

Institute of Criminology Public Seminar Series (Revised Time!)

# Researching Bullying Among Prisoners: A decade of research

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Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, 2.00pm (Please note time!)

Research into the bullying that occurs among prisoners has advanced over the last decade both in the methods employed to examine this topic and also with regards to analysis and theoretical developments. This seminar will outline how the research field has developed over the past ten years with a particular focus on developments in methods of measurement and theory, reflecting in particular on the developing international application. The focus will be on prisoner-to-prisoner bullying as opposed to prisoner-to-staff or staff-to-prisoner. It will describe how developments in this research field have assisted with the management of bullying. The seminar will outline in particular how:

The specific research method adopted can influence findings, including any assertions of sex differences in bullying behaviours. Measures of 'intensity' are assisting in refining the different groups involved in bullying with approximately one fifth of prisoners determined to belong to an extreme bully and/or victim group at any one time.

Those involved in bullying behaviour should not be psycho-pathologised with a focus instead on the encouraging and reinforcing role played by the environment. The role for an 'Interactional Model' of prison bullying is outlined in particular.

The groups of 'bully' and 'victim' are by no means mutually exclusive although have been treated as such within the non-prisoner literature.

Bullying may serve an adaptive function in prisons and thus interventions based on skill deficit models are unlikely to prove effective in the long term.

'Stage systems' and 'anti-bullying units/wings' are not appropriate to manage bullying and are based on an inadequate application of theory.

The seminar will conclude with some directions for future research and application.

Professor Ireland is a Chartered Forensic Psychologist, Course Director for an MSc. Forensic Psychology, A/Head of the School of Psychology and Violence Treatment Lead within an NHS Trust. Professor Ireland is currently Chair of the British Psychological Society's Division of Forensic Psychology and of the Expert Witness Working Party. Professor Ireland has published over 60 papers, articles and book chapters, with the majority of these on intra group aggression [bullying] within secure settings. She also authored the first book on prison bullying in 2002, with a further edited book in 2005. Professor Ireland is a fellow of the International Society for Research on Aggression [ISRA].

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If you wish to be added to the seminar mailing list, please contact Joanne Garner on [jf225@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jf225@cam.ac.uk)