Learning Together: edgework and productive discomfort

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What is Learning Together?

• Brings students in universities and people involved in the CJS together to study degree level material with each other in prisons and in universities.

• Dialogical and experiential engagement; interactive lecture; small group facilitated discussion; essay; group project; ceremony.

• Nurtures inclusive and transformative learning cultures through partnership working: mentoring, training opportunities, shared resources.
Our journey into space - theory

• Pedagogy
• Desistance
• Intergroup contact

‘Only by living in communities of other personal selves can anyone become a distinct personal self. Thatcher was dead wrong; it is not existent individuals who aggregate into (allegedly fictional) communities but communities that emerge as real institutional facts from individual interactions.’ (Smith: 2010:475)
Our journey to the edge of space - theory

Water entering the cell by osmosis inflates the cell and makes it rigid.

Loss of water makes the cell limp and shrinks the cell membrane away from the cell wall.

This review has been compiled as a result of a prolonged discussion with a representative contingent of the original participants from the pilot phase of 'Learning Together' [LT]. All considerations have evolved from study and debate over the proposed methodology in Dr Ruth Armstrong's postdoctoral summary (2015), specifically the evaluation process of this model. This paper will assume a base knowledge of the project’s premise, ambition and initial execution but the above source details these areas in full. To consider any of the limitations of this study would be to caption Dr Ruth Armstrong’s already deeply considered critical understanding with perhaps the addition of difficulties that may only be apparent for people who have not had extensive sociological research experience; nevertheless, we have presented them with the acknowledgement that some contingencies for minimising the scale of the problems we have identified may already be in place.
Interacting in time and space - findings

Interaction: “... because you are in a prison you very often not only think about your own life, but you think about your own life with reference to other people’s lives that you are learning with ... it is very much a lived learning experience, gives it a different dimension” (Azra, LT student, 2016)

Time: “[Learning Together] is a chance to meet some great people. To open your mind. To discuss things with like-minded people. To build your confidence, broaden your horizons. It’s a chance to feel differently about yourself and your future.” (Adam, LT student, 2016)

Space: Q: “If I asked you to have a picture in your mind of Learning Together what would it look like?”
A: “Just coming into that room that we’d go to each week ... People sitting very relaxed, and that’s important, just the postures. I just imagine these relaxed postures that were not only comfortable with themselves ... but to be comfortable with other people or other people in that time and space felt to be the case, especially towards the end [of the course].” (Jessie, LT student, 2016)
Our journey into space: methods

“Thinking in conventional criminology, law and social justice is plainly disconnected and disembodied, leaving the nature of being human a mere shell of what it is and what it can possibly do and become.” (Milovanovic, 2014:6)
Please tell us about an experience related to Learning Together that was important to you.

Please give your story a title

Please share your story here
The story is about?

If you could tell this story to anyone, who would it be and why? (list) Original answers are shown when hovering over the individual stories.

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<td>Someone who lacks self-belief / confidence...</td>
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Let it out
At graduation it had already been an amazing and emotional day and I had struggled to keep my emotions in check. At the end the band played ‘Be Somebody’ and everyone was dancing and singing in seats. Then we all decided to stand up and dance and sing. I looked around at some other students and saw they were struggling to hold back tears too. so I decided to let it out - let myself cry and enjoy the moment singing and dancing with fellow students at our graduation.

Why is this story important?
Because it celebrated our entire Learning Together experience - a sense of community. It was really positive even though so emotional. It really encapsulated the togetherness for me.

If there are people in this story, how did they feel about each other?
I think there was a big sense of togetherness and achievement.
“Social structures are only potentialities rather than actualities, but this is equally the case for agents. Their superposed states are co-emergent, and if they become real realities they do so together in localized practices, which themselves are emergent ... Perhaps paradoxically, therefore, a quantum approach suggests that to understand emergence properly we need a horizontal rather than vertical worldview” (Wendt, 2015:265).
Into the productive discomfort of outer space

“The danger is that ... celebrating the potential of everyday encounters to produce social transformations, potentially allow[s] the knotty issue of inequalities to slip out of the debate”

(Valentine, 2008)
Learning Together: Prison and University Partnership Conference
16 June 2017, HMP Grendon

Email justis@crim.cam.ac.uk to register for a free place.