Programme project, Ethnicity, Identity and Social Relations in Prison (RES-148-25-005) based at the LSE. All but one of the publications listed above draw from this project but another dynamic feature of the proposed PhD lies further back, deeper down, in my personal history.

In 1982, aged 24, I spent three months in HMP Norwich having been convicted in Norwich Crown Court of ‘Incitement to Commit Criminal Damage By Fire (Arson)’. Although this was my first experience of prison, I had other convictions, both criminal and political. In terms of the latter, I had become familiar, both from a distance and close up in West Belfast, with prison struggles and aspects of prison life by supporting the efforts of Irish republican prisoners to resist their criminalisation in the late 1970s, and most intensely during the two hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981.
was a thoroughgoing induction into the sociology of social control and aspects of
prison life experienced during some of the most turbulent and politically contested
periods of recent British history.
Throughout the late 1970s the prison system in the six county stateletii of Northern
Ireland was the front-line of the British Government’s efforts to neutralise Irish
republican resistance to the neo-colonial settlement of partition by presenting it as
simply criminal. It resulted in young men enduring prison conditions that are hard to
imagine now, although artist-turned-film maker, Steve McQueen’s film, *Hunger* goes
some way to capturing them. David Beresford’s (1987) book *Ten Men Dead: The
Story of the 1981 Hunger Strike* gives a fuller, if less graphic but no less moving
account. The struggle to defeat the men on hunger strike was Margaret Thatcher’s
first substantial political victory as Prime Minister after her election in 1979. It
established a political trend, a technique of government and a vocabulary of
intransigent resilience that served her well, as the British labour movement and
particularly the miners were soon to discover.
My three months in HMP Norwich were imposed because I had printed and published
a year earlier, in April 1981, a local fanzineiii, aptly titled, as it turned out, Final
Straw. It included among the interviews and reviews of bands, both local and national
(for example, The Higsons! The Vital Disorders, U2), a collaged graphic that
contained a recipe for a Molotov cocktail, alongside some indications of how it might
be combined with certain institutions such as banks and branches of McDonalds. The
day after it was delivered to the local record shops in Norwich, riots erupted in
Brixton, S.W. London. In retrospect, I think a better title for the fanzine would have
been Bad Timing. The shops were raided by police, I was arrested, charged and
eventually prosecuted. Bad times.
I realised as soon as I started work with Coretta Phillips (LSE) on the ESRC project that aspects of my biography were likely to ‘come into play’ as we discussed how our fieldwork would adopt ethnographic approaches. I had expected my prison experience and first-hand knowledge of other aspects of the criminal justice system, and its peripheries, to be a feature of the project but I was uncertain of their implications. The point at which I realised most fully that issues of biography could not be avoided or suppressed came halfway through the project in the second prison, HMP Maidstone. There I met a 30-year old man I had last seen when I had been his ‘keyworker’ in a south London Intermediate Treatmentiv Project. Fifteen years had passed and we were in very different places, metaphorically speaking, though talking face-to-face in the same cell. I refer to this meeting and its implications because they were instrumental in prompting me to write the first listed article, ‘Prison and University: A Tale of Two Institutions’.

**Continuous excursions: theoretical perspectives and approach**

The theoretical and methodological concerns of this PhD emerged from the journey described above but have been consolidated through academic and intellectual training. Some of the influences are clearer than others. Feminism as a social movement, a form of politics and mode of practice has shaped the trajectory of my work. Raewyn Connell is perhaps the most consistently cited author, and certainly the most personally influential. Connell combines Marxist perspectives, informed by psycho-analytical, libertarian and feminist standpoints. Trained as a historian, and writing mostly from the southern hemisphere, Connell’s work is imbued with literary and anti-colonial insights. She has theorised gender systematically and opened the field of masculinity studies. In as much as Connell’s approach seeks to hold in play
the multiple dimensions of power that operate through gender, race, ethnicity and class, her work is classically ‘intersectional’.

Intersectionality as a distinctive and recognisable form of theorising has recently become almost ‘fashionable’ in the Academy (see Lewis 2009). It emerged from activist roots, notably the Combahee River Collective and the feminist jurisprudence of Kimberlé Crenshaw, who is credited with coining the term in 1989.

Intersectionality addresses a political and theoretical tendency to revert to ‘metaphors and frameworks of addition: gender + class + race +… +… +…’ (Lewis 2009: 204) that layer class, gender and race in shuffling hierarchies of urgency, priority, impact and influence at the expense of appreciating their multiple combinational dimensions.

This focus on the simultaneity of categories of difference is an analytical approach that stresses how they articulate as one another rather than with one another to produce social relations. The philosophical emphasis is on the indivisibility of such social categories in any individual.

Intersectional approaches to theory are both a response and testimony to the destabilising impacts of post-structural theory and post-modernism. They aim to direct thought away from ‘the infernal dichotomies of modernity’ (Viveiros de Castro 1992:13) and postmodernism’s emphasis on infinitely regressing fragmentation and perpetual ambivalence. Despite its explanatory power and potential, arguments continue over both the viability and utility of intersectionality. Is it, for example, a theory or a concept, a method or a heuristic (see Phoenix and Pattynama 2006, Anthias 2013)? These questions are not resolved in this PhD thesis, and the creative tensions they generate are identifiable in the variable approach to different theoretical perspectives that populate the published works and this supporting document.
As the ESRC prison research project with Coretta Phillips progressed, method and theory were consistently in question and persistently interrogated. One of the benefits of co-working is that opportunities to question and interrogate are ever-present and rarely solitary. This is unusual for PhD study that generally privileges the private intellectual journey of a dedicated individual scholar. There are merits to this approach, although it is perhaps surprising that more PhD students do not go mad or succumb to schizophrenic obsessions as they move in and out of their research field. Perhaps, at the end of the day, mono-manias are simply the entry requirements and propulsive force for a successful academic career, privileging the mildly autistic and ‘coincidentally’ masculine modalities of much of academic life. If I have avoided this, it is through working closely with Coretta Phillips who has massively extended the range, scope and vitality of my learning journey. Her work on multicultural realities, diversity policies and applying theory to practice has been as invaluable as it has enriching. In her book (Phillips 2012) she hesitates to describe our research as ethnographic. With academically unusual restraint she declines to accept the kudos that accompanies the term ‘ethnography’ and adopts the more mundane and justifiable description of mixed qualitative research. Notwithstanding the open fluidity of ethnographic research methods (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983), such circumspection reflects our shared anxieties that prison is a very difficult place to practice ethnography (Drake, Earle and Sloan 2015, forthcoming). Ethnography is a research method developed by anthropologists and, although somewhat neglected, anthropological approaches have much to recommend themselves to those pursuing a study of imprisonment, prisons and prisoners (see for example Rhodes 2001). Anthropology is not interested in causes, especially not those that so energetically animate criminology and penology. Its defining and distinctive
mission is simply to demonstrate the many ways of being human in the world. It involves listening to people, seeing what they do, attempting to feel what they feel, and hear what they say. It thereby creates an implicit politics of affinity.

Anthropology, thus practiced, embraces radical alterity, an openness to otherness (Hage 2012, 2013).

As I indicate at various times below, the ESRC prison research project was part of a wider multi-disciplinary research programme into identity and social action. At an early gathering of this programme an anthropologist recommended a book that I doubt would have been found on the shelves of many criminologists: Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia (Overing and Passes 2000). The collection of field studies from Amazonia was helpful because it demonstrated how far the discipline of anthropology had travelled from its colonial origins and how it had furnished post-colonial thinking with one of its most vital conceptual tools.

As is evident in many of the papers below, conviviality became something of a leitmotif for the research project, morphing into a tentative penal variant of ‘conviviality’, those sometimes brittle, sometimes pliant, details of perpetual emotion-in-action that make convicts’ lives viable. As Coretta’s (2012) book demonstrates, the multicultural prisons of Rochester and Maidstone provide a compelling picture of globalisation made small and secure, or at least ‘well-governed’. Paul Gilroy’s (2004) After Empire describes the post-colonial melancholia that blankets political and cultural sentiments in Britain. There is a clear debt throughout the text to his analysis of its countervailing convivialities. Equally influential is Stuart Hall’s (1992) seminal and paradigm-shifting ‘new ethnicities’ and both provide the theoretical impetus for
many of the papers included for consideration here, as do those of Ghassan Hage and, somewhat more problematically, Loïc Wacquant.

In papers V and VIII I cite, approvingly, Wacquant’s extensive analysis of the transformations occurring in modern life, brought on by an ascendant neo-liberalism. Wacquant characterises these transformations as ‘epochal’ – i.e. of world-historical proportions that are equivalent in scale to the shifts (in the West) from feudalism to capitalism. I am convinced that historical perspectives are essential to understanding contemporary penality, and that the ascendancy of neo-liberalism represents a new conjuncture, but Hall is less given to flamboyant rhetoric. His no less eloquent but more measured analysis is that the current transformations are clearly not on this scale (see Hall 1989: 127). While I am drawn to Wacquant’s lyrical flair and appreciate the energy and urgency of his writing, I suspect that he fulfils Pierre Bourdieu’s warning that ‘good politics does not necessarily produce good sociology’ (cited in Hage 2010: 39).

Wacquant can, however, be credited with attempting to redress the recurring neglect of race within a largely white academic milieu, and prison studies in particular. His recognition that race is thoroughly imbricated in Western state politics and social life, places him closer to Hall and Gilroy’s post-colonial approach in this respect. The complexity of this contemporary conjuncture, and Wacquant’s difficulty in generating a consistent and coherent theoretical synthesis accommodating class, race and gender has resulted in the withdrawal from the publisher of the final instalment of his trilogy: *Urban Outcasts* (2007), *Punishing the Poor* (2009a) and *Deadly Symbiosis: Race and the Rise of the Penal State* (currently predicted for 2014). The controversies and complexities of analysing the different historical legacies of race-thinking and statecraft on both sides of the north Atlantic are enormous and frequently problematic,
as Wacquant (2013: 8) concedes: “These difficulties explain why I have twice taken this book back from my publisher [Polity] to revise it top to bottom.”

Wacquant’s almost frenzied theorising, and torrential outputs are not always the most helpful guide to clarity but they are a consistent presence in the collection of papers included here. My engagement with his work is undoubtedly incomplete and, in places, inconsistent but reflects a common interest in the approach referred to above as intersectionality, of keeping in play the dynamics of complex and continually evolving social processes clustered around race and class.

The significance of post-colonial thinking is evident within the body of work I have submitted, most obviously in Hall and Gilroy’s recurring presence. The perspective is inspired by C.L.R James’ (1963) sublime account of the game of cricket in *Beyond a Boundary*, an unmatchable early exemplar of post-colonial writing. In it, a cricket-lover uses cricket to weave into his passion for the game all its supressed and hidden histories of racial superiority and colonial dissembling. The untold story of the Caribbean unfolds as the elegant and easy scholarship subversively unpicks its buried details in England’s favoured game: ‘What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?’!

More generally, post-colonialism is an approach to academic inquiry that has its intellectual wellsprings in the struggles against European colonial occupation from Haiti and Algeria (France) to Guinea, Cape Verde and Mozambique (Portugal), India and Ireland (Britain). Franz Fanon’s work (1986) features in some of my analysis, and more unattributed and implicit is the work of Edward Said’s (1978, 1993) seminal critiques of Western conceptions of identity, culture and belonging. I make specific reference to Mary Pratt’s (1991) work, which in itself operationalises in an empirical context, Homi Bhabha’s (1994) ideas about the inherent ambivalences of post-
colonial identity and their accompanying hybrid amalgams. These are subject-positions that draw creatively and sometimes problematically from practices of emulation and mimicry.

For ethnographers, and indeed anyone writing up a research thesis, the issue of representation looms large. When the issues at stake are those of culture and identity, the descriptive can easily slip into the prescriptive. In this context, Gayatri Spivak’s (1988) provocatively unanswerable question ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ has set an agenda for post-colonial theory that continues to animate social inquiry. The agenda involves retrieving, discovering or creating the histories of disempowered or marginalised ‘subaltern’ groups. More than simply a critique of the powerful and the coloniser’s perspective, post-colonial studies are engaged in revealing new and previously unseen vistas, hearing what is unheard and creating new formations of human possibility. For Spivak this can sometimes involve ‘strategic essentialism’, a kind of conscious and elective subject position that characterised some of the Black politics of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a form of ‘identity by consent’ rather than ‘identity by descent’. These complex and unfinished theoretical perspectives occupy the last three papers in the submitted collection where ideas about whiteness and white identities begin to take more substantial shape.

Post-colonial scholarship is diverse and diversifying. It includes distinctive and productive threads, such as the Subaltern Studies Group in India (Guha and Spivak 1988) and, closer to home, some streams of Irish Studies (Graham and Maley 1999). One such thread is concerned with theorising ‘whiteness’. Whiteness studies proceed from the post-colonial concern to specify and examine more closely the locations of power. I include references to this literature in several of the papers included in this submission. Garner (2007) provides as clear and comprehensive introduction to this
complex field of study as could be hoped for. In doing so, he identifies five ‘Pitfalls’ that frequently accompany ‘using whiteness as a paradigm’ (ibid: 8-11). These cautionary indicators help to navigate the asymmetrical characteristics of a concept prone to relapse into the comforting delusions of simple inversion and implicit equivalence. Nothing, of course, could be further from the actuality. If I have avoided ‘Reification’ (Pitfall 1), ‘Whiteness [as] merely fluid and contingent’ (Pitfall 2), ‘The level playing field’ (Pitfall 3), ‘Recentring’ (Pitfall 4) and ‘Assuming that analysing whiteness is an anti-racist procedure per se’ (Pitfall 5), it is due to the clarity of Garner’s account.

Wacquant (op. cit.) is fond of presenting a theoretical coda that draws together his many theoretical concerns. Although the combinations of the way race, gender, class and state are laced together in prison are also a concern for this submission, I have not included such a coda. The difficulties that Wacquant confronts in his third volume (see above) are substantial and his coda has clearly been elusive. In these 12 papers it is almost inevitable that the various theoretical threads are more disparate and tangled, perhaps even frayed. This is a result, in part, of the process of compilation and assembly. In the concluding section I make some further comments on how, in future work, they may be drawn together, extended or added to. A coda may or may not be the result, but theoretical coherence and an open-ness to new theoretical perspectives will be a continuing objective.

In what follows I provide a very short, free-standing, descriptive summary of each paper’s general topic and findings before moving on to offer a more extensive commentary on its analytical approach and the contribution it makes to criminological knowledge. In the section after that, each paper is presented in its final published form.
Part 1 – What The Papers Say…

**Paper 1 summary** - ‘Prison and University: A Tale of Two Institutions’

comprises a theoretical reflection on the discipline of criminology, its historical trajectory and current relationship with the ascendancy of neo-liberal forms of governance. In particular, the paper presents a unique and original consideration of relationships between prisons and universities. It introduces the concept of ‘Convict Criminology’, examining its emergence in the USA and its implications within, and for, critical criminology. It is presented to the conference journal as a means of encouraging further reflection within a scholarly community on the role of criminology, and of its ‘silent partners’ behind prison bars. The paper challenges the administrative and positivist frameworks that lurk within criminological discourse. The paper poses interesting questions about social stratification and institutions by interrogating the role, purpose and value of criminology.

‘Prison and University: A Tale of Two Institutions’ is based on a panel I organised at the 2011 British Society of Criminology conference in Newcastle, ‘Putting Prison In Its Place’. This panel, comprised of three papers, served as a launch-pad for what has become known as British Convict Criminology. One of the papers was presented by Andy Aresti, then a lecturer at Birkbeck College, to whom I had been introduced some months earlier. Andy’s work with the ex-prisoners’ organisation UnLock, and his PhD, focused on the way prison experiences linger after release. An ex-prisoner himself, he was keen to develop a group similar to the US based Convict Criminology collective (Aresti 2012). My own paper considered the connections between the
halted expansion of Higher Education and the growth of prisons over the previous 25 years.

The paper engages with Loïc Wacquant’s (2009a, 2009b) thesis on the reconfigurations of the Western liberal state. Wacquant identifies the prison as central to this process, cementing the ‘precariat’, the insecure and marginalised poor, into the penal circuits of a low/no wage economy. My paper juxtaposes this development of an institution that ‘locks the poor down’ with another, the newly marketised university sector that secures the upwardly mobile privileges of the middle and upper classes. The paper suggests the current generation of this class segment are busy pulling up the ladder tentatively lowered by their parents’ generation in the closing years of the post-war welfare settlement.

The paper is conjectural in tone and asks if, and how, the spectacular growth of criminology as a discipline is implicated in the developments Wacquant describes so powerfully and eloquently in his books. Wacquant was the keynote speaker at the 2011 BSC conference.

By asking questions of British criminology, the paper critically revisits both the reflexive literature it has produced and its pedagogical priorities. The paper introduces some critical themes about the role of criminology as a discipline, how its knowledge is produced and for whom or what purpose. The leitmotif is taken from the words of a prisoner with whom I had engaged positively but who persistently declined a formal interview by repeatedly posing a provocative and leading question: ‘Cui Bono?’ – ‘who benefits?’. This thoughtful evasion of the research project’s objectives is contrasted with my encounter with an erstwhile ‘client’ of Lambeth Social Services, a person I knew as ‘a kid I worked with’. ‘Warren’ was then a child of 15 but his life, I quickly discovered, had followed a trajectory into drugs, crime and violence that we
had both once worked hard to avoid. He was a broken man, barely able to cope with
the simple routines of prison life, haunted by his past and afraid of his future.
The shock of meeting ‘Warren’ some 15 years later, him at 30, me at 50, and in such
appalling circumstances was profound. Although I had anticipated a degree of
possibly difficult resonance with my earlier prison experiences, I had not expected to
encounter such a fully embodied echo from another part of my past. It was the single
most upsetting experience of a project that was inevitably and predictably distressing
at times.
The effect prompted me to revisit Simon Holdaway and Paul Rock’s (1998)
thoughtful reflections on the biographical constitution of criminology as a discipline
in British academic life. This, and other reflexive accounts of the development of
criminology in Britain (e.g. Rock 1994), led me to James Bennett’s (1981) earlier
examination of the role of oral history and personal biography in criminological
writing.
As is perhaps familiar to more experienced academics, it sometimes appears there is
nothing new under the sun, but the process by which light falls in some places again
and again is not simple serendipity, though this in and of itself is a precious resource
of sociological inquiry. The paper alludes to this process by drawing from the
coincidental publication of a Special Issue of the journal *Theoretical Criminology*
(Vol. 11 no. 4, 2007) based around a classic of Chicago School social interactionism,
Clifford Shaw’s (1930) *The Jack Roller*. This special issue revealed key
criminological figures again reflecting on the role of biography and the role of the
criminologist in social scientific research. The longstanding features of this agonising
around the role of criminology and its facility for recuperation into crude, coercive
and instrumental ends forms another, slightly divergent, but biographically consistent, feature of the paper.

Tom Nairn’s (1977, 1988, 2001) thesis around the peculiar political configurations of the British monarchy and the future prospects of the United Kingdom were once confined to the critical margins of social theory (see Miles 1993 for a sympathetic but critical reading of Nairn’s linkages between race, nation and the English context). The tide of history has subsequently moved his arguments closer to centre stage, and Nairn’s abiding fascination with Robert Musil’s (1979) novel, The Man Without Qualities, is one I share. Its neglected criminological dimensions are sketched out in this paper as a counterpoint to the possibility that as criminology grows, cuckoo-like, in scale, reach and ambition in the post-Browne report era, its horizons will narrow to its instrumental and positivist origins. Although I share Bosworth and Hoyle’s (2012) enthusiasm for the vigour and diverse fragmenting of criminology, I am not sure it has accomplished, or is capable of accomplishing, the kind of transformations that allows geographers, say, in the shape (and wake) of Doreen Massey (2005) to be recognised as being ‘For Space’ rather than simply good for mapping territory and classifying rocks.

**Paper 2 Summary:** ‘Restorative Justice and the Right To Move On: toward deinstitutionalising the stigma of a criminal conviction’ is an epistemological and reflexive exploration of the issues surrounding the rapid growth in the administration and public availability of criminal records. In particular the paper critically considers the coincident growth of restorative justice in policy communities, social movements and criminological discourse, and questions the neglect of apparent contradictions between a concern to restore the good
name of offenders with the distribution of their criminal records. The paper briefly summarises international comparators in the administration of criminal records, and notes the emergence of domestic resistance and central government reorganisation of procedures for managing criminal records.

‘Restorative Justice and the Right To Move On: toward deinstitutionalising the stigma of a criminal conviction’, (with Alison Wakefield) is the only paper that does not draw from or refer to the ESRC prison project. It is included because it tackles the ways in which the establishment of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) has insidiously and discreetly, but also publicly, institutionalised the stigma of a criminal conviction. The biographical prompting for this publication is less open but no less significant.

My transition from youth justice social worker to academic has been accomplished largely without mishap but not entirely without interruption. It was a series of relatively inconsequential events that planted the seeds of disquiet over the way criminal records had begun to circulate as a public currency of disdain. The first of these was compounded by my encounter with the precariousness of my transition into academic work without the security of the qualification I am now seeking, a PhD. After the conclusion of two years teaching criminology at the University of Surrey and with no onward academic prospects, I was shortlisted for interview by the local Probation Service as a training officer. As part of the application process I was reconciled to the disclosure of my criminal record as exempt from the provisions of the 1974 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. I was less reconciled to the questions I was asked about it at the conclusion of the interview. They seemed irrelevant to the role, and in breach of the guidelines of the Act. They were only consistent with the
vicarious curiosity of the interview panel and their neglect of the law and my right to privacy. To encounter this in the Probation Service was disturbing and upsetting. The anger I felt may have been sharpened by my rising sense of insecurity as I felt my job prospects and academic ambitions ebbing away while I ‘signed on’ at the local employment office, for the first time in over twenty years. I was rescued by academic colleagues, such as my eventual co-author, Dr Alison Wakefield, through visiting lectureships at City University, Westminster University and an Associate Lectureship with The Open University. The interruption was thankfully brief though thoroughly educational, in an uncomfortable kind of way.

Around the same time I had also taken on a voluntary role as a governor in the local infant school, and it was in this capacity that I had my second encounter with the changing profile of criminal convictions from largely private matters to public issues, courtesy of the Criminal Records Bureau. C. Wright Mills’ (1959) famous exhortation to ‘connect private troubles with public issues’ began to make sense and pull on me more strongly. His advice about how to craft sociological work has encouraged me to pursue the autobiographical aspects of this PhD:

“What this means is that you must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship is the center of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you work.”

(Mills, 1959: 196)

The paper examines the rapid rise to prominence of restorative justice as a criminal justice policy panacea, particularly in youth justice arenas. Restorative justice is a complex, at times contradictory, but always enervating set of ideas about social order and social harms (Johnson 2003). It promises to be a more inclusive and less
damaging approach than conventional criminal justice (Woldegrave 2002). At some levels, and in some variants, it challenges the very basis of criminal law as viable social procedure (Christie 1977, 2004). The paper takes issue with the co-existence of this perspective, the popularity of restorative justice in criminal justice reforms in the youth justice sector (the subject of my MA dissertationvi) and the simultaneous rise to prominence of the Criminal Records Bureau. In particular, the paper suggests that the intentions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 have been superseded by the operation of the Bureau, and its sentiments neglected to the point of extinction, or at least functional obscurity.

The paper includes a short history of criminal records vetting procedures in the UK and reviews similar procedures internationally. It discusses the ‘collateral consequences’ that have accompanied the emergence of the CRB and, better late than never, the emergence of resistance to its growth. The neglect of these issues within mainstream criminology is revealing of some of its pre-occupations and theoretical blinkers. For critical criminology in the UK, so thorough in its rejection of positivism, it is something like the elephant in the room. I think of it as a kind of criminological Hawthorn Effect where the researchers note that the factory workers have modified their levels of output not so much, as anticipated, according to the levels of light at their workstations but according to their own presence among them, but fail to register how the workers have also started to manufacture light bulbs rather than continuing to produce telephone relay equipment. This is a rather clumsy analogyvii, but the sense of a radical blind spot and the absence of any empirical engagement with such an extraordinary development in the social profile of crime is as frustrating as it is hard to comprehend (for an exception, see Thomas 2007).
Without wanting to labour the autobiographical dimension, it is worth recalling, since I can, that in 1986 when the junior Home Office minister David Mellor announced, in the heyday of Thatcherism, that local authorities, health services and independent schools would be granted access to criminal records to check any potential employee or volunteer working with children, it was widely regarded as a draconian step. The sensitive and apologetic tone of questioning I was subject to on applying to work for Lambeth Social Services in 1987 probably reflected its relative novelty, and the still pervasive and sensitising influence of labelling theory in the profession.

The paper ends by noting the new fragility of policy developments in this field as New Labour’s muscular policy outputs come up against the vapid indifference of a Conservative-led Coalition Government guided by a different breed of positivist. The Coalition has abandoned New Labour’s governmental vigour and apparently seeks neither to ‘steer’ nor to ‘row’ as long as it remains afloat. At its core is an Eton-educated cabal of upper class men fulfilling their manifest destiny of being both born and schooled to rule. They feel no need to prove their merits with endlessly evidenced policy formulations. So sure, so secure and so relentlessly positive are David Cameron and his chums that they are buoyed up by the prevailing currents of neoliberalism (Seymour 2010), that they barely feel the need to bother with governing through crime (Simon 2007). For them, the state rules rather than governs.

**Paper 3 Summary:** ‘Reading Difference Differently? Identity, Epistemology and prison ethnography’ foregrounds the way that researchers’ identities interacted with interviewees’ identities and other aspects of prison fieldwork during the ESRC project, conducted with Coretta Phillips. It challenges the prevailing orthodoxies of positivist criminology at both an epistemological
and methodological level by insisting on the material influence of identity in
the research process. The discussion reviews existing literature on reflexivity
and presents an original development of its own. The sophisticated discussion
of some of the methodological issues arising from a prolonged period of
prison ethnography by a two person research team provides a unique and
stimulating enlargement of the criminological field.

Concerns about the capacity of criminology to move beyond a self-congratulatory
celebration of incessant growth as a porous rendezvous discipline are a feature of both
the first and second paper, and also feature in the third paper listed, ‘Reading
Difference Differently? Identity, Epistemology and prison ethnography’.

Co-authored with Coretta Phillips, this article emerged from that period at the end of a
research project when the issue of declaring your findings, not least to your funding
body, becomes more pressing. We struggled with the complexity of our subject
matter; ethnicity and social relations in men’s prisons, and our chosen methods which
were ethnographic. It was glaringly obvious to us that my being white and Coretta
being black and mixed race had been a significant feature of our fieldwork, shaping
the data we collected and our encounters with respondents. Should we proceed as if
this were not the case just because the discipline to which we both owed some
allegiance appeared ill-equipped to digest the epistemological implications that
shouted out to us from our experiences?

From almost the first day of fieldwork we were aware of how aspects of our
biographies and identity would be a feature of the project, but we were uncertain
about how to work with the issue. For example, on our first full day ‘in the field’ we
decided to go onto the wings at HMYOI Rochester and explain a bit about our
research and approach. The issue of our respective identities quickly surfaced. When
we returned to our office in another part of the prison to compare notes. It was clear
Coretta’s experiences, and thus her account, had been very different from mine. While
I had struggled to get any attention or generate much interest in our research from the
young men, Coretta had struggled to field an avalanche of stories about prison officers
and their racism, largely, but not exclusively, from black prisoners.
Perhaps the novelty of the appearance on the wing of a black, mixed race woman had
something to do with it. Nearly all prison officers are white and most are male (in
men’s prisons). Although much of the recent expansion of prison research has been
undertaken by women, they have been almost exclusively white. Some months later
Coretta asked if I’d noticed how the prison officers always seemed to address me first
when we encountered them on our walks around the prison\textsuperscript{viii}. As we progressed
through the research we came to appreciate the complexities of our identities and their
various impacts on the data we collected. We also discovered how other
ethnographers, such as Mitch Duneier, have come across similar issues. Duneier
(2004: 101) is convinced that ‘neither blacks nor whites…talk honestly about race in
the other’s presence’. Spending two years considering questions of ethnicity and
identity, both Coretta and I found ourselves unable to avoid some kind of engagement
with our own differences. We knew we were ‘onto something’, as Les Back (2012)
puts it, but we weren’t quite sure what or how to work with whatever ‘it’ was.
Developing a consciousness of one’s self in the process of research is a familiar
experience that has become known in scholarly literature as ‘reflexivity’. It is a
widespread and controversial term in social science, qualifying its claim to objective
knowledge because of the way the personal qualities of the researcher filter and shape
the data collected and thus the knowledge that emerges from it. Unfortunately,
reflexivity has also developed a reputation for making academics even more self-
absorbed than usual, and if we are really honest, no-one much cares who we are or the troubles we’ve seen. Reflexivity, so it is argued, is a diverting hall of mirrors, best passed through quickly. After all, as Dick Hobbs (1993:62) rather wearily observes, who wants to know about the valiant ethnographer of the social margins ‘who was nearly arrested, almost beaten up and didn’t quite go crazy’ as they bravely descended into the criminal underworld he himself was brought up in. Reflexivity, poorly practised, or uncritically indulged, simply turns the voyeurism of the researcher back on themselves, a narcissistic self-absorption that confuses the object of study with the method (Skeggs 2004).

I think we avoid some of these traps in this article largely because two of us were involved in a process of structured reflection. We could counter-pose any over-investment in scrutinising our ‘selves’ because we were also not just scrutinising each other, but each other through specific lenses of class, ethnicity and gender where we were each positioned so ‘differently’.

In subsequent articles (above and below) I have taken aspects of my own biography, such as my experiences as a prisoner, a bit further, and without the benefit of this collaborative ‘exteriority’ and subaltern counter-positioning. The pitfalls of doing so are many. Perhaps Hobbs, above, had in mind Geertz’s (1988:97) warnings about ‘the unbearably earnest fieldworker’s confessional writing. The tendency, seemingly a trans-Atlantic one, for irritating neologisms, such as ‘mystory” and ‘Me-search’, or ‘I-witnessing’ can be off-putting (Back 2012). It is a difficult balance to strike between recognising that there is no ‘view from nowhere’ (Bourdieu 2000:2) and that you are not the story, you are the storyteller. Les Back’s writing has been invaluable in helping and encouraging me to experiment with this balance. Raewyn Connell (1983, 1995), more usually noted for her theoretical creativity and innovation, has also been
a powerful influence, not least her neglected critical analysis of Willis’s (1977) Learning to Labour and her passing remark on the value of Heinrich Böll’s (1973) novel *Group Portrait With a Lady*. This is a challenging read for a social scientist, a kind of fictional journalism, or journalistic fiction, which does what only a novel can do in bringing to life real places and ‘unreal’ people. Social scientists so frequently accomplish the opposite (Billig 2013). One ‘absent’ woman, Leni, is assembled through the multiple lenses of a series of ‘witnesses’ with the resulting ‘group portrait’ conveying both the awful dread of Nazi Germany and the vitality of people living through it. It is perhaps best regarded as a non-fiction novel.

Coretta and I had the luxury of an element of ‘group portraiture’ denied to the single researcher and the benefit of a mutual commitment to developing structured reflective co-interviews during the course of the research project. Coretta felt strongly that rather than seeking a straightforward route to publication in a methods journal, we should press our case within the discipline of criminology, not least because of her experiences of its sceptical resistance to reflexivity. The referees and editor of the *British Journal of Criminology* were persuaded that our epistemological concerns were significant and robustly substantiated by a supporting theoretical literature and specific methodological innovations.

The article’s concerns about questions of biography, identity and reflexivity are cited in an article by Yvonne Jewkes in the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*. Jewkes (2012) explores and extends some of the themes we posed in the *British Journal of Criminology*, and significantly, identifies the article as a breakthrough in advancing a rigorous approach to reflexivity in criminological research. In her article, and subsequently in personal correspondence, Jewkes refers to the resistance she encountered amongst criminologists to the development of her reflexive approach and
article. The response to Yvonne’s article was such that she was invited by the editors, Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, to edit a special issue dedicated to ‘Doing Prison Research Differently’. My contribution to this special issue is the fourth article in the list.

**Paper 4 Summary:** ‘Insider and Out – making sense of a prison experience and a research experience’ focuses on the implications of ‘insider’ research positions in the context of prison research. It develops a sustained discussion of qualitative methods that engages with criminological and philosophical sources. It makes a case for a ‘convict criminology’ that encourages the participation of ex-prisoners in criminological inquiry and for research approaches sensitive to the peculiarity of prison experiences. This paper calls for criminologists (and especially male prison researchers) to be more honest and revealing about their own identity management and more sensitive to gender dynamics in researching men’s prisons.

‘Insider and Out – making sense of a prison experience and a research experience’ is my most explicit and extensive exploration of the significance of serving time in prison to my subsequent criminological interests. It includes a consideration of some of the established conventions of insider research, and the associated critical literature of this approach. The article involves more sustained reflection on specific aspects of prison experience and their potential relevance for a new kind of ‘affinative research’ that might form part of emergent Convict Criminology perspectives. There is a tension within some currents of Convict Criminology around the extent to which ‘insider/ex-con’ perspectives may be assumed to provide privileged insights,
intrinsically superior, more authentic, and thus more valid, than conventional research accounts (see Jones et al 2009; Newbold and Ross 2013). I am keen to avoid such an approach, not least, perhaps, for personal reasons about the limited and atypical nature of my own penal experiences. Also, for men ‘authenticity’ is an extensively over-valorised disposition that, for the male researcher, requires special care. My intentions in this article are to report and reflect on some of my own experiences and dispositions, as they surfaced during the course of the prison research project, and subsequently.

For most of my working life since my conviction I have resisted any direct reference to my prison experiences, for a variety of reasons, not least a degree of confusion about their significance. I think very few people who have been sent to prison want to be defined by the experience. Most of us are acutely aware of its defining power and our lack of control over how we will be regarded under its lingering shadows. I have been conscious of not wanting to ‘cash-in’ on experiences that were, to me, exceptional but that to others less fortunate (i.e. less middle class) are, if not a matter of destiny, a kind of routine hazard, more of a ‘commonplace’. For the most part prison is an experience that blights lives and leaves scars (or worse) I am thankful to have avoided. In short, prison did me no harm but I have been reluctant to allow it to do me good, as it were, not least (again) because this would mean implicitly colluding in its most pernicious myth and affirming liberal faith in the benefits of prison’s rehabilitative role (see Carlen 2008).

I have also wanted to avoid granting any kind of currency to the macho myths of prison, of being tough enough to simply shrug it off or smart enough to trade in its reputations and perverse allure. This kind of masculine capital is not something I am generously endowed with, and what I have I’d rather divest myself of than convert or
accumulate, though I recognise that choice, not always easy or straightforward, is as
freighted with class privilege as it is with gender virtue.

In this article I introduce a number of ‘angles’ that I feel require further development
in ‘doing prison research differently’. In the Special Issue of *Qualitative Inquiry* it
was gratifying to see that some of these are recognised and taken up by other prison
researchers. Crewe (2014) for example, is sympathetic to the need to develop a
nuanced and careful approach to reflexivity and the affective dimensions of
researching prisons. Crewe also identifies the curious omission of a more specific
focus on homo-social masculinities and gender specific perspectives.

Writing a Foreword to a collection of prisoners’ writings, Erwin James (2013:7)
points out “[W]hoever you are and however long your sentence, in prison you live
inside your head”. In my article I indicate a need to address this aspect of men’s
experience more closely and sensitively. Men’s interior, subjective worlds are thrown
back at them by force of circumstance in prison, exposing them to new and familiar
challenges experienced very differently in the open world.

Researchers and prisoners could interrogate more specifically the ways in which
prison corroborates and twists masculine identities and anxieties formed around, for
example, the dichotomies of public and private life. The partial collapse of this
distinction in prison life generates tensions, a structure of feeling (Williams 1977),
that are potentially revealing but under-examined. Crewe also notes the neglect of
these psycho-social dimensions in the research literature on men’s social lives in
prison.

In the article I draw attention to prison’s analogous attractions to sociologists and
social theorists. This remains compelling to my mind, but again the gendered
dynamics of its attractions are also underexplored. For example, reading Lacan (1957,
in Lodge 1995), via Žižek (2006), I find myself tempted to speculation by his observation that ‘in the unconscious is the whole of language’. In prison’s civil death there is something of the process of being rendered both unconscious in the social sense, and into the social unconscious that is revealing. Just as Freud asserted that dreams are ‘the royal road’ to the unconscious, so I think it is possible that prisons operate as the (bad) dream-world of society, a repository of its repressed desires for order and pattern. In the same way that Freud saw the unconscious as a kind of uncanny ‘internal foreign territory’, so the prison is to society, being of society but not in society. Again, taking from Castoriadis’ (1987) reading of Lacan, where he suggests that ‘the unconscious is the domain of the Other’, so prisoners might function in this capacity to society, providing it with an unformed image against which to imagine the citizen. Being there, either as a man, a prisoner or other long term capacity, has distinctive psycho-social effects, which are considerably more than simply obvious, but neglected in the research literature.

The ‘hardness and harshness’ of men’s prison environments, and their relationship to the state’s wider social projects of care and hope, for example, might be productively theorised along the lines Hage (2003) has experimented with using a neo-Kleinian psycho-analytical perspective. Social and personal investments in punishment and security might be recognised as defences against anxieties generated both by a collapse of (Western) hope in the future and as compensation against the perceived injury this imposes (in the West). Equally, the kinds of masculine ‘toughness’ found in the regime’s official fortifications and austerity mirror themselves in the character and body-muscle armour (‘hench’) some men equip themselves with to survive. Both reflect a certain kind of orientation to the social and personal management of ontological vulnerability.
By encouraging ex-prisoners with academic social science ambitions Convict Criminology will be well placed to provide some empirical and reflexive development of these fields. The gradient of the roads that lead to university and academic careers are, even if only in cliché, the inverse of those that took them into prison. It’s a hard climb back up from such a long fall, or a steep slide. This presents ex-prisoners with specific challenges and the roads are increasingly littered with administrative obstacles, the simple fact of possessing a criminal record and the mandatory screening of academic applicants being but one. Marshalling support and recognition of these difficulties is one objective of the group. The outputs will be diverse, and the establishment of a group that can sustain it is far from complete, but this article at least contributes some intellectual momentum to that process.

**Paper 5 Summary:** ‘Boys’ Zone Stories: perspectives from a young men’s prison’ offers an analysis of the ways in which masculinities are generated and expressed in a Young Offender Institution. It examines the way young men in HMYOI Rochester talk about their experiences and critically considers their allegiances, their ideas about freedom and their bonds to others. The paper categorises features of the young men’s talk in three ways, tying them to different forms of masculinity. It includes a reflective and analytical commentary on the historical salience of such masculinities, and the apparent pre-eminence of locality in young men’s sense of themselves.

‘Boys’ Zone Stories: perspectives from a young men’s prison’ picks up questions of masculine identity in prison. The paper engages with the underdeveloped currents of gender specific analysis of prison experiences, and further disaggregates a singular, simplistic conceptualisation of masculine identities. Specific features of youthful or
young masculinities are identified from interview data and fieldwork experiences, alongside a short review of research and literature around young masculinities. Three semantic themes structure the paper; the experience of being ‘on road’, young men’s form of reference to life outside prison (and home life); their social affiliations referred to with the term ‘my boys’ which is suggestive of martial and pre-modern masculine collectivities; and, ‘postcode pride’, a term I coined to refer to the salience of locality to young men’s sense of themselves and their aspirations.

The paper contributes to, and challenges, some of the critical cultural criminology published in the journal *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. It develops a gendered analysis of young men’s experience of penal confinement and its relationship to other aspects of young men’s senses of who and how they are in a rapidly changing world. The article is original in foregrounding historical perspectives on changing forms of masculine adolescence, and insisting on the salience of these perspectives for critical criminological analysis. The three themes are distinct but interrelated, with the first two, ‘on road’ and ‘my boys’ each emerging from the recurrence of these specific ‘motifs’ in the young men’s talk in HMYOI Rochester. The third, ‘postcode pride’, is my own invention but simply refers to the well-established (in the academic literature) but urgently and intensely experienced sense of locality among the young men.

The article considers the extent to which the term ‘on road’ resonates with a paradigmatic American masculinity based on a ‘flight from women’, articulated around concepts of freedom, motion and adventure that are defined against what women are supposed to stand for in the Western masculine imagination - entrapment, stasis, and ‘civilisation’. The romanticised identification with travelling unencumbered by domestic responsibilities is powerfully evoked in the young men’s phrasing and accounts of their lives. Within the enforced stasis of prison
environments these kinetic masculinities are intensely constrained but repeatedly invoked as a kind of ideal state of being.

My curiosity about particular masculine vernaculars in the term ‘my boys’ derives from Beier’s (1987) accounts of vagrancy in medieval England. This prompted a mostly fruitless search for literature on medieval masculinities, which seems to be in an early stage of development. Karras (2003), for instance, is reported to be the first broad study of masculinity in the medieval era. Interestingly from the point of view of this body of work, Karras focuses on the characteristics of European masculinities in three different settings, knighthood, ‘the university’ and ‘the craftsman’s workshop’. Unfortunately, falling outside of her remit are the ‘master-less men’ or majority populations of peasants and agricultural labourers that Beier’s was pre-occupied with. As criminology attempts to embrace gender specific analysis, it will be important to retain a sense of trajectory and history to the forms of masculinity the discipline is so well endowed with to study but so persistently neglects. The works of Tosh (1999, 2005; Roper and Tosh 1991, also see Harvey and Shepard 2005) are invaluable in this respect, as an exemplary model of scholarship and critical insight. The article acknowledges aspects of this trajectory in citing the Edwardian masculine proclivities that established the Borstal institution on which HMYOI Rochester now stands. In HMYOI Rochester I was also struck by a coincidence with the young men’s descriptions of, and comportment in, the type of heavily muscled upper body strength, referred to above as ‘hench’, and Karl Polanyi’s (1957) description in the ‘Great Transformation’ of the shifting priorities of European states in the late middle-ages. The ‘crustacean state’ is how he describes the fortifications of these pre-Westphalian states invested as they were in armour and shows of martial strength.
‘Crustacean’ is a term that, to me, always evokes comic-book images of heavily
armoured super-heroes as much as it does crabs and lobsters. The hard-looking
sculpted body many of the young men in HMYOI Rochester prize is one apparently
impervious to harm, full of showy body strength. This investment, especially by
heterosexual men\textsuperscript{ix}, in surfaces and appearance is often at the expense of interiors and
substance – it bespeaks a life of and for the body below the neck (i.e. not the mind),
for action not reflection. It is a kind of shaping and a form of affective orientation
recognisable in the toys increasingly targeted at young boys and young men, from
Ninja Turtles to Transformers. These militarised, crustacean, masculine and
mechanical body-forms suggest to me a profound kind of masculine self-alienation I
recognise, hesitantly, from experience. Academic and intellectual pursuits may mirror
this approach, reflecting a similar desire for invulnerability, omnipotence and control,
and some men may use the academy as others use a gym, for just such purposes,
though they are sometimes harder to recognise!
The popularity of cinematic Marvel-comic movies, such as \textit{The X-Men}, or \textit{Iron Man},
rests on a spectacular valorisation of a bizarre fantasy of omnipotence, invulnerability
and ‘raw’, brute, power. Now in its third iteration \textit{Iron Man}, for example, is most
successful for combining explicitly this tension between omnipotent exterior
action/vulnerable interior reflection in the form of famously troubled, once drug-
addled, Robert Downey Jr. as Iron Man/Tony Stark. Perhaps these schizoid images
indicate anxious shifts in the hegemonic balance of gender’s social force, a waning of
masculine body capital as the epoch of cognitive or ‘immaterial’ capitalism shoulders
aside the old industrial, Fordist and muscular/masculine capitalism (Pfiel 1990, Hardt
Paper 6 Summary: ‘Con-viviality’ and Beyond: Identity Dynamics in a Young Men’s Prison’ presents some of the key findings from the first half of the research period in the young men’s prison, HMYOI Rochester. These revolve around the tensions, creativity and complexities of multicultural living in a confined and tense space. The paper draws from post-colonial perspectives to discuss how the diversity and conflicts of prison life frequently fail to correspond with the categories involved in the prison’s pro-active ethnic monitoring procedures. The complexities of prisoners’ affiliations and disaffiliations, their interests and disinterests, are brought out and deepened in a reflexive discussion of identity dynamics.

‘Con-viviality’ and Beyond: Identity Dynamics in a Young Men’s Prison’, is the contribution I made with Coretta Phillips to one of the two anthologies that marked the conclusion of the ESRC Identities and Social Action programme. The article introduces a key concept in the development of our work around men’s ethnicity and social relations in penal environments. Drawing from post-colonial analysis of race and national cultures, particularly and specifically the work of Paul Gilroy (2004), we examine the complexities of the affirmation and disavowal of ethnic identities in HMYOI Rochester, the site of the first phase of fieldwork on the ESRC project. We examine the latent features of ethnicity and the tensions that are generated with conventional understanding of race and racism, as well as the ethnic monitoring procedures of the prison service. Religious forms of identification and social presence are also explored, alongside the less formally recognised but vitally experienced salience of postcode and locality.

The article offers an empirically based and theoretically informed contribution to how ethnicity and racism are configured in a highly ordered and coercive institution. As
Phillips (2012) notes, the level of disproportionality by which young men from
minority ethnic groups are processed by the criminal justice system and end up in
prison exceeds even that of the USA. Recent declines in the aggregate level of young
men in prison in England and Wales have not been equally distributed and have
intensified the level of disproportionality. In this context, there is even more of a
danger that the ‘harmony discourse’ identified in this article as having considerable
presence in the prison, and purchase on men’s minds, can deflect attention from the
pressing need to critically interrogate race in prison. The relative neglect of race in the
empirical literature on prisons (see Phillips 2012), particularly qualitative and
otherwise critical work, coincides with sharpening differences and complex
intersections of lived experience around race. The chapter addresses several of these
without fully developing them. This is reflected in the way they are picked up and
moved on in subsequent articles.

The question of white ethnicities, for example, is posed, briefly, within the context of
the wider literature on disavowal (Nayak 2005, Garner 2007). The account places
these white and multicultural accounts in the context of ideas about national
belonging and specific features of a destabilised, post-imperial British identity that
resonate with other articles already discussed. This distinctive re-combination of race
and nation forms an important part of the developing analysis.

The article is also original in suggesting that Keat’s notion of ‘negative capability’
corresponds with some of these complicated re-configurations. I suggest that negative
capability offers a form of resistance to powerful shaping forces that are keenly felt by
the young men. These are intensified by the prisons’ explicit ordering and moulding
regime, but still lack intelligibility. For the Romantic poet John Keats (Paulin 2008,
Plumly 2008) the dispositions of negative capability were those of a ‘wise passivity’
that surfaced among ordinary people in the contexts of Britain’s disorienting imperial and industrial expansions. As I indicate in the article, I think aspects of this negative capability are identifiable as a kind of intuitive awareness of the powerful affective forces at play in the prison (and wider society) in the face of which it is wise to be passive. Recognising this kind of indeterminate agency diminishes, I think, tendencies toward reductive simplicities in trying to account for the inevitably tangled complexities of any person’s life, and the collectivities to which they are drawn and resist. There may be particular white, and masculine, ‘passivities’ and withdrawals that are more calculating and strategic in relation to the balance of force in respect to race, but the term is helpful in identifying a collection of personal and social dispositions, a way of making sense of a social milieu.

Foucault (1979) argues in *Discipline and Punish* that visibility is often ‘a trap’, the opening of a new disciplinary discourse by the identification of a categorical object, and white men’s ambivalence towards a racialising discourse may be based on an instrumental uncertainty about its potential benefits. They sense the traps of ‘race’ alongside its waning capacity to deliver privilege. In the flux of racial reconfiguration the uncertainty applies to the security of white privilege and it may be that they suspend overt allegiance only while they are unsure of whether they will remain ‘on top’ and continue to gather the benefits of racialised advantage, particularly when the traditional currency of this advantage, i.e. being white, is its capacity for invisibility.

Another innovative feature of the article is to work with the concept of ‘metis’ as it is developed by both de Certeau (1984) and Scott (1999). Jacobs (2010) identifies in metis features of resistance, ‘alternative logics and patterns of thought’, that I also associate, above, with ‘negative capability’, but on this occasion resistance was noted in the young men’s vivid identification with their locality.
Metis is derived from the Greek term for ‘cunning intelligence’, a countervailing knowledge of local conditions, terrain and opportunities. Metis is disruptive and reactive to power relations, and particularly relations of force (Jacobs 2010), while for de Certeau it represents ‘the tactics of the weak’ in response to the ‘strategies of the powerful’. I do not share all of Jacob’s post-structuralist enthusiasms for a Deleuzian turn in feminist thought but her excavations of the pre-modern origins of the term and the practices that may be associated with it are most helpful. It provides an account of how de Certeau, and subsequently Scott, might have been influenced by Detienne and Vernant’s (1978) examination of the way ‘metis’ offers a utopian theory of survival, transformation and creativity. Collecting together, under the rubric of metis, the myriad ‘subtle movements of escape and evasion’ (Buchanan 1999:100) that the young men bring to their accounts of local living and local loyalties seems appropriate. It offers a way of making sense of the vitality of locality that engages with the grain of experience as much as it is driven by the wind of globalisation (Bauman 1998).

**Paper 7 Summary:** ‘Digesting Men? Ethnicity, Gender and Food – perspectives from a prison ethnography’ is an in-depth examination of how the tensions of ‘multiculturalism as policy’ play out against the multicultural realities of the communal cooking areas of the second prison on the ESRC study, HMP Maidstone. There are many dimensions to the sometimes fraught convivial negotiations that ensue; disengagement on the part of some of the white prisoners coincides with engagement with other groups’ practices in a stimulating set of circumstances that are described and analysed in the paper. Rich description and thick data drawn from ethnographic fieldwork are
presented to facilitate a critical and creative engagement with aspects of masculine practice in prison. The paper provides insights into the racialised politics of prison wings and the symbolic meaning of food to prisoners and prison management.

‘Digesting Men? Ethnicity, Gender and Food – perspectives from a prison ethnography’, co-authored with Coretta Phillips, represents another attempt to extend gender specific analysis of men’s experiences of prison. The article develops an original analysis of a unique feature of the adult men’s prison in the ESRC study, HMP Maidstone. In this prison the unusual (atypical for a medium security prison) provision of cooking facilities on each prison wing/block offered exceptional opportunities for forms of interaction otherwise excluded from men’s prisons; quasi-domestic activities of preparing, sharing and cooking food.

Taking the arrest and imprisonment on remand in Rikers Island prison, New York, of Dominic Strauss-Khan, the Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a point of departure, the article contrasts ideas about punishment, rape and masculinity on opposite sides of the Atlantic by examining the popular misconceptions of penal experience, race and ethnicity that were bundled together around that incident.

Emphasising the unusual features of men’s experience of cooking and sharing food in a prison in south-east England, the article argues for the importance of recognising the diversity of prison experiences, and the distance between its culturally iconic status as the defining boundary of punishment and its frequently banal, convivial but distinctive realities. The evasion of most forms of men’s sexual violence from the routine procedures of criminal justice, as exemplified in the Strauss-Khan case, demonstrates the distortions and limitations of conventional penal discourse.
In the article, I argue, with Coretta, that the provision of cooking facilities at HMP Maidstone creatively upsets the conventional repertoires of masculinity and enhances the ethnic diversity of the prison. The article responds to the powerful influence of HMP Maidstone’s self-cook areas on our fieldwork and men’s lives in the prison. As discussed in methodological reflections in several of the articles in this collection the substantive research topics of men’s identities are hard to target with conventional research approaches. Direct questions have the virtue of being straightforward and ethically open, but can also be leading or almost completely unintelligible. Asking men what they are like as men, or what masculinity means to them, is about as helpful as asking white people what it is like being white. This is not quite as straightforward as the remark, in the previous article, about asking a fish what it feels like to be wet. Fish cannot speak, of course, and though the point is flippant it also relates to Wittgenstein’s widely cited philosophical conundrum – ‘whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent’. Men’s silences in respect of gender are now almost a sub-genre of feminist theory and a prominent feature of masculinities research literature (see Rutherford 1992). What we found around the cooking areas of HMP Maidstone was an oasis of research opportunity in the otherwise Spartan sensory social spaces of the prison: here was noise in the silence.

The only other area of the penal compound that attracted such feeling, such a sense of an affective presence, was the gym and other sport facilities. Sport facilities and gyms, however, carry more conventional gender loading, as discussed earlier. It is an irony of the fieldwork that of the two investigators only one, Coretta, was adept in gym work, and that the only two places where Coretta could not participate fully as an active researcher were Friday prayers and in the prison gym, where she sought
permission to exercise with the men, but was refused, though straightforward observation was not a problem.

Crewe (2014) reports the benefits of fieldwork in the prison gym but I found I was more competent (and probably, truth be told, more comfortable) in the wing cooking areas. In light of my observations above about ‘crustacean masculinities’ I regret not taking more steps out of my comfort zone and into the gym zone. It is undoubtedly a key ‘theatre of struggle’ in the neglected relations between men’s homo-social desires, the affective dimensions of their living in such close proximity and their pervasive homophobic policing of homo-sexual desire (Sedgwick 1985). Offered an apparently vibrant alternative in the form of the cooking areas, I was grateful of the opportunity to make use of it.

The cooking areas at HMP Maidstone brought to life the tensions and paradoxes of convivial, or con-vivial as we dubbed it, conditions. The article picks up Stuart Hall’s (1992) prescriptions on the way new ethnicities configure and combine cultural and historical experience in ways distinct from, but not in isolation from, race. These themes are picked up again in other articles, but most fully in Article 12 around contemporary articulations with Islam and Muslim identities. The intention in this article was to insist on, and demonstrate, the significance of particular and specific historical and cultural conjunctions in prison experiences. The article opens with this theme of the preponderance of US-tinted penal visions, but seeks to unpick those presumptions around race and punishment. The article introduces and re-states with empirical backing, Hall’s new ethnicities paradigm, emphasising its contingencies against the essentialisms of race, the requirement to embrace the relational constitution of identities and their representations.
Mary Pratt’s (1991) work on ‘contact zones’ also provides an empirically grounded and helpful way of thinking about the destabilisation of the fixed categories of race. Pratt’s work in school classrooms identifies how specific places and institutional contexts provide unwitting resources for the renegotiation of colonial certainties. Routine contacts, she suggests, provide opportunities to witness and work with the complex interplay of colonial and post-colonial sensibilities. The confusing arrays of emulation, mimicry, and subversive trickery that arise in such ‘contact zones’, which we frequently encountered as researchers, trouble the conventional reification of racialised fixed difference. Nowhere was this more obvious than around the cooking area’s steaming pots, spitting pans and scorching grills. Negotiating bacon frying with Muslim prisoners among the flaming rings, boiling chip oil, carving knives and forks could not have been much more of a security guard’s nightmare, but, for the most part, the men worked it out.

The article attempts to map some of the ways that ethnicity articulates with gender in these ‘contact zones’ by counter-posing the prevalent and popular image of men in prison as brutalised victims or brutal predators with these more mundane affairs of the hearth. In my field notes I tentatively record my impression of one older, white man, well respected and seemingly striking an almost explicitly maternal role as general housekeeper for the kitchen store cupboards and freezers.

As with any ethnographic encounter it can feel as though you are missing essential details, the back-stage or the in-cell realities. I was suspicious of my readiness to see these relations around cooking and food as mainly benign, but only once caught sight of something that hinted at its malign potential. A prisoner I had got to know was carrying a large plate of steaming food upstairs toward the cells. I commented on the size of the dish, and his hurried and slightly nervy response that it wasn’t for him,
troubled me. Food could be implicated in coercive networks and trade, and I suspected that this man was feeding someone else, serving someone else, in ways that may not have been entirely reciprocal, or free from some of the malignant characteristics of the trade in drugs or tobacco.

**Paper 8 Summary:** ‘Who’s the Daddy? – ideas about fathers from a young men’s prison’ begins in a fatherhood class at HMYOI Rochester. It traces some of the forms of fatherhood being promulgated in official discourse and instruction around the prison. These institutional and tutelary approaches are contrasted to the fragmented, jagged and painful fathering realities experienced by young men in the prison. It further develops the theme of prison masculinities with an analysis of fatherhood as a viable masculine identity actively promoted but remotely experienced. The article is methodologically experimental, using vignettes constructed from a wide range of fieldwork experiences. This article combines original data and personal reflections about fieldwork with theoretical analysis that draws critically from Loïc Wacquant and other penal theorists.

Questions of masculine identity are extensively explored in ‘Who’s the Daddy? – ideas about fathers from a young men’s prison’. Drawing from fieldwork in HMYOI Rochester this paper opens up questions of power and authority in young men’s lives and the salience of the patriarchal and paternalistic schemes that have characterised prison services for boys and young men since the establishment of the Borstal system in 1908. The article develops themes also present in the Boys’ Zone Stories article concerning the historical continuities of HMYOI Rochester, located in the village of
Borstal on the site of the original Borstal Institutions, and questions how the defining mission of it’s male Edwardian founders have both changed and remained the same. The article outlines feminist scholarship around the reconfigurations of paternal authority in families and the persistence of patriarchal masculinities (Campbell 2014, forthcoming). Three vignettes are presented that allow for insights into the complex interplay of power and authority between men and their children, and between men and other men in the institution. It includes methodological reflections on the delicacy of fieldwork in such harsh environments and with men with widely varying experiences of fatherhood. It asks whether prisons can be suitable vehicles for a new vision of men’s relationships to the care of children, or whether prison’s traditional mission to rehabilitate men back into compliance with patriarchal orders is simply being re-fashioned.

My interest in developing this analysis and writing this article was driven by fieldwork experiences in which I felt there were powerful disjunctures and resonances in what the prison was trying to do with the young men. It seemed that ‘fatherhood’ provided the prison with a new vocabulary for its rehabilitative mission, but it was one in which it struggled to recognise the power, and differentials of experience or position, that animate father identities. Reading Megan Comfort’s (2008) work with women on their relationships with their incarcerated partners, I was struck by how men I met in both HMYOI Rochester and HMP Maidstone also found their relations to women, and children, reconfigured in the psychic realm by their removal from the physical realm. Both women and children were missed and though the cliché of ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’ no doubt applies, there is more at stake here. Anyone reading John R Gillis’s (1997) heart wrenching personal testimony of how the differential experiences between him and his wife surrounding the tragic loss of
their son in an accident, propelled him to write his acclaimed critical account of the myths and rituals of family life, will recognise how frequently men misread and misappropriate family intimacy.

Comfort (2008) reveals how men and women in the US sustain their relationships through a prison sentence and how imprisonment redraws the boundaries and contexts of personal relationships with women so profoundly, and usually at men’s expense, that both can be tempted into idealizing the process as one of renegotiated commitment. Both parties in Comfort’s study were given to romanticising the effects of enforced separation and the prospects of reunion. ‘Fatherhood’ in particular appeared to offer to each partner a recognisably viable masculine identity, almost a script in Ken Plummer’s terms (1995), bringing with it images of tenderness and care that were sharply juxtaposed by prison experiences of isolation, neglect and harshness. However, as Comfort points out, this imaginary, idealised and elusive masculine rehabilitation does little more than sustain the hope of the prisoner and the myth of an effective prison sentence. Many of the relationships quickly reverted to their earlier status and dynamics on the men’s release.

In the UK, as in the US, attention is turning to identifying men in prison as absent fathers and targeting their rehabilitation in this masculine register. Prison resettlement programmes that have identified the critical transition from secure institutional life to insecure public life have traditionally focused exclusively on job placement, accommodation and drug treatment as the fundamentals of rehabilitation (Day et al 2005), albeit with limited effect. Notwithstanding the undoubted salience of these features, in contemporary penal practice there is a growing recognition of the way men’s successful re-entry to society from prison is sustained by close and caring relationships (Walker 2010, Halsey 2011). An emerging criminological literature
examines how such relationships contribute to the process of desistance from crime by offering a positive sense of personal narrative and self-managed change (Walker 2010; Maruna 2001; McNeill 2006, Ward and Maruna 2007)

In some prisons recognition of the rehabilitative potential of maintaining personal relationships has led to visitor facilities being made more ‘child-friendly’. For example, some prisoners have access to facilities that allow them to make digital recordings of ‘bed time’ readings for their children that can be sent to them and played at appropriate times (www.prisonerseducation.org.uk). However, beyond a relatively vague instrumental appreciation of rehabilitative utility, little is known of how men in prison think and feel about themselves as fathers (Walker 2010), how they position themselves in families or in relationships with the mothers of their children, or, for that matter, their own mothers and fathers.

In the USA fathers’ absence from, and troubled return to, family life, via prison, occurs on an unprecedented scale owing to the explosive growth of men’s prison populations (Day et al. 2005). The financial and social costs of such extraordinary levels of incarceration have quickly become apparent across a range of government departments, from health through to education. This has placed fatherhood firmly on prison and social policy agendas. A review of US research literature and contemporary practice involving prisoners in ‘fathering programs’ concluded: “ambivalence is a key concept that repeatedly surfaced in both qualitative and quantitative [data]….prison relationships are complicated and do not fit neatly on the simple continua or scales we attempted to measure.” (Day et al 2005:198). Day’s (2005) special issue of the journal ‘Fathering’ on men’s prison experiences revealed complex and contradictory findings among the programs dedicated to addressing prisoners as fathers.
In the UK, Walker’s (2010) research on ex-prisoners identifies the need to develop greater theoretical sophistication to equip policy and practitioners with the capabilities to render this group of fathers more visible in ways that transcend entrenched dichotomies. As Featherstone (2010) observes, it is fathers from the social and economic margins of society who are so readily stigmatised (or simply made visible, in Foucault’s terms) yet so poorly served by research that fails to engage with the relational complexities of gender. A growing body of gender research (Cowburn and Featherstone 2010) points to the need for moving beyond simplistic dichotomies of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ fathers, not least because they circulate so quickly from the popular media to social policy. Their passage is eased by the use of reductive conceptual dyads of ‘father-child’ relations that displace appreciation of wider and interconnecting networks of care and personal relationships (Featherstone 2010). Aitken’s (2009) detailed and exploratory (methodologically and intellectually) ethnographic study of fathers provides some of the inspiration behind this article, while Bitman and Pixley’s (1997) empirically grounded re-theorisation of contemporary family practices and labour processes formed a backdrop.

This paper is original because it offers new insights on modern prison regimes in a gender context. Prisons are profoundly paradoxical places that, since their inception as places of punishment in the late 18th century, have depended on research for the refinement of their rehabilitative mission. They are places where the brute power to punish is tempered by the desire to cure (or, now, care?). They are places where philanthropy meets misanthropy in an unhappy but enduring union. Be it arranged marriage or marriage of convenience, the cohabitation is effective mainly in sustaining the pre-eminent place of prison in the popular imagination of punishment.
This empirically grounded paper offers new understandings of prison’s place in society by focusing on this long neglected aspect of men’s place in prison.

Historically, prisons have tried, in rhetoric if not in fact, to make men fit for the labour force and the labour market. As Foucault (1979:242) put it, men in prison are “mechanised according to the general norms of industrial society”. Prisons are designed to give men a hard time, providing punishment by confining them in austere institutions that emphasise harsh discipline, compliance to hierarchical authority and hard work (Rusche and Kircheimer 1939; Jankovic 1977; Foucault 1977; Melossi 1979; Melossi and Pavarini 1981; Ignatieff 1978). The men that emerge from prison tend to both reflect and resist these designs to shape their masculine identity.

To punish and rehabilitate men, prison regimes now take more diverse forms, flexibly combining these primary intentions, and taking on new ones to sustain their legitimacy. They draw continually from wider social conditions and gender preoccupations in their efforts to fulfil their ambiguous and elusive mandate (Jewkes 2007). This paper helps to shed light on the ways that prison regimes may now seek to make men (more) fit for family life in a changing world in which relations between state and individual, men and women, and men and work are all in a state of flux in the transition to a third form of capitalism characterised by cognitive labour (Hardt and Negri 2001, Illouz 2010).

**Paper 9 Summary:** ‘Ethnicity, Multiculture and Racism in a Young Offender’s Institution’ emphasises white discourses of victimisation in the young men’s experiences at HMYOI Rochester. The paper examines how white identities are discursively produced almost as if they were liabilities rather than locations of privilege and enhanced status. The contrasting fortunes
of white and minority ethnic prisoners appear as both confused and confusing as the prison administration at HMYOI Rochester attempts to confront and resolve ingrained legacies of discrimination and differential treatment. It foregrounds Muslim identities, noting the interesting juxtaposition of rapidly rising numbers of Muslim men incarcerated within social institutions that were built on Christian foundations and which retain strong elements of Christian doctrine.

‘Ethnicity, Multiculture and Racism in a Young Offender’s Institution’, appears in a special issue of The Prison Service Journal on young people in prison. It builds on and updates the issues of conviviality and multicultures explored in Article 6. Taking Prime Minister David Cameron’s remarks about the ‘problems’ of multiculturalism, and the popularity of the award winning film, The King’s Speech, as starting points, the article presents a concise summary of some of the findings from the study alongside a critical introduction to issues of cosmopolitanism and conviviality. The article introduces the salience of ‘whiteness’ and resentment to understandings of critiques of multiculturalism. It represents an attempt to analyse the findings of the study with a more explicit focus on the dynamics of racism in general and whiteness in particular.

As in other articles in this submission, the linking of national identity to race is presented as an important theme. The widespread acclaim for the film about King George VI’s speech impediment tends to gloss over the English aristocracy’s record of virulent anti-Semitism and elements of the Royal Family’s semi-open collusion with German fascism in the pre-war years. Edward VIII’s abdication is not the subject of the film, but the details of his, the wider Windsor/Saxe-Coburg dynasty’s and Wallis Simpson’s fascination with fascism might not make such comfortable viewing,
and remains largely hidden from popular historical accounts of the period. Although no single film can be expected to address every aspect of a historical moment, the success of the film rests on a nostalgic identification with the one institution that most explicitly represents Britain’s imperial past, and, according to Nairn (1988), the most significant symbolic obstacle to a progressive future. The struggle over multiculture in the YOI is a struggle over both meanings and futures, as it is elsewhere, but since the landmark MacPherson Inquiry, and Commission for Racial Equality reports that followed the in-cell murder of Zahid Mubarek (CRE 2003a 2003b), the criminal justice system, and specifically Her Majesty’s Prison Service (HMPS) has been at the forefront of a certain kind of multiculturalism. This struggle requires sustained critical scrutiny because of the symbolic importance of the institutions of criminal justice (Gilroy 1987), and their unprecedented power to impact on people’s lives. Phillips (2012) provides a comprehensive account of this, but in our most recent work, not included in this collection (Earle and Phillips, 2015 forthcoming), we explore concerns that this requirement is far from being met and commitments to it may, in fact, be waning rather than gathering momentum.

The theme of tensions between the official endorsement of multicultures and the complexities of living in a heavily structured institution under duress are taken up in the final three articles of this submission.

**Paper 10 Summary:** ‘Cultural diversity, ethnicity and race relations in prison’ presents two long segments of interview material with an accompanying analytical commentary. This innovative way of dealing with interview data avoids the mini-soundbite approach that is commonly deployed in such articles. The presentation of substantial edited portions of interview
material allows for a wide ranging and detailed examination of two prisoners’ accounts of themselves and their orientations to prison living, with specific and particular reference to race and ethnicity. The complex flows of power and fluctuating patterns of racialization in prison are discussed in the context of these two men’s accounts.

‘Cultural diversity, ethnicity and race relations in prison’ is a methodologically innovative piece of writing, co-authored with Coretta Phillips and published in The Prisoner, a book edited by Ben Crewe and Jamie Bennett. The editors developed this collection as an attempt to foreground the ‘voice’ of prisoners in academic literature on prisons. Prospective authors were invited to adopt a novel approach to their data by compiling a section of continuous narrative prose from the interviews they had conducted and to use this ‘prisoner’s voice’ as the basis of their analysis. The intention was to redress the tendency for prisoner’s voices to be presented in disjointed fragments, small pieces of a story, that were rarely allowed to coalesce into a more substantial presence in the text. With prisoners suffering from stereotyping, prejudice and all manner of misconceptions about their character and the shape of their lives, the attempt to foster fuller and more three-dimensional representations was welcome, but also troubling.

Two ‘case studies’ were assembled to facilitate a further discussion of the themes of conviviality, racism and the permutations of identity that condition social relations in prison. The development of the ‘voices’ of a white prisoner, ‘Barry’, and ‘Clinton’ a black prisoner, allows for a more sensitive appreciation of the complex dynamics of racism, resentment and desires for belonging that characterise contemporary manifestations of race.
I had initial reservations about taking such an approach to our interview transcripts. In part, these reservations stem from the need to be careful with interview transcripts, to respect the medium of qualitative research and be cautious about ‘blending’ a narrative and deviating from the recorded sequence of articulations. In any and every account from the field there is an element of ventriloquism, of placing your own ‘voice’ in the mouths of your respondents, but this method, as explained by the editors, appeared to risk taking this step much further.

Somewhat against expectation, it proved to be a fruitful and illuminating exercise. Perhaps this reflects the accumulated benefits of working in the multi-disciplinary, multi-project ESRC research programme of which Coretta and I were a part, particularly when it is led by someone such as Professor Margie Wetherall who made considerable efforts to foster collaboration and sharing between methods and projects (see www.identities.org ). I particularly remember a programme seminar in which advocates of discourse analysis and conversation analysis discussed the ‘veracity’ and meaning of ‘speech acts’. Professor Ben Rampton and Dr Roxy Harris (see Rampton 2006, and Harris 2006 for a full account), for instance, who worked with miniature radio microphones attached to children’s clothes to record their interactions in school, presented minutely transcribed transcripts of children’s classroom chatter at various Programme workshops. They said on one occasion, memorably, that if you listen carefully to real, ‘everyday talk’ you have to take a very flexible approach to the ‘rules’ of language. Syntax, grammar and other familiar conventions of communication for written text are vastly different from spoken words, and neither fully represent the multiple meanings conveyed in any interaction, or are understood from ‘without’. The relationship between cultural diversity, linguistic diversity and lived experience, it soon emerged, is a wonderfully complex one. Rampton (2006)
also notes, interestingly, that children in the young multicultural classrooms of his study have far less difficulty with ‘race’ and ethnicity than the policy-makers. However, the study points carefully to the research tendency to “only see ‘race’ and ethnicity in the spotlight of the interview” and thereby “exaggerate the difficulties they pose in ordinary life”. Crewe and Bennett’s suggestion was to do exactly this, to focus on a particular theme in long interview transcripts to extract and compile subject-specific narrative accounts. The risks were plain to see, the benefits, less so. Ethnographers agonise almost endlessly about the problems of representation and how to write themselves into or out of the research process, as has already been discussed. Both Mitch Duneier (2000) and Les Back (2007) have written insightful accounts of the process, exhorting ethnographic researchers to stretch themselves into richer, more evocative accounts of the research interaction, and counselling against fragmented quotation. In many journal articles, research reports or book chapters, the supposedly illustrative purposes of these fragments are often perfunctory at best and tokenistic at worst. I know because I’ve used them like that myself.

Two prisoners’ narratives are presented, those of Barry, a middle-aged white man and Clinton, a younger, African-born black man. The two accounts are not presented as if they expressed some natural distinction between black and white experiences in prison. They were chosen and compiled to allow for a wider discussion of how ‘race’, racism and ethnicity are encountered by men in prison. Our intention was to present accounts that reflected the complexity and contraditoriness of contemporary racism and the multicultural features of modern Britain, as they are found in its prisons. Clinton’s biography traverses continental Africa and Europe. His tri-lingual capacities are implicated in his encounters with prison authorities whose more mono-lingual habits leave him exposed to arbitrary decisions that can and do become racialised. In
this, Clinton recognises a continuity of experience from beyond the prison walls. Clinton’s experiences of growing up in multicultural London provide him with multiple sources of reference for making sense of racism in his encounters with the criminal justice system, and elsewhere. Clinton sees and feels the fluid and fleeting qualities of ‘race’ as it flows through his friendships with white, Asian and other black men.

The narrative compiled by Coretta from her interview with Clinton draws from transcripts, field notes and recollected impressions of their various interactions. The words are exclusively Clinton’s, taken from the transcript, but we both chose respondents from whom we had gathered a variety of impressionistic data, and whose lives we felt we had entered in something more than a formulaic interview construct. Clinton’s account reveals something both unique and not untypical among black people in Britain where the spectacularly diverse particulars of their biography are reduced to the simplistic national preoccupations of ‘race’. For many men of recent African origin, a European frame of reference sits alongside diaspora and post-colonial histories. Some men in the prison referred to novel, ‘Afro-pean’ (i.e. African and European) orientations that reflected their familial and personal investments in a variety of former colonial European nations, such as Portugal, France, Germany and Britain. Speaking two or three European languages, as well as one or two African ones was not unusual. As Coretta describes at length in her book, these are multicultural realities that generate complex and fluctuating patterns of racialization. Clinton’s account presents an abundance of these, as was the intention. ‘Race’ was everywhere and nowhere, something and nothing, but particularly liable to surface in any institutional interaction. It also had a spectral presence in less formal relations where it was managed accordingly.
‘Barry’ was chosen by me for the distinctive contrast he posed to Clinton. Where Clinton voiced complex intersections of ‘race’, racialization and ethnicity, Barry struggled toward a reductive, colour-blindness, a disavowal of difference that was urgently and energetically pursued. Barry’s was a long interview and I had many casual and informal interactions with him elsewhere in the prison. He was interested in our research and the kinds of questions we were asking. I hesitated to select him for fear of reducing the complexities of his dispositions into a crude portrayal of ‘a white racist’. He was far from such a caricature and I hope I managed to avoid presenting him as one. He forced me to think harder, both in his presence in terms of how I could react to the energy and vigour with which he presented his arguments, and afterwards when I had the luxury of reflecting on and analysing transcripts and notes of our interactions. I found myself reflecting that ‘Barry’ offered a strange kind of reversal of the Thomas Theorem in sociological theory that ‘if men define situations as real, they are real in their effects’ (Thomas and Thomas 1928:572; see Merton 1995). Barry defined race as unreal so as to deny the reality of its effects. Producing this paper and my involvement in theorising ‘whiteness’ and other aspects of racialization encouraged me to develop its themes more systematically in the eleventh article in this series.

**Paper 11 summary:** ‘Inside White – racism, social relations and ethnicity in English prison’ considers forms of whiteness in a prison setting. The variety of identification and cultural positionings available to white men are examined through the use of a single case study. The case study focuses systematically on aspects of ‘whiteness’ by deploying a reflexive analysis of the various ways of being white in prison, both as a researcher and as a prisoner. Some of the
existing and emerging literature from ‘whiteness studies’ is reviewed and its applicability to the further study of penal conditions is critically evaluated.

‘Inside White – racism, social relations and ethnicity in English prison’ is a chapter in a book, New Directions in Race, Ethnicity and Crime, edited by Colin Webster and Coretta Phillips (2013). This paper tries to combine elements of autobiography with critical theorisation of white identities in prison. It develops the ‘Barry’ case-study used in Article 10 and modifies the analysis to focus more systematically on whiteness, the prison context and the dilemmas of diversity policy. The problematic correspondence between penal corrections and political correctness are explored in a creative analysis drawing from the work of Hage (1998, 2003), Hall (1992) and Gilroy (2004). The chapter provides an empirically grounded and theoretically innovative contribution to understanding contemporary prisons and prisoners through the lens of ethnicity. I try to convey something of the constrictions of everyday prison life and the ordinariness of most of the people you are likely to encounter in prison. Barry’s account is presented as a case-study of whiteness, a set of dispositions through which I inevitably configure myself, as I try to make clear in the article. Writing it I recognised much in Frankenberg’s (1993) analysis about the way white people adopt a kind of ‘colour-blindness’, asserting themselves to be oblivious of ‘race’. This ‘blindness’ is not so much an issue of chromatic discernment as a desire for virtue, as Frankenberg (ibid:145) points out: ‘to be caught in the act of seeing race [is] to be caught being prejudiced’. Ironically, being ‘free’ of the stain of racism involves presenting oneself as ‘whiter than white’, spotless. It is such unhelpful polarisation that is the stock-in-trade of racism, and sometimes, anti-racism. As such it is also a central performative element of ‘whiteness’, a way of being in the world
that secures rather than challenges the material advantages and ontological assumptions established by racism, as the article explores. The absence of effective theoretical analysis of racism, the neglect of robust empirical evidence about its effects, and the failure to establish an anti-racist ‘common sense’ compromise attempts to undo the work racism accomplishes. It leaves white people with the refuge of privilege or the confusion of engagement. There are few of the familiar privileges of whiteness in prison, and even less of its refuges, hence the brittleness and vitality of con-viviality.

Nowadays almost nobody ‘believes’ in ‘race’, or at least explicitly states that they do. The reverse is more common, especially in social science, but white people tend to be more likely to think of ‘race’ in abstract terms as a kind of intellectual unicorn that has wandered off-stage into some kind of harmless never-land. In this post-racial schema ‘race’ does not exist, so neither does its history or any material effects. Miraculously, from such a perspective, it is as if race had never managed to insinuate itself into contemporary ideas of citizenship and belonging, it was never implicated in ideas about forms of family life, principles of education, or the experience of poverty or crime. Under the same corner of this ideological carpet, bulge popular images of sexuality and gender. In reality, the legacies of race are not so quietly swept away. For people whose experience of racism has been more direct, the effects of ‘race’ are continuous and continuing, changing and shifting but most definitely real and present, despite the exaggerated reports of its apparent demise. This enigma presents a considerable intellectual and political challenge. It is a challenge the multicultural prison condenses sharply in its efforts to accommodate people that are not called at random into its embrace.
In governing the unruly bodies and artificial spaces of the multicultural prison (Phillips 2012), prison officers and prisoners are locked into an encounter with these legacies and actualities of ‘race’. Up close, in these reduced circumstances people are remarkably similar but their structural and historical positioning is neither easily erased (cf Sykes (1958) indigenous model) nor fully accommodated (cf Irwin and Cressey’s (1962) importation model). As Fields and Fields (2012) argue, the ‘social fact-ness’ of race has been unable to disentangle itself from its ideological roots in biology, nation-building and colonialism. It exists as a real force, a social construct that determines many aspects of social life. As such it is immaterial in the same way that, as the Fields’ put it, ‘six o’clock is both an idea and a reality’, but has undeniable material effects. Refusing to consider ‘race’ as having any ontological reality because it is discredited in terms of biological science is about as useful as thinking that because it is never six o’clock in nature (i.e. independent of human presence or invention), that six o’clock does not exist. We are back with Thomas and Thomas. It is real because we give it that effect; what is ontologically subjective is epistemologically objective. Women in the Middle Ages who were believed to be witches, and may have been killed as a result, were never anything more or less than human, but their social constructed-ness as witches was often fatal. So it is with ‘race’. The Fields’ deploy this analogy with witchcraft in their considerations of what they call contemporary ‘racecraft’.

My paper attempts to engage with this peculiar alchemy of race and the permutations that manifest in the exceptional circumstances of prison life. Men’s prisons are places where ‘racecraft’ meets ‘statecraft’ and the almost ineffable, irreducible, quotidian realities of being human. Stuart Hall’s lucid thinking on both topics opens the paper’s arguments. His analysis provides the most consistent and coherent account of the
conjunction of race-thinking and state-thinking in contemporary Britain, but its failures to permeate more widely into social discourse and policy are explored in the final article of the series.

### Paper 12 Summary:

‘Muslims is the New Black’: New Ethnicities and New Essentialisms in the Prison’ suggests that Muslims in prison occupy the discursive space once, briefly, the preserve of Britain’s black community. Using a case study approach the article offers an assessment of a black prisoner’s reflections on the similarities between contemporary Muslims’ experiences to historical black ones. This provides for a detailed study of prisoners’ attachments to Islam and institutional fears of a new collectivity within its walls and transcending its boundaries. The paper uses the case study and it various connotative fields to explore how masculinities associated with colonialism are strikingly similar to those that underpin the establishment of the modern rehabilitative prison.

The last paper is co-authored with Coretta Phillips and developed from a seminar workshop delivered in HMP Grendon, a therapeutic community involving long-term prisoners in their own rehabilitation. ‘Muslims is the New Black’: New Ethnicities and New Essentialisms in the Prison’ contributes to a special edition of the journal Race and Justice. This special issue, guest edited by Jamie Bennett, is built around papers presented at the Grendon workshop. In this workshop the issue of culture was persistently raised, but never resolved, by prisoners and prison officers in a manner perceptively described by Anthias (2013: 324) as ‘the culturalization of social relationships’. The paper examines the ways in which conceptualisations of race and culture play out in prison diversity policies and prisoners’ experiences. In particular,
the paper explores the ways in which ideas about essentialist identities and radical
otherness appear to be located in prison Muslim populations, rendering them at a
collective and personal level, ‘the new blacks’ in prison. The paper discusses how
Stuart Hall’s landmark theorisations of new ethnicities appear to be recouped by the
familiar polarisations of race.

The article juxtaposes the remark of the Black American sociologist W. E. Du Bois,
made in 1903, that for the USA, the ‘problem of the color line’ would define its
trajectory through the 20th century, with Stuart Hall’s corresponding observation that
‘the capacity to live with difference’ is the ‘coming question’ of the 21st century. The
durability of Du Bois’s prediction can be seen in the reaction to the belated arrest,
prosecution and ultimate acquittal, on 14 July 2013, of George Zimmerman, an
Hispanic citizen of Florida who shot dead a black teenager, Trayvon Martin, as he
wandered back from the shops through Zimmerman’s gated estate with nothing but a
packet of sweets in his hand.

The theoretical and political implications of Hall’s ‘coming question’ are no less
fraught, though thankfully less bullet ridden, here in the UK. The article traces the
comprehensive efforts of prison administrators to address the stubborn persistence of
both empirical and anecdotal evidence of racial disparities, racial prejudice and
discrimination in formal and informal interactions between prison officers and
prisoners, and between prisoners themselves. This governmental management of
multicultural realities is characterised as ‘multiculturalism’, a set of policies and
procedures designed to challenge prejudice and discrimination. The article explores
and examines how these policies are encountered in the prison, and how new
collectivities, particularly those that gather around Islam, are proving problematic and
unsettling.
The article is a significant, empirically anchored, examination of the complex ambiguities of multicultural practice and multiculturalism. It demonstrates how the essentialisms of race can be reconfigured, or in the terms preferred by Lentin and Titley (2010:24) ‘legitimised and laundered’. Lentin and Titley characterise the new preferences for post-racial sensibilities, signalled by ever proliferating ethnic categorisations, as a kind of neo-liberal ‘crisis politics’. This politics draws on the idea of ‘race’ as an untheorised fiction that can only generate a ‘fraught, accusatory moralism’ or an agonised ‘apologetics’ that confuse the banalities of racism with its exceptional incidents.

For Lentin and Titley (ibid, 24/25), the ‘primary recited truth’ that underpins and validates multiculturalism is that ‘race’ is a fiction, and that interminable repetition of this ‘truth’ will undo its work, when in fact it simply regenerates an unrelenting focus on, and evaluation of, those ‘in but not of Europe’ (Hall 2003:35). Race is an idea that remains powerful, as Paul Gilroy (2004: 9) argues, ‘precisely because it supplies a foundational understanding of natural hierarchy on which a host of other supplementary social and political conflicts have come to rely’. In prison, this research suggests that, as in open society, race-thinking finds its most convenient alibi in ideas about Muslims and Islam. Even though the fieldwork presented ample evidence of the diversity of cultural heritage, habits of observance and orientations to faith, the ‘recited truth’ was of an awkward, potentially dangerous, homogeneity. It was as if Muslims, unmanaged, are threatening, something potentially unspeakably ‘other’. The grammar and syntax of race are written all over it, but simultaneously denied.

The article adopts the extended case-study method of Articles 9 and 10 by presenting a compiled vignette-type portrait of ‘Samson’, a black prisoner whose words provided
the title and propelled the thinking behind this article. Samson recognised something in the way Muslims were seen by other people and the prison itself because, whether they were black or white, Asian or ‘mixed race’, they were treated as he was treated in the 1970s and 80s, before ‘race’ had been semantically vanquished. Samson’s words and experiences suggested that for these transnational, self-evidentially diverse groups of people the idea of ‘the Muslim’ performed the work of race, shaping and naturalising ‘the groupings it identifies in its own name’ (Goldberg 1993:81).

The Czech novelist Milan Kundera suggests that the struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting, and nowhere does this appear more apt than in the struggles of a multicultural prison. Samson may not have been the only person we met who seemed to be engaged in such a struggle but his words stood out against the kind of institutionalised and collective amnesia that have laundered the visionary politics and cultural analysis of Hall et al.’s (1978) ‘Policing the Crisis’ out of sight.

Catherine Hall (1996) refers to the ‘memory work’ that needs to be done in Britain, and among white people of the Western metropole more generally, in particular with the repressed British memories of empire. It is a work needed to understand the legacies of empire, so as to be able to let it go and face the future with hope and expectation rather than dread and melancholia, as Gilroy has more recently explained. Memory is always a blending of remembering and forgetting, and Hall cites Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* as an example that creatively, if uncomfortably (particularly for white readers) re-memorises painful pasts. Hall warns that the failure to do this work causes a haunting of the social imagination with ghosts that disrupt the present and spook mundane interactions. The haunted sense of incomprehension that fuels white resentment of multicultural realities and fosters the cynical suspicion of
multiculturalism is a product of this learned amnesia. As I argue in several of these papers, sometimes this can take the form of ‘negative capability’, a kind of strategic suspension or withdrawal as the lines of force in a culture are redrawn. The presence of ‘minorities’, now large minorities, immigrants and their children and their children’s children in the convivial and conflicted urban flux of cities such as London, acts as a ‘perpetual reminder’ of the ways in which the metropolis is intimately connected with its peripheries, the present with the past. It reminds us of shared histories we cannot escape. As both Catherine Hall and Stuart Hall insist, with globalisation the coloniser is with the colonised now, and their separate histories and separate memories have to be reconciled. White British feelings of post-colonial embarrassment, resentment and melancholia drag against the need to focus on creating a future in a more open and inclusive post-national Europe, a Europe without colonies.

In the multicultural prison (Phillips 2012) questions of Britain’s cultural identities are played out with vigour and force, condensed as they are by the proximities of prison life with its heavily managed and securitised dynamics. For several centuries, white identities in Britain have been built around a sense of superiority derived from the power exercised over racialised others. As the sun finally sets on its empire, a post-colonial Britain surfaces. The loss of that power and the overdue recognition that Britain is likely to be a relatively minor player on the 21st century global stage, mean that painful transitions are likely. A society that has discarded the notion of a homogenous nation-state with singular and exclusive forms of belonging may not be immediately recognisable, but the possibilities of European, post-national configurations are not as remote as they once were (Bauman 2004). Phillips’ (2012) work on the multicultural prison, and my own work here with her and more
independently, offers some glimpses of both the available polarities and the ground in-between, and understanding those glimpses provides precious opportunities to fashion better outcomes.

The British Empire’s ambitions for global supremacy and control are heavily implicated in men’s contemporary identities. As Hall (1996:76) notes, “[m]en were made white by the empire in a way that was never articulated ‘at home’”, but though this whiteness was ‘lived’ in the colonial periphery, it was eulogised in the centre. Living in the colonies meant many white men were living largely without female ‘service’, and beyond the affective intimacies of heterosexual and domestic cohabitation. Questions of appropriate manliness, of men’s gender identities, were questions of open public significance in Victorian and Edwardian times (see Tosh 1999, 2005). Colonising is a brutal and bloody business and it involved the determined valorisation of a certain kind of masculine self-sufficiency, the kind refined and sanitised domestically by Baden-Powell’s Scouting movement. The masculinities associated with colonial expansion, control and management are those also associated with the establishment of the modern rehabilitative prison. A militarised, colonial whiteness, exemplified in the officer classes, was seemingly driven by the desire to enlighten and improve lesser mortals, or ‘races’ in the collective sense. The governmental mechanism for doing so was frequently dressed in kindness and benign intentions, but more frequently slipped into viciousness and systemic violence. The revelations that finally emerged this year (2013) in the High Court from the legal actions taken by surviving Kenyans to expose atrocities involved in the suppression of the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army by British colonial forces in the 1950s are but a recent case in point. These white masculine identities demonstrate how central masculine identity is to the colonial project of ‘civilising the
lesser races’, and are only too recognisable in the complex social relations of the
down, multicultural prison. My articles and collaborative work with Coretta
Phillips, gathered below and added to here, attempt to make sense of this reality. As in
any academic endeavour, the story is incomplete but the work is intended as a
contribution to the further development of historically informed, gender-specific, and
ethnically sensitive narratives.
The Papers as Published
Part 3 – On the road again…

This PhD submission is subtitled with a quote by Victor Serge from his account of serving five years in a French prison, *Men in Prison*. A revolutionary libertarian socialist, Serge had insights into politics and prison that I have rarely seen matched by academic writers. Elsewhere in the book he remarks on the graffiti carved into the walls and doors of the prison: “It is as if the throngs of men thrown together by prison needed only thirty words and a phallic symbol to express the essence of their suffering and their lives” (Serge, 1977:9). That ‘as if’ of Serge’s remains a thoroughly neglected insight. Serge saw a gendered essence to the prison experience that merits a lot more attention than it currently gets. As I have discovered, from two points of view, men’s prisons are complex places on the inside and occupy a complex place in the social imagination of the outside. As a result, they propel the curious researcher and the inquiring sociologist into a myriad of urgent but ultimately diverting questions about prison itself rather than those more determining ones of gender, race and class.

In this, many studies of prison exemplify J.F. Lyotard’s (1977: 11) description of the limits of critique:

"Just as atheism is religion extended in its negative form...so does the critique make itself the object of its object and settles down into the field of the other, accepting the latter's dimensions and space at the very moment that it contests them...."

Critical academic literature on the relationship between masculinities, the prison, social order and social control only began to emerge in the late 1990s. In 1994, for example, Joe Sim (1994: 101-109) noted how the prevailing focus within prison sociology had been on ‘men as prisoners’ rather than ‘prisoners as men’: “To speak in terms of normal and abnormal men…is to miss the fundamental point, namely that
normal life in male prisons is highly problematic – it reproduces normal men”. I think that is part of what Serge was saying. An HMP Wellingborough prisoner in Ben Crewe’s (2009) study tells him ‘I was made for it, made for prison’. It is a telling echo of Serge’s words that I’ve used as suffix to the title of this PhD, revealing of the way men find something familiar and compelling, strange and unsettling in prison life. This otherwise unspoken gender dimension may be what makes them both, prison and prisoners, so fascinating to a new generation of critical women researchers.

In America, Don Sabo’s edited collection, *Prison Masculinities* (Sabo et al 2001), indicates the emergence of gender specific prison studies that take masculinity and the sociology of gender seriously. Even so, Sabo’s opening remark that ‘prison is an ultra-masculine place where no one talks about masculinity’ is probably more true of the academic literature than the actuality of prison life. I think we, as social researchers, have simply failed to listen to what the field is telling us (Back 2007), and what Serge so quickly saw. Too often, we remain colour blind as well as gender blind, despite the glaring disparities that confront anyone entering a prison in either the UK or the USA. As Crewe (2014) playfully phrases it, we, meaning male researchers in men’s prisons I think, need to look harder.

**Neoliberal ascendancy and imperial decline**

The publication with which I started, ‘Prison and University – a tale of two institutions’, includes those elements I am continuing to try to develop in British Convict Criminology. The possibilities of insider perspectives, of ex-prisoner scholars contributing to criminological knowledge, and knowledge of prison in particular, are rich and exciting, as our subsequent panels at the BSC in 2012 and 2013 have shown.
‘Insiders’ are never simply that, and George Orwell, for example, talks candidly of his position as a kind of class insider in examining both the upper and lower reaches of the English class system. According to Raymond Williams (1971), Orwell possessed a special advantage when he did so for he came to look at England with an ‘insider’ knowledge of its Empire that provided a more ‘outsider’ perspective on domestic English life. It provided him with a rich, triangulated, view on an insular society that was as unusual as it was penetrating.

This ‘insider and outsider’ perspective surfaces at many points in his writing. In *The Road To Wigan Pier* Orwell writes of his time as an imperial police officer in colonial India:

> “I was in the Indian Police Force five years, and by the end of that time I hated the imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I can probably not make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it.” (Orwell 1937: 145).

Orwell knew that what was possible in England was the result of labours and exploited labourers that spanned the world. As he put it in his acerbic 1939 essay ‘*Not Counting Niggers*’, “What we forget is that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat does not live in Britain but in Asia and Africa… This is the system which we all live on” (Orwell, in Orwell and Angus 1968: 397).

Orwell’s orientation to class is also deeply significant to his writing and perspective. Educated in the public school system, he rejected his ruling class background but could not fully jettison the disdain for working class people that is such a pervasive, but usually undisclosed, feature of the English middle and upper classes:

> “At a distance I could agonise over their suffering, but I still hated them and despised them when I came anywhere near them…To the shock-absorbers of
the bourgeoisie, such as myself, ‘common people’ still appeared brutal and repulsive.” (Orwell 1937: 142-3)

Williams (1971: 18) makes an observation that the current Prime Minister, David Cameron, would do well to learn. He says it is almost impossible to convince middle and upper class people who have had “a separated education that they are not, in the most central ways, English.” This is because the treasured myth of England, its definition and ideology, has been in their hands; this is the class that, as Williams points out “has done most of the writing, directed most of the institutions, and is most readily recognised abroad. It is based however on the experiences of a tiny minority”. This minority’s images and imagination has defined Englishness, as the last Tory prime minister John Major found to his cost when he attempted to deploy another of Orwell’s potent images of England, that of ‘maids cycling to church across misty village greens.’

A much larger part of England ‘had a harder and humbler function’ as Williams puts it. Their education and function was to service the system, act as its loyal servants, sharing fully in the insistent myth and ideology of imperial England, but in practice occupying only the outer edge of the ruling hub. This was the class Orwell describes as ‘lower-upper-middle class’, dependent on professional service salaries which the system had created for them; the petite-bourgeoisie. Their position ‘off-centre’ leads them to over-identify, and over-adjust to the myths of that class. Their sense of belonging is insecure and anxious because they are propelled by the fear they might drop out of the slipstream of the class of which they were once the trailing edge.

When Orwell rejects the England that educated him and in which he had served as an officer, as he does, he is confronted with a cruel dilemma because there is, for him, no other England immediately available to him. This is what he writes about so
powerfully in *The Road to Wigan Pier*; his encounter with another England, the majority England, working class England. What he finds is that two thirds of the population are living through widespread unemployment and depression. The contrast destroys the myth image of England for him, but, as Williams’ painstaking examination shows, Orwell, like many English men since, struggles to find another untainted by the first.

Parts of today’s newly ascendant class, the bourgeoisie, are still seeking the England that eluded Orwell, a replacement for a waning imperial England, even though it frequently stares it in the face in the convivial vibrancy of the expanding urban polis. England’s cocooned bourgeoisie cannot tear itself away from the rear-view mirror even though it finds no consolation in its rapidly receding images. Theirs is an England that no longer has a colonial frontier to drive it forward, and the masculinities of empire have no home to go to or territory to conquer. With no road ahead and no road back it is a dismal place in which to be stuck. In it, the urban outcasts (Wacquant 2007) who are gathered so energetically by an expanding criminal justice system find themselves increasingly dumped into a growing number of places called prison, places like HMYOI Rochester and HMP Maidstone. These prisons, proliferating in number and size, express the fears and insecurities of an unstable and anxious class and a gender order unable to reconcile its history with its future. In this case the past is not another country, it is another prison.

**Penal criminology or public criminology: Shock-absorber or echo-chamber?**

Criminologists and criminology for all their expansive eclecticism have singularly failed to dissuade people-at-large that the police control the level of crime in society. They/we have almost completely failed to have any impact on the popular myth that
the best way to control crime is to arrest offenders and put them behind bars somewhere. We/they have operated most successfully as ‘shock-absorbers’.


Or, as Terry Eagleton (2006) observes, they may simply conjure with Irish vistas of colonial victimhood, implying ‘you can do no more than sit and wait for deliverance.’

‘Fail better’ appears to be the guiding principle of prison policy and the hallmark of criminology’s lamentable efforts to convince itself and others of its capacity to deliver anything but better failure. It recalls both Michel Foucault’s (1979) acute diagnosis of the way prison expands paradoxically because of its limitations, and his coruscating description of the role of criminology in public life (Foucault, 1980: 47):

> “Have you ever read any criminological texts? They are staggering. And I say this out of astonishment, not aggressiveness, because I fail to comprehend how the discourse of criminology has been able to go on at this level. One has the impression that it is of such utility, is needed so urgently and rendered so vital for the working of the system, that it does not even seek a theoretical justification for itself, or even simply a coherent framework. It is entirely utilitarian.”

If only it were that simple. When I started evening classes in London for a Certificate in Crime and Deviance (yes, nice work if you can get it!) in 1994 at Birkbeck College, I came across an article by Mary Tuck (1994: 65), Head of Research at the Home Office from 1984 until her retirement in 1990. This is how she began her article:
“I am a criminologist. The other day I ran into an economist friend, just after the Home Secretary [Michael Howard] had made his famous tub-thumping conference speech about the need for more punishment, more custody as the answer to rising crime rates. ‘Why is it, Mary’ he said ‘that in your field, ministers can stand up and say things that everyone in social science knows to be nonsense..? We economists may disagree. We may give the Treasury different advice. But no minister can stand up and say things which every academic economist in the country knows to be just plain wrong. What are your lot of social science advisors doing? Why are they not getting their message across?”

Well indeed, but that was then and this is now. Economists did not exactly cover themselves in glory in the years preceding the 2007/8 banking crisis that crashed the global economy into a brick wall. Economists who once ridiculed the idea of simply printing more money to get out of the fiscal crises of the 1970s are now endorsing ‘quantitative easing’ as a suitable tonic for the global economy. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity” is how the great Irish poet William Butler Yeats expressed a similar sense of intellectual disorientation in his foreboding verse on the opening of 20th century modernity. He was right, the centre cannot hold. It multiplies, and things do not fall apart, they carry on without revelation or the second coming, but perhaps not as calmly as the British would like. After Yeats, Beckett.

When I started my Masters in 1995, British criminology was a relatively small discipline tearing itself to pieces over its failure to account for the meteoric rise in crime rates in the preceding three and a half decades. It is now clear that crime rates stopped rising in most Western countries, and certainly in Britain, around this time in
the mid-1990s. Then they began to fall, significantly and consistently. And now criminology, still without any answers about why crime rates are going the other way, is asking itself again why no one appears to listen to it (cf Loader and Sparks 2010) even though criminology is growing ‘like topsy’, colonising the social science departments of an expanded and reconstituted Higher Education sector. The trouble starts, as Mary Tuck points out in her article, because no one pretends, or even wants, to understand economics, much less, the person-in-the-street, but the reverse is true of crime: everyone and their dog have ideas about it, and sometimes they are both forceful and deeply felt.

**Thesis 11: Sugar or spice?**

In the under-institutionalized world of liquid modernity (Bauman 2007) the pressure to define and understand social institutions and processes becomes seemingly more urgent. Les Back (2007), among other sociologists, cautions against responding to this need for certainty, or the call to identify ‘what is really going on’ behind the veil of ideology. Against these calls for certainty, for authoritative, and more often than not, authoritarian judgement, Back (ibid) argues the job of sociology is to present the ‘importance of living with doubt in the service of understanding, of trying to grapple with moral complexity.’ Back (ibid) contrasts the recent trends towards a journalistically informed, web-enabled, ‘reality rush’, with the sociological imagination outlined by C. Wright Mills, of connecting ‘private troubles’ to wider history, shared public issues, global concerns. In the face of this acceleration, Back seems to be saying we need to slow down, start listening better and thinking deeper. As academics, he insists, we need to take our time (see Phil Cohen 2004).
Amid the torrents of ‘new journalistic exposé and reality TV ethnography’, Back is concerned not only by the voyeuristic intrusion into the lives of the poor and the marginalised, the vicarious glee with which those ‘unfortunates’ ‘living at the bottom’ are paraded across screens, but also by the claims of revelation, relevance and detail, that the simple profusion of documentary data also implies a genuine empirical provenance. Coinciding with this trend there is, according to Back (2007), a counter-movement within academic sociology toward abstraction and theory, a disengagement in the face of such proliferating competing representations of the meaning of lives lived ‘out there’. Tellingly, he notes a reticence or inhibition in some emerging sociological literature, such as PhD dissertations, to attempt ‘thick’ or ‘rich’ social description. As if unnerved by the multiplying forms of social representation, and the accelerating pace of generation and distribution, sociology is, he fears, failing ‘to situate and describe the voices of the people that have been transcribed so faithfully on the page’ (ibid: 17). He is scathing of a trend toward what might be called ‘sound-bite’ or ‘sugar’ sociology which confuses quotation for portraiture, sweetness for flavour. It is, he says, “the task of sociological writing to bring to life the people we work with and listen to”. Instead, he finds quotation used as if they were tables or graphs in a quantitative study, as free-standing, self-contained illustrations of some aspect of the text. He cites (ibid: 17) Mitch Duneier’s pithy remark:

“If you are going to get at the humanity of people, you can’t just have a bunch of disembodied thoughts that come out of subjects mouths in interviews without ever developing characters and trying to show people as full human beings. In order to do that it is useful to have a character that lives in the text…”
Perhaps this means investing in what Amin and Thrift (2002: 232) describe as ‘a politics of the minor register’, a commitment to the fragmentary, to the ‘small gains and losses that never quite add up’ (p. 232) that are found in ‘small things – gestures, encounters, noise, smells, relationships, codes, rules and conventions, walks, car journeys, friendships, fears, daily joys and irritations,’ not least because they provide the resources for other political interventions and possibilities to emerge.

With its tendencies toward naked instrumentalism, criminology, among all the social sciences, has most to gain from addressing the question originally posed by the social theorist Albert O. Hirschman (1982: 143): “after so many failed prophesies is it not in the interests of social science to embrace complexity, be it at some sacrifice of its claim to predictive power?”

To an extent it also involves abandoning what Bourdieu (2000: 2) referred to as the seductive dream of ‘sociological omnipotence’. For prison ethnographies and ethnographers perhaps the best that can be hoped for is that we can draw from C. Wright Mills’ advice on the craft of sociology and provide the rich descriptions and ‘thick data’ to act as levers for the transformation of analytical concepts we use to think about a society of prisons.
Concluding with convictions

My direct research and personal experience of prisons is restricted to three English prisons, two of them separated from the first by over 100 miles and more than 30 years. For as long as I have worked around the criminal justice system having personal experience of imprisonment has troubled me, albeit in a low-key kind of way. I didn’t realise how much I would appreciate working through these troubles, or how much better I would feel about myself by connecting them to public issues. C. Wright Mills perhaps underplayed the therapeutic value of his sociological imagination. I am still troubled, however, that I may over-reach myself, risk claiming too much for these very brief experiences of prison and the glancing blow they delivered. I’ve now spent more hours in prison as a researcher or a guest than I have as a prisoner which barely qualifies me to assert my time as a prisoner provides me with special credentials to conduct prison research. But it does, I think, in the end, make a difference if I am going to approach the prison again as a scholar, as a criminologist.

Something of this difference resides in a remark I remember, but cannot properly cite, from an eminent former Chief Inspector of Prisons. Reflecting, in a newspaper article, on his work revealing and reforming the way prisons operate, he noted that for all the good reform does, it was ever the case that prison ‘sits on a road that leads ultimately to the concentration camp.’ Society, he said, neglects this awkward fact at its peril. It is something, an immanent truth perhaps, that prisoners can sense more intuitively than most.

Without wanting to sound too melodramatic I don’t think anyone touched by prison, either as a worker or as a prisoner, is ever quite the same or will ever entirely forget the experience. For a prisoner, it can leave a mark on your soul as much as a stain on
your character, even if it doesn’t totally re-shape it, as intended. Prison’s awesome totalitarian implications, however far distant, are registered in personal experience and various levels of consciousness. This is not as fanciful or rhetorical as it may seem. Goffman (1961: 56, emphasis in original), for example, compares the ‘secondary adjustments’ men make in the asylum as ‘lodgement[s] for the self, a churinga in which the soul is felt to reside’ – not so very different, perhaps, from Voldemort’s ‘horcrux’ in JK Rowling’s saga, and the resulting scar that marks Harry Potter’s encounter with ‘the dark Lord’! Not so very different from Erwin James’ (2013) remark about the way ‘you live in your head when you are in prison.’ Life behind bars means retreating behind your eyes.

This brings me to the role of criminology and its traditional work of examining the mind and soul of the criminal and the prisoner. There are, of course, a lot of variously constituted criminologies now: cultural criminology, public criminology, administrative criminology, and so on. Convict criminology, as I discuss here, and in the BSC conference article, is very much at an early and uncertain stage of development, but one that can, I think, offer radical new insights into what criminology does and what it is for.

My articles that refer to convict criminology and to reflexivity are starting to receive citations and I have ensured convict criminology has had a consistent and growing presence in the last three conferences of the British Society of Criminology. Yvonne Jewkes referred to this work in her closing plenary address of the 2013 conference. In March 2012 I was invited to present an account of convict criminology to postgraduate students at the Institute of Criminology at University of Cambridge. I have been invited to write a book about Convict Criminology for a new Criminology series to be published by Policy Press. The proposal document is currently under
review. Palgrave has invited me to edit a book that collects international contributions from people with convict criminology perspectives. A proposal document for this work is being drafted with two of my colleagues in British Convict Criminology, Andy Aresti and Sacha Darke. I am co-author of an article, ‘Developing convict criminology beyond North America’ that has been accepted for publication in the *International Criminal Justice Review*. In March 2014, I was invited to act as Rapporteur to a Symposium on Restorative Justice in Europe at Queen’s University in Belfast on the basis of my chapter on the tensions between the operation of the Criminal Records Bureau and the growing influence of restorative justice. These invitations are also a result of the profile I achieved through organising, with my Open University colleague, Deb Drake, *Resisting The Eclipse: An International Symposium on Prison Ethnography* in September 2012. Over one hundred delegates from 12 different countries and five continents gathered in Milton Keynes in September 2012 to share their experiences of, and the meanings they make from, prison ethnography. I am currently editing for Palgrave, with Deb Drake and Jennifer Sloan, a 28-chapter *International Handbook of Prison Ethnography* arising from this symposium.

Prison is a very heavily gendered institution but rarely analysed as such. I make some contributions to a gendered analysis in these articles, looking at aspects of fatherhood, boys and young men’s experiences, but far more needs to be done to ensure gender specificity with respect to men in prison becomes more commonplace. Failure to do so not only projects men’s experiences onto women as if it were a generality of prison life, thereby occluding women’s experience of penality, it also denies analytical purchase on one of its most distinctive features. Men’s prisons are very masculine places, places created almost exclusively by, and for, men. Reading much of the
prison literature you might be forgiven for thinking this was simply an accident of
fate, or just so obvious as to be beyond question. It is my hope that, by listening
closely to how men who have been in prison as prisoners connect their experiences of
prisons to their interest in criminology I can provide new and telling insights into the
relationships between men and society, between men and crime, prison and
criminology.

To secure this form of intellectual and academic progression I am submitting an
application for a Leverhulme Fellowship to allow me to develop these themes more
systematically by conducting a series of biographical interviews with key figures in
and around convict criminology. This will generate a more empirically robust and
theoretically sophisticated account of its possibilities and potentials than is currently
available.

This new phase of inquiry will also build on the reflexive and intersectional
approaches developed here, and seek to provide conceptual resources to help
overcome tendencies, particularly within criminology and among white, male
academics, that I characterise as ‘passive reflexive’. This is a kind of self-awareness
that corresponds with reflexive knowledge, but one that appears unhelpfully
reconciled to passivity. This provides the comfort of an apparent impotence that is
both self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating, a kind of fatalistic reflexivity. It derives
from a limited acknowledgement of the implications of race, class and gender,
principally as personally embodied characteristics rather than dimensions of social
structure and experience. As with the passive aggressive, the problematics are noted,
but aggressively neglected as a personal responsibility, as if they were an ontological
version of the legal concept of ‘ultra vires’.
In as much as these passivities coincide with gendered power and racialised privilege, they are perhaps functional to particular kinds of whiteness and masculinity. In Sartre’s existential terms they are instances of bad faith where bad faith is that constant temptation to find excuses for ourselves, to explain away our responsibility for what we are and what we do. Race and gender privilege do not disappear in the simple academic act of recognising their social construction. Believing so, and acting so, confuses the historical force of social construction with the ephemera of social confection. As Marx observed in the famous 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, alluded to above, it will take more than insight, more than intellectual gestures, to undo the work that ‘race’ accomplishes. Interpreting the world is no substitute for changing it.

**One final straw in the wind…one final ‘publication’…**

The narrative thread of this PhD began with an ineffectual gesture, something I printed in 1981 that resulted in my serving a short prison sentence. After my release I completed my training in small off-set lithographic printing, a craft and a technology subsequently rendered almost totally obsolete (see Cockburn 1987; Sennett 2009). I got a job and continued to print fanzines and assorted agitational or community-oriented publications, on the cheap, for friends and fellow travellers. One of these was a magazine called *Helpers*, put together by a vagrant collection of young graphic artists and writers in Norwich in 1985. In it, Spencer Woodcock and Jenny Derbyshire included their cartoon/graphic story of the emergence of the new rehabilitative prison, titled ‘The Philanthropists’. Although I did not write this publication, I did print it and it didn’t get me into trouble. In 2010 I got Spencer and Jenny’s permission to include it in the resources for The Open University module Youth Justice: Theory, Research and Practice (K209). I would like to include it here because I am proud to have been involved in its production and it brings me full circle, from print to prison to page.
WORK? NO.
NO LUCK. I WALKED
TO CRIMESGATE
CLOCK TODAY. EVERY
FOUNDRY, EVERY
FACTORY THE
SAME...

THEY SAY,
"WAIT, COME BACK,
AND IT'S,
"SORRY..."

THEY HAVE
A LIST, THEY
MUST HAVE. ALL
THAT THEY SUSPECT
OF BROTHERHOOD-
COMBINATION.
THEY CALL IT
NOW!

EZZA, NO!

YOU STAND UP FOR
YOURSELF JUST ONCE
AND FIND THAT YOU'VE
CONDEMNED YOUR FAMILY
TO DEATH. WELL, I WON'T
HAVE IT! BARKER & LEEMEN
HAS MADE A PROVISION.
"You see, when I was young, any fractious cagot was simply dealt with by the beadles."

"But times have changed, my lord. The new rookeries in Brickeren terr, with cagots—a public execution raised a riot!

He’s right, my lord. The public display of a broken body simply no longer works..."

"Ah, there we differ, Gresham. But it’s true what with interbreeding, ruined misters, wealthy cagots. It’s no longer possible to define.

But good God, man, if you give one recourse to law, they will all want it—it will be chaos!"

"It is chaos, my lord. We wish to bring back order—and, remember too, a court comprising of worthy citizens has likely scant regard for the whining of society’s press."

"Well put, Gresham. Damn well put! Hang Wm. Legal—that’s the ticket!"
DON'T GO, EZRA. SOMETHING WILL TURN UP TODAY. I KNOW IT.

WE CANNOT LIVE ON HOPE ANY LONGER, MY LOVE AND BARTHOLEME'S TERMS ARE GOOD....

OF ALL THE LONG DAYS SHE HAD PASSED.....

WAITING FOR HIS RETURN.....

DON'T CRY, MARTHA MY PET. YOUR FATHER WILL BE BACK SOON WITH SOMETHING...

THAT DAY WAS THE LONGEST.

REBECCA, LOVE, IT'S YOUR EZRA. HE'S BEEN TOOK, CHARGED WITH THEFT....
"But reformation, Gresham, I'm not so sure..."

"I believe, Justice Crabtree, that God is the great mechanic, and that his creations can and do break down. Then we have a duty to try and mend..."

"Stuff and nonsense!"

"Once a bad 'un, always a bad 'un, and the only place for a bad cagot is dangling..."

"Please, my lord, hear me out! The reformatory I propose, my fanoptic, will provide no holiday for felons!"

"So you want to build more things like this Brueghen rasp?"

"Well, I should go even further, though I have the greatest admiration for the designers of the rasp..."

"So first it's trials and then fine new prisons for the scum of the gutter, is it?"

"To reform, my lord, we must first begin with justice."
Now then, now then, you.

Dr. What was his name again?

Ezra, may your worship.

Have been found guilty of.

Dr. What was it?

What! A twelve pound ham? You don't say! Well, let me tell you, sir, whatever your name is, this is a serious, a grave matter. Do you know, I've a good mind to hang the beggar!

Stealing a twelve pound ham, your worship.

"Think yourself lucky," the judge had said...

A palace to the judge, perhaps.

Five years for you, the silent system, Bruckin Rasp!

"A veritable palace for felons" he had called it.

But to those who knew its ways, the rasp was called "the tomb".

Here, inebriate these rags.
I very commendable. I'm sure, this concern for the gutter rats' souls, but I don't believe you can reform.

With discipline—rigid and inflexible—no chance for the felon to consort with his criminal fellows, and regular readings of the scriptures I believe that we can.

But getting back to work, you say you can get labour from the wretched, but it's been tried.

Ah, yes! in those ill-governed dens of vice, the bridewella but there the force of discipline was lacking.

Why, my architecture alone would resolve most of the problems, as the felon is exposed to the constant scrutiny of authority.

Whilst he can see naught but his cell and his work! F
HALF PAST FIVE, THE DAY BEGINS

“THIS SCRUTINY ALONE COULD MAKE THE FELON'S LABOUR WORTH HIS KEEP..."

SIX O’CLOCK, WORK.

“...AND WHAT OTHER MASTER IS THERE WHO CAN REDUCE HIS WORKMEN IN IDLE, TO A SITUATION NEXT TO STARVING WITHOUT SUFFERING THEM TO GO ELSEWHERE?”

SEVEN THIRTY, FOOD.

EIGHT O’CLOCK, TURN OUT FOR CHAPEL.

“...WHAT OTHER MASTER IS THERE WHOSE MEN CAN NEVER GET DRUNK, UNLESS HE Chooses THEY SHOULD DO SO?”

EIGHT FIFTEEN, CHAPEL...

“... AND THANK HIM, YEA THANK THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEARTS!”

SIX O’CLOCK, WORK FINISHES.

“... AND WHO SO FAR FROM BEING ABLE TO RAISE THEIR WAGES BY COMBINATION ARE OBLIGED TO TAKE WHAT FITTANCE HE THINGS IT NOT HIS INTEREST TO ALLOW!”
Well... Gresham, I see I had you wrong. Your methods, well, they're not so soft as I thought...

I, ha, I think I'd rather swing than take a, ha, trip to your Panopticon, were I a felon, Gresham!

The stability of our great nation depends upon a return to the ways of discipline... the growth of rookeries like Whithers and Grimesgate...

Don't forget St. Luke's, Gresham, damned place grows by the minute!

But today we need more systematic methods— as we have moulded machines so must we mould men!

Mean that the order is threatened even in the very capital. The old ways worked well enough once...
"WE MUST SUFFER THEM FROM THOSE CONTACTS THAT PRODUCED THEIR CRIMINALITY..."

"SILENCE MUST BE THE INVARABLE RULE..."

"AND ON THOSE FEW OCCASIONS THAT THE PRISONERS ARE IN PUBLIC, LET THEM WEAR MASKS TO PREVENT SILENT CONTACT BY EXPRESSION"

"BY THESE METHODS, WITH KINDLY REGARD FOR THE PRISONERS' REFORMATION, RATHER THAN THE CRIEITY OF OLD..."

"WE WILL ESSAY TO CURE HIM OF HIS VILLAINY AND SEND HIM BACK INTO SOCIETY..."

"A MAN REBORN!"

"AH... EEEAH... EEEAH..."

"UH... WHY... WHAT HAVE THEY DONE...?"
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i “For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation.” Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters To A Young Poet

ii The Irish province of Ulster is composed of nine counties. At partition at the end of the war of independence in 1922, six were identified as the largest viable territory to sustain a loyalist majority.

iii Fanzines were a significant feature in the development of punk, a music sub-culture of the late 1970s. Cheaply produced on photocopiers, duplicators or small-offset litho presses, they echoed in print the DIY ethos of the music, and the urgency of the emotional sense of transition and crisis (see Savage 1991 for a vivid account)

iv Intermediate treatment refers to a kind of mixed-method social work approach to helping young people in trouble with the law developed in the early 1980s.


vi “Connect and Provide or Contain and Control: Restorative justice in the youth justice system”, Middlesex University 1997.

vii See Illouz (2007) for a revealing account of Elton Mayo’s experiments in worker/management relations at the General Electric plant at Hawthorne, USA.

viii For further such reflections on this topic, such as the time she was mistaken by a white academic, at a conference on ethnicity, for a hotel cleaner, or the occasion she was mistakenly treated as a clerical assistant and asked to photocopy someone’s documents at a journal editorial board meeting composed entirely of white academics, see Phillips and Webster (2013).

ix Gay men’s investment in such physicality is qualitatively distinct in being more openly erotic and explicitly desirous.

x Personal cooking facilities are more routinely available only in the smaller, but expanding, ‘lifer’ high-security estate.