

AIMS OF THE 'GOOD' POLICE CUSTODY STUDY (GPCS)

1. Describe and appraise variations in police custody arrangements across England and Wales.
2. Identify the key dimensions of police custody areas in operation (e.g. occupational culture(s), power, fairness, justice, emotions and relationships, cost, governance and accountability).
3. Explore how police custody arrangements such as civilianisation and privatisation impact on these key dimensions of police custody.
4. Conceptualise and theorise the dimensions of 'good' police custody and the links between them, and examine the implications for 'good' policing.
5. Develop benchmarks and a survey tool to monitor and improve police custody facilities, complementing the inspections conducted by HMIP/HMIC.

DATA COLLECTION ON GPCS

Phase 1

- Describe and appraise police custody arrangements.
- Survey of custody managers in all police forces in England and Wales.

Phase 2

- 100 in-depth interviews with staff and detainees (conducted using AI)
- 500 hours of observations in 4 custody suites
- 3000 custody records
- Used to identify and define key dimensions of police custody.

Phase 3

- Survey devised based on the data collected in Phase 2 and administered to 700-800 staff and detainees in 25 custody suites in 12 forces in 2016.

Phase 4

- Purpose is to theorize 'good' police custody and disseminate this knowledge to key stakeholders.
- Analyse survey data and hold end-of-project conference and workshop.

THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CUSTODY

Meso-scale locations of custody

- Locating custody within the city
- Why are suites built where they are? (Moran, Jewkes et al)
- Does this say something about detainees and punishment?
- Architecturally, what do custody suites say about public reassurance? (Millie, 2012)
- Interaction between pains of deprivation and the built environment.

Micro-scale spaces of custody

- Liminality/temporality of custody
- The emotions associated with zones and spaces in custody
- The coping mechanisms of detainees in custody
- Custody as a transformative experience?
- The physical custody spaces – the interaction between space and emotion

POLICE CUSTODY AS A SPACE OF LIMINALITY

Liminality: Turner (1967) developed the idea of liminality as an ‘interstructural’ state in which the person is ‘betwixt and between’ socially constructed identities.

Formation of socially constructed identities

‘Temporal disruption’ and uncertainty of outcomes:

“not knowing what’s going to happen to you, especially my predicament when you know you are getting kept in for Court and you have got to tell yourself the worst scenario is the next day you are going to prison. You have got to keep saying to yourself like this is getting frequent now, what’s the Judge going to think, he’ll think I’m taking the piss, I am definitely going away today. And you have got that mind set of I’ll be in prison tomorrow, I’ll be in prison tomorrow and obviously every time you get out its a bonus ...” [Detainee_NT]

Being in limbo:

“[p]isses me off when you’re just left in limbo and it’s not only me that’s feeling it, it’s my mum ... and obviously the missus and everything, and they just keep you in limbo” [Detainee_MC]

TEMPORALITY —

ABSENCE OF TIME AND TIME AS AN ORGANISING CONCEPT IN CUSTODY

The environment itself is timeless, with little light penetrating the custody suite:

'We have no natural light, the cells are appalling really dark and dingy and yeah there's not a lot positive to say about it to be fair. (SS_CS1)'

Absence of time for detainees/time structuring everything

'For me, the protocol [for meals] is set times. I aint really got an issue whether I say yes or no to a prisoner unless I've checked record and he's had one every hour, that's just ridiculous' (SS_DO4)

'we had in yesterday...teenager... fourteen... and said he I'm bored so I got some magazines.. women's magazines, but he were quite happy sitting reading them and it passed some time on so it's kept him happy and it's stopped him kicking on cell door and peeling paint of the wall...' (SS_DO2)

'One of things I really like about my job is the fact that the [custody] board changes everyday and its new people in all the time' [Custody Sergeant_NT]

CUSTODY AS A SPACE OF EMOTION

At the charge bar:

*'[a detainee] is brought in and is all over the place. Sarge is already raging and you can tell he is not going to keep him in before he even gets near the cell. The officers chat about him as he is pretty spaced out and the sarge is **unsure of whether he is an Oscar winner or a pension killer...**' (SS_obs_1.7.14)*

In the cell:

*'The fact **that you're behind a door and you know you've fucked up basically, and that's what's most upsetting I think**' (SS_Det2)*

*'I mean the minute you walk through them doors, it's like, well this is how I feel. **Like, you're scared for your life. You want time to pass so you can go home and when I go to the cell, I regret what I've done, before I've got to them doors. And I sit there and I beg and plead, can I please go...**' (NT_Det4)*

EMOTION ZONES IN CUSTODY?

Applicable to an extent – definite zones of different emotion in custody

Limitation of emotion zones in custody:

- Custody as a more controlled environment than prison
- Immediacy of arrest
- Innocence of detainees
- Liminality/temporality mean that detainees are arriving and being released regularly, so ‘emotional micro climate’ not so clear.

Coping strategies:

I just try and chat to people, have a bit of chat and a bit of banter. I like to talk and have a laugh and it makes me feel more at ease type of thing, yeah. [Detainee_NT2]

[Custody] itself apart from been physically painful was quite emotionally disturbing to see people that I knew could barely stand on their feet, some of them were blind people been skitted all over...I was conscious of speaking quietly and calming...was determined to make sure that I wouldn't do anything that they could afterwards construe as behaviour that justified them using violence against me [Detainee_SS1]

Skinns, L., Rice, L., Sprawson, A. and Wooff, A. (Forthcoming) 'Police legitimacy in context: An exploration of 'soft' power in police custody in England', Policing: an international journal of Police Strategies and Management

CUSTODY AS A SPACE OF EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Emotional and physical transformation – stigma associated with having been in custody

'I'm happy that I am in and out in 2 hours and nobody is none the wiser, from my point of view. Work don't need to know what it was all about, because it's only a caution it doesn't need to be recorded for work purposes... You only have to disclose it if it says Police caution, reprimand, whatever. So yeah I was more relieved at the point of which they said its going to be a caution because it could have been £80 fixed penalty and that was point of me nicking the fucking Sat Nav' [Detainee_Nt]

Embodied emotional scars carried mentally

'You remember your first time in custody, I do anyway, it was frightening and horrible. The thought makes me tense up' [Detainee_SS]

DETAINEES REFLECTING ON CUSTODY

“In a way you feel a bit ashamed. I don’t feel like they’re judging me. You feel mad with yourself. I mean it’s easy to think that on reflection, but at the time you just think, well I need a bit of money, let’s do it. It’s, get yourself slightly off your face, psyche yourself up, I love it, but just hope you don’t get caught.”

[Detainee_SS_det3]

“ I now know how good Tesco’s CCTV is. Apparently I looked too suspicious. I was really nervous. And I know I was now, thinking back I thought I was pretty slick, you know what I mean but because I was nervous and hanging about, that’s why, and that’s one of the reasons I got caught...I know for next time”

[Detainee_NT_det6]

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A GEOGRAPHY OF [GOOD] CUSTODY?

- Custody as a liminal experience
- Temporality a key organising factor within custody: both timeless and timed
- Spaces of custody shape, and are shaped by, emotions – both embodied and physical
- Custody as a transformative space for some detainees
- Importance of reflecting on emotions in custody – link to police legitimacy and the treatment by staff and how they use their authority.

PAPERS IN PROCESS FROM GPCS

Skinns, L., **Wooff, A.**, Sprawson, A., (2015), 'Preliminary findings on police custody delivery in the twenty-first century: Is it 'good' enough?', *Policing and Society*, doi: 10.1080/10439463.2015.1058377

Skinns, L., Rice, L., Sprawson, A. and **Wooff, A.** (2016) 'Police legitimacy in context: An exploration of 'soft' power in police custody in England', *Policing: an international journal of Police Strategies and Management*

Skinns, L., **Wooff, A.**, Sprawson, A., (2016) 'The ethics of researching the police: Dilemmas and new directions', in Tong, S. and Martin, D. (Eds) *Researching police: Taking lessons from Practice*, Routledge

Skinns, L. Sprawson, A. Sorsby, A. Smith, R and **Wooff, A** (under revision), Police custody delivery in the twenty-first century in England and Wales: Current arrangements and their implications for patterns of policing, *European Journal of Policing Studies*

Skinns, L., Sprawson, A and **Wooff, A** (in progress) "My best day will be my last day!": Assessing the value of appreciative inquiry for police studies

Skinns, L. (in progress) 'The pains of police custody: Sykes revisited'

Wooff, A and Skinns, L. (in progress) 'The geographies of police custody: emotion, space and place'