

## Suicide in prison: The potentials and pitfalls of film-research collaborations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Item Type     | Article  |
| Authors       | Buck, Gillian;Tomczak, Philippa  |
| Citation      | Buck, G., & Tomczak, P. (2025). Suicide in prison: The potentials and pitfalls of film-research collaborations. <i>Incarceration</i> , 6, article-number article-number 26326663251334711. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/26326663251334711">https://doi.org/10.1177/26326663251334711</a> |
| DOI           | <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/26326663251334711">10.1177/26326663251334711</a>  |
| Publisher     | SAGE Publications  |
| Journal       | <i>Incarceration</i>   |
| Download date | 2026-05-19 16:49:13  |
| Item License  | <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>  |
| Link to Item  | <a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10034/629332">http://hdl.handle.net/10034/629332</a>  |



# Suicide in prison: The potentials and pitfalls of film-research collaborations

Incarceration

Volume 6: 1–21

© The Author(s) 2025



DOI: 10.1177/26326663251334711

journals.sagepub.com/home/icn



Gillian Buck<sup>1</sup>  and Philippa Tomczak<sup>2</sup> 

## Abstract

Prisoner suicide rates are consistently higher than rates among communities outside prisons. Between 2012 and 2016, England and Wales' prison suicide rates more than doubled, hitting record numbers in 2016. Often those most invested in prison safety are those personally impacted, and campaigns by prisoners' families can have material effects on imprisonment. This article critically reflects on a collaboration between an academic research team (who authored this article), a bereaved mother and a theatre company, which aimed to raise awareness of prison suicide through verbatim film. Drawing upon interviews with the filmmakers and audience surveys, we examine the potentials and challenges of such collaborations. We conclude that film can engage audiences within and beyond social science, making complex subjects accessible, humanising marginalised people and potentially inspiring social change, but a sustained ethic of care is required to mitigate harms and manage expectations, which may involve difficult decisions for researchers.

## Keywords

Arts-based dissemination, collaborative research, prison, suicide, verbatim film

## Introduction

Our aim is to critically reflect on an arts-criminology collaboration, which sought to raise awareness of the hidden yet pervasive concern of prison suicide (Tomczak, 2022), using a verbatim film centring a bereaved mother. Across the world, prisoner suicide rates are consistently above those outside prisons (Fazel et al., 2017). In 2022–2023, England and Wales recorded a 24% increase of self-inflicted deaths in prisons (HMPPS, 2023). Self-harm incidents also increased, by 8% in

---

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Work, University of Chester, Warrington, UK

<sup>2</sup>School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

### Corresponding author:

Gillian Buck, Department of Social Work, University of Chester, Remond House, Warrington, WA1 1WA, UK.

Email: g.buck@chester.ac.uk

male prisons and 65% in female prisons (HMPPS, 2023). Working in this area, we were concerned by the devastating impacts of prison suicide (Tomczak, 2022) and knowledge that England and Wales' dense prison oversight frameworks were not reducing persistently elevated rates (Tomczak, 2018, 2022). As researchers, we have lost friends and family to suicide, so were also personally motivated to work on preventing avoidable deaths and their associated harms and costs (Banwell-Moore et al., 2022).

Our focus on an interdisciplinary arts-criminology collaboration encourages a re-evaluation of established research and dissemination methods, consideration of complex ethical terrains and analysis of power dynamics and representation within socially responsible scholarship. Creative forms of expression can help imagine new possibilities (Merrill and Frigon, 2015), aid collective problem-solving and potentially transform society (Huss and Bos, 2018). Film-based research can 'question stale, tired ways of viewing the world and... interrogate the prevailing imaginary' (Barone, 2003: 209). Such re-imagining is much needed to help tackle 'intractable and complex' social problems, from prison suicide to poverty and inequality (Quinn et al., 2022: 371). Indeed, participatory filmmaking has challenged perceptions of prison. For example, Wiseman's (1967) *Titicut Follies*, whilst highly criticised for violating the (privacy) rights of subjects filmed, did expose harsh conditions (Brown, 2012). Recently, *Calls from Home* (2023) used film to fight prison expansion (Ryerson, 2023), focusing on alternative community justice efforts (Turner, 2014).

Our case study focuses on 'verbatim' film, which uses directly cited material to highlight experiences, often seeking to be a force for social change (Paget, 2010: 173). However, sharing lived experiences in a stigmatised setting such as criminal justice can create emotional costs and ethical consequences, including significant risks of exclusion, shaming and tokenism (Brosnan, 2019; Buck et al., 2022). Although making and sharing this film has, overall, been a transformative, joyful and educational experience, the social scientist authors were also unsettled and concerned during commissioning, review and dissemination, and these diverging experiences stimulated this article.

Films based on spoken narratives can have humanising potentials, helping to 'validate' lives (Maruna and Liem, 2021: 126) and illuminate often-unseen experiences of people impacted by criminal justice (Merrill and Frigon, 2015). Performances which centre and evoke emotion offer an important counterpoint to the concealed emotional vulnerabilities which often accompany a prisoner's death (Barry, 2020), producing knowledge that transcends official and scientific discourses (Jarldorn, 2016) and engaging audiences in ways that traditional data presentations cannot (Ogston-Tuck et al., 2016).

Creative arts hold methodological and educational potentials, offering inclusive methods for co-creating material with participants (Kara et al., 2021) and consciousness raising (Freire, 1970). Collaborative performances can also enhance critical literacy and citizenship teaching (Turner-King, 2019). For predominantly text-based social science, performative arts hold potential for emotional translation to audiences (Rossiter et al., 2008), and film can be a tool for public scholarship, providing access to research for non-academic audiences (Franzen, 2013).

Creative expressions also offer socially transformative potentials (Merrill and Frigon, 2015): for example, research-based theatre has offered a counternarrative to prejudicial attitudes related to suicide (Silvén Hagström, 2020). Cross-disciplinary collaborations between academics and artists can interrogate structural inequalities that foster injustices (Gray and Kontos, 2019). Indeed, a visual criminology holds potential to reveal and challenge mass incarceration (Brown, 2014). The Tamms 'supermax' prison in Illinois, USA, which held hundreds of men in solitary confinement

for indefinite periods, closed in 2013, following a 5-year mixed media and public education campaign by community activists and artist Laurie Jo Reynolds, which engaged audiences with the lasting harms of solitary confinement (Jackson et al., 2023). Relatedly, in 2016, a BBC *Panorama* documentary highlighted pain-inducing restraints of children by staff in England's Medway Secure Training Centre. The Serious Case Review (2019) which followed cited the documentary as its stimulus, national policymakers recognised Secure Training Centres had made 'inadequate provision for vulnerable children', and two of England's three Secure Training Centres closed (House of Commons Committee, 2022: 9).

However, despite clear potentials, arts-collaborations should not be idealised, and the limitations of research-informed art, including films, must be taken seriously by social scientists. Dramatic representations can cause emotional harm, including re-traumatisation (Bradford, 2016). Lived experience campaigning can be energising and reaffirm citizenship but also lead to fatigue and oppression (Bartlett, 2014). Exposure and audience reception can also create harms (Roy et al., 2021). Mobilising 'epistemic injustice', Fricker (2013) illustrates how speakers can be wronged by audience perceptions: speakers' credibility can be limited by hearers' judgements and speakers' marginalised positions can impact how their sensemaking is received. Regarding our film involving a mother speaking about her child's death in prison, epistemic injustice highlights that we must seriously consider hearers' potential prejudices and our mother's societal marginalisation, which could impact the reception of her message, including audiences' potential lack of care and sympathy for prisoners (Marzano et al., 2015) and their families (Peters, 2012). Although silence in the face of depersonalisation and discrimination is problematic (Lorde, 1977), academic-artistic collaborators should openly discuss risks of judgement, disregard and abuse (Buck et al., 2022) to facilitate informed decisions, and remain mindful of these risks at all stages. In our case, these risks informed our much-deliberated decision to limit screening to selected audiences, as we discuss later. Using our short film as a case study, we critically reflect on the potentials and challenges of artistic collaboration, which may assist decision making by other prison researchers using participatory arts.

### *Our collaboration*

From 2020 to 2024, the authors worked on a large research study of prison regulation (Tomczak, 2020). Simply put, 'regulation' includes sanctioning and supportive activities aimed at influencing conditions (Braithwaite et al., 2007). There is a duty upon States to protect the right to life under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights and extensive prison regulatory apparatuses monitor compliance with this duty *inter alia* across local, national and international scales (van Zyl Smit, 2010). Prison regulators include, for example, Independent Monitoring Boards, Inspectorates, Ombudsmen, Coroners, European and United Nations committees. However, prison overseers have not been effective at preventing prisoner deaths (Tomczak, 2022).

As part of our project, we interviewed prison death investigators, prison staff, and family members to understand how regulators' harm reduction potentials could be more fully harnessed (Tomczak, 2022). At the end of 2021, amidst COVID lockdowns, we hosted a large webinar to share emerging findings. Our passion for the topic, sadness at enduring suicide numbers, and frustration at prisoner death investigations' lack of impact, meant we were eager to engage stakeholders and move beyond traditional academic presentations, which can reduce the people at their centre to data and statistics (Ricchiardi, 2021). As a project aim was to explore the (potential) participatory roles of prisoners and their families in regulation, we also wanted to include lived experiences in the webinar but were keen to avoid the tokenism and distress that can too often hamper participation

efforts (Buck et al., 2022). We considered creating a short film as a means of including lived experiences and emotionally engaging and educating attendees, but were keen to attempt inclusion in a meaningful, safe and collaborative way.

As researchers, we had been approached by a campaign-led theatre company who wanted to illuminate prison suicide through verbatim theatre. We asked if the company might be interested in creating a film to represent experiences of prison suicide to professional and academic audiences, which they were very motivated to do. The company co-create scripts for live performances from individuals' spoken words and were already in touch with legal actors and families who had been seeking redress following increased suicides in one particular prison. The theatre company asked one mother from this group if she would like to share her story for an educational film and she agreed. For the purposes of this reflection, this mother would like to be called 'Jo'.

The company's creative director and Jo met informally, built a strong rapport, and worked together to co-create her 'verbatim' account of losing her child. The director turned Jo's words into a film script and checked drafts with Jo throughout. The academics reviewed the script at a later stage and proposed minor edits. In scripting a film from Jo's ideas, the director adopted the role of a 'creative associate' (Turner-King, 2019: 102): listening to Jo, working with her to represent her narrative and checking that she was happy with the production and the process. Professional choreographers and musicians working for the theatre company added dramatic interpretations. These included filmic portraits of Jo in different environments (including her home, a forest, a park and dancing on a rooftop). These settings illustrated parts of Jo's narrative, which were screened as she read her script. Whilst Jo did not shape the visual art, beyond providing words to inspire creators, she did have editorial power and was encouraged to veto elements she was unhappy with.

As academic collaborators, we commissioned and funded the film and sessions for Jo with a trained counsellor (who was engaged by the theatre company and experienced in socially engaged theatre). This was an attempt to mitigate the potential for dramatic representations re-traumatise (Bradford, 2016), and provide safety and connectedness (de Smet et al., 2019). We also shared research ethics resources. For example, we encouraged informed consideration of self-disclosure (revealing identity), including mental health survivors' warnings about the discriminatory impact that anti-stigma campaigns based on personal stories can have on individuals (Tyler, 2020). These 'hands off our stories' messages (Costa et al., 2012: 93, Figure 1) alert partners

- Participation is voluntary. You can always say no.
- Ask yourself, who profits from you telling your story?
- What purpose does personal story sharing serve?
- How do large organizations use stories to make material change?
- Story telling as an exercise of labour/work. Do you get paid?
- The internet lasts forever. Because of the technology available today, your interview or story will likely be accessible to the public for a very long time. That includes future employers and landlords.

**Figure 1.** Hands off our stories tips.

to the dangers of storytelling, including the potential appropriation of personal stories for organisational interests.

Remuneration for Jo as an artist-collaborator was handled by the theatre company. She also chose how her story was represented, from options of (i) an actor appearing in the film and speaking her words, (ii) an actor performing to Jo's voice narrating or (iii) Jo appearing in and narrating the film. Jo made the informed choice of option (iii). As this means the film is deeply personal and directly identifies people involved, it is screened only in organised research and training events, which Jo is always given the choice to collaborate on. It has not been made publicly available to mitigate prejudice, misuse and abuse.

As academic collaborators, we also shared evidence of how prisoners' families, working in partnership with others, can be influential advocates. For example, threats of litigation from the voluntary sector and bereaved families following six suicides at HMP Styal in 2002–2003, triggered the *Corston Report* on women in the criminal justice system (Tomczak, 2022). Corston's conclusion that jail was not the right place for women who had experienced harm and disadvantage (Corston, 2007: 69) influenced the government to abandon plans to build more, larger women's prisons, and the number of women in prison trended downwards for more than a decade after its 2008 high (PRT, 2019: 35). Tomczak (2022: 502) argued that these important effects 'could provide a springboard for further activism', which provided some of the impetus for making this film, particularly as (women's) imprisonment rates have since risen again and prisoners still disproportionately die by suicide (Howard League, 2024). Finally, as academics, we shared evidence about prison deaths in the featured prison and nationally (see e.g. Tomczak, 2018, 2022) for the film's postscript and accompanying booklet, placing Jo's family's tragedy in broader context and preventing it being seen as an individual aberration. Whilst Jo's experiences do not represent the diverse needs of those who have lost loved ones in prison, hers is not an isolated case. In a 3-year period, between 2013 and 2016, 18 prisoners took their own lives at the prison the film features (Tomczak, 2018). During this period, the prison combined multiple complex functions, and serious staff cuts and shortages had led to boredom and isolation, which are major contributing factors for self-harm. Furthermore, suicide prevention policies were designed when there were significantly more prison staff and significantly fewer prisoners (Tomczak, 2022). In providing these resources and contexts, we became critical friends to the filmmakers, strengthening safeguarding considerations and awareness of general and particular penal contexts. In exchange, the filmmakers became artisanal 'ethnographic educators' (Vannini and Vannini, 2020: 865), sensitising us to (film-based) ethnography as a craft.

In collaborating on this film, our aims as researchers were to engage and motivate a multi-disciplinary audience, ethically represent lived experiences, and explore an innovative dissemination medium for research findings, in an area where innovation is sorely needed. The aims of the theatre company were to raise awareness of bereaved prisoners' families' experiences and produce a performance-based tool for social change. Jo's aims were to humanise prisoners and their families, challenge prejudicial attitudes and improve prison conditions. As researchers, our aim in writing this article is to critically reflect on our multi-stakeholder partnership and the extent to which we achieved our aims, along with providing an illuminative case study for the benefit of (prison) scholars more broadly. Our reflections on this single production are not representative of research-informed filmmaking, nor is our account detached, given we funded and collaborated on this production. However, we do offer valuable situated insight into the process, complexities, and possible impacts of such collaborations. In doing so we hope to assist the practical, ethical and safeguarding planning of other researchers using participatory arts-based dissemination.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we describe the research methods we employed to evaluate the film partnership. We then include a short reflection on the subjective nature of artistic ‘quality’, before presenting our findings, which highlight that films informed by lived experience and social research can generate an emotional learning experience, create stories for social change and generate (potential) harms, which must be considered and mitigated.

## Methods

Mixed qualitative methods underpinned our analysis, including semi-structured interviews with filmmakers ( $n=2$ ), open-ended surveys of audience members ( $n=27$  over three screenings) and researcher reflexivity. The interviews and survey responses counterbalanced our ‘insider’ reflexivity (Greene, 2014): opening ourselves to scrutiny through critical reflection on research roles, relationships and artefacts (Corlett and Mavin, 2017). Our approach to reflexivity was ‘positional’ (Macbeth, 2001: 38) as we undertook self-referential, at times autobiographical analytic reflections, using reflective conversations and research diaries to enhance methodological rigour through critically disciplined subjectivity (Macbeth, 2001). Sampling of interview participants and survey respondents was purposive, as people were ‘hand-picked’ based on their knowledge (Denscombe, 2021: 79), that is, we invited the creative director and Jo to be interviewed and all trainees and professionals who watched the film (in 2022) to complete a survey anonymously. Organised screenings of the film were targeted at groups working (or training) in criminal justice. For more details about survey respondents, see Table 1.

The study design was approved by the University of Nottingham research ethics committee. All participants were informed of aims and proposed use of findings. Participation was voluntary and respondents were informed orally and in writing of their right to withdraw or decline to answer any questions (Kara et al., 2021). Survey respondents were invited to take part at the end of screenings, via a Quick Response (QR) code link to information and an online survey, including an opt-out option. Surveys were completed anonymously to encourage open reflections (see Tartaro, 2021). Interview participants were given a choice of whether to take part and where to be interviewed. One person chose a telephone interview, another an online video interview (via MS Teams). Both agreed that their names would be anonymised in this publication to protect their identities to some extent, although we openly discussed the potential for ‘jigsaw identification’, or the

**Table 1.** Survey respondents.<sup>a</sup>

| Date          | Event  | Number of participants | Number of responses | Response rate |
|---------------|--|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| March 2022    | Social Work students preparing for end-of-life practice (UK)             | 25                     | 14                  | 56%           |
| July 2022     | Criminal justice voluntary sector staff working on penal reform (UK)     | 20                     | 7                   | 35%           |
| November 2022 | International conference attendees (from academia, practice, and policy) | 20                     | 6                   | 30%           |
| <b>Totals</b> |  | <b>65</b>              | <b>27</b>           | <b>42%</b>    |

<sup>a</sup>Response rates may have been lower in professional than classroom settings because classroom power dynamics may have resulted in greater compliance with requests.

piecing together of sources to reveal identifying information (MRC 2021: 1), for example, if people who had seen the film read this article and recognise people involved.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically alongside survey data. Thematic analysis involves descriptive coding of transcripts and responses, interpretation, and the construction of overarching themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For example, we read and re-read interview transcripts and attached descriptive codes (such as ‘fun’; ‘holding steady’). We then interpreted meaning from these, using interpretive codes (such as ‘emotionally aligned’; ‘emotional processing’). Finally, we constructed ‘overarching themes’ from the data. For example, varied the emotional experiences of all collaborators were analysed in relation to relationship-based research (Bion, 1967; Booth and Harriott, 2021) and grouped into the theme of ‘an emotional experience’. Interviews were additionally analysed using ‘I poems’ (Gilligan in Kiegelmann, 2009: 39) which are created by taking each ‘I phrase’ in interview transcripts and listing them in sequence (e.g. ‘I want... I know ...’). These poems can ‘be remarkably revealing... capturing what people know about themselves, often without being aware of communicating it’ (Gilligan in Kiegelmann, 2009, p. 39). We include extracts of individual ‘I poems’ below. Prosaic data can be impersonal and leave readers unmoved (Furman et al., 2006: 24) but poetic forms can enhance (emotional) engagement, so that readers develop a deep, personal understanding of subjects, and while extract-based poetry can strip context, data selection decisions are explicit (Furman et al., 2006; Kiegelmann, 2009). Whilst our collaboration (and this methodology) focused on film for *dissemination*, there is also potential for film as a data collection method. For example, verbatim filmmaking has, as its core, a methodology where material is generated by interviews with people, converting traditional methods into something more participatory and fit for wider dissemination (Loots, 2016). Indeed, the data from film methods can depict harm in ways that written texts cannot (Redmon, 2018).

## Findings

Filmmakers, audiences and researchers reflected that connecting research with lived experience-informed film can: (i) generate an emotional (learning) experience, (ii) create stories to encourage social change and (iii) entail harms. We begin by considering artistic quality, before exploring these themes in turn.

### *A note on artistic quality*

We were amazed and delighted by how beautiful an artwork the film turned out to be, but this caused us to reflect: *what if this had not been the case?* How would we have responded if the film we had commissioned was lacking in production quality or insensitive in its representation?<sup>1</sup> As Bartlett (2015: 765) argues:

The process of artistic creation takes both the researcher and researched into a different kind of practice and meaning making; one in which artful (rather than scientific) knowledge prevails. This in turn can lead to tensions especially when the values of the artist and research do not ‘harmonise’ (Finley, 2008: 72), and the researcher has to relinquish control over how the data are interpreted and reused (Wiles et al., 2011). Researchers should therefore think carefully about what art can offer and what it cannot offer, before engaging with artists to communicate research findings.

Artists' aims to represent the interests of marginalised communities can sometimes lead to poor artistic quality (Johanson and Glow, 2019). Defenders of participatory arts argue that there can be no failed or unsuccessful 'works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond' (Bishop, 2005: 2). However, quality is subjective, and it is possible that creators and researchers may disagree. Moreover, as researchers (particularly funded researchers) we need to have regard for our external reputations. We were commissioning a film for a national event near the beginning of our project. In hindsight, we were naïve expecting high quality, inclusive work with a relatively low budget and short deadline. Whilst we were fortunate to have highly skilled and committed collaborators whose ability matched their enthusiasm and we could have *not* screened the film at the event, if necessary, on reflection we did not fully consider the ways our burgeoning collaboration could have gone wrong, nor leave enough time for collaborator negotiations and revisions, which are aspects we encourage others to think about:

Good work, good art and good relationships take time... sometimes there's a real value in getting it done quite quickly, but I think... breathing space is really important to ensure that the right stories are being told in the right way... I think we got it right in this case, but it reinforced to me that time is a very important part of this kind of work. (Creative director)

The filmmaker's reflections align with the philosophy of 'slow scholarship' (Douglas and Carless, 2020), which recognises that 'good stories' take considerable time to distil and amplify. Not only did we risk setting collaborators up to fail by being prepared to experiment with developing a film for a large event in a relatively short time scale, but had we decided not to use the work, for example, due to disagreements about quality, we would have fallen into the paternalist type of participation relationship that we were seeking to avoid, risking harming the creatives and the bereaved mother who had invested their time and energy.

### *An emotional experience*

All parties reported that engagement with the film was an emotional experience. Jo stated 'it's gonna sound a bit mad this but to actually do it was great fun, even though it was about such a sensitive and sad subject'. This was in part due to the artistic process but also the creative team's approach:

Jo: I had to have these dancing lessons, which were hilarious. Because I can't dance... And then when we went to the recording studios to do the soundtrack, the guy was really nice and friendly... it is a weird thing to say that I had great fun doing it. And everyone was totally mindful through every stage of it, that I was okay. And, obviously, I had counselling sessions as well.

Jo's emotional experience was positive overall because she had the opportunity to learn new, creative skills and because the artistic team engaged with an ethic of care: having regard for those silenced or devalued and taking responsibilities to people seriously (Brannelly and Barnes, 2022). The filmmakers' relational engagement went beyond researcher-guided provisions of informed story-sharing, wellbeing checks, and therapeutic support, as indicated by these extracts of Jo's 'I poem':

I was a bit of a rabbit in the headlights, but... the people that  
I was working with... they gauged how they were with me with how

I was. So, had  
I wanted to feel sad. There would have been that, because  
I was quite upbeat about it all. We were all very upbeat. But  
I think everyone involved was led by my emotions.  
I think that was why  
I kind of sailed through it and when it came to the end, it's why  
I didn't have one of my sudden nosedives into miserable depression,  
I was able, because  
I had been held steady throughout the whole thing...  
I think, the people... They were the ones that made it not easy, but not painful.  
I knew always that the support was there,  
I knew always that  
I can talk to [film maker].  
I knew always that all  
I had to do was reach out and ask for help. And it would be given...

Jo reflected how, by matching her energy, collaborators provided a form of emotional containment (Bion, 1967), so that she was 'held steady' to tell her story, rather than becoming overwhelmed and taking a 'nosedive'. The artistic collaborators were emotionally aligned and available, which offered vital grounding. We had not included an ethics of care statement in our planning process, but it would be valuable for other social scientists employing film as a method to consider emotional safety and containment strategies in their ethical planning and discuss this robustly with artistic collaborators, including talking through potential adverse experiences and management strategies.

Whilst we are pleased that Jo did not have a 'sudden nosedives into miserable depression', we were aware that this could have been a consequence of our work. Whilst alignment and care can steady people, these approaches may not be enough, and it is important to have additional strategies outside of the working relationship and to discuss safeguarding with collaborators. In this project, Jo was offered and accepted funded confidential sessions with a counsellor experienced in socially engaged theatre, which worked well in this case.

The film also proved an emotional experience for filmmakers:

[Jo] has borne her soul in that film, and it shows and... It's given me an opportunity to process and recognise the way that grief has invested itself in my own life. And I think that's been a really powerful thing, and I've never – to be clear – ever put that on the families, but I think in my own time, it's led to me being more open and allowed me to process what's gone on in my life as well. And I think sometimes it takes someone as brave as [Jo] to take the plunge and do that, but then kind of encourage other people (Creative director).

The director describes feeling encouraged to experience and process their own grief. Emotional experiences, learning and processing were also reported by audiences, who described the film as 'moving, powerful, impactful, emotive but educational, and inspirational' (Survey respondent, 2022). One viewer reflected:

As a person with lived experience of prison and a passionate supporter of prison reform, I always find a large degree of catharsis in hearing such issues being spoken about (Survey respondent, 2022).

These reflections demonstrate how socially engaged films can carry an affective charge with potential to ignite dialogic emotional learning (Schulz et al., 2024). Our film provided a tool for increased self-awareness and emotional processing (Patton et al., 2023), for those who created and viewed the production. However, the filmmaker's reflections also reveal how this highly personal, emotional form of learning is frequently seen as something to be hidden away within professional collaboration. Suppression of emotion was also discussed in conversations between the researchers involved:

Researcher: Do we need to talk about ourselves and our experiences here? Obviously, I don't want you to have to out yourself [as bereaved by suicide] if you don't want to, and I can't believe I'm saying this 'cos I'm not sure I even like that confessional research stuff, but also, is that one of the reasons we're here doing this work? Is it fair if we have Jo laying out her life and we don't even acknowledge that we've both lost people to suicide?

Co-researcher: I think you're right, maybe we do need to. It's interesting that we haven't really done it much up to this point.

During our collaboration, both the artist and the two researchers reflected independently on the interconnectedness of our emotional lives with the film's subject, but these connections were withheld or concealed, only being tentatively explored in private 'backstage' discussions with one other team member. When I (*first author*) reflected on why I had not talked about my own bereavement by suicide and emotional vulnerability within this project, it is because I was trained in professional boundaries (including withholding emotion and personal experiences at work) both as a social worker and a researcher (see e.g. Cooper, 2012; Kelly and Potter, 2023). Yet, as researchers, we were troubled by whether shielding and bracketing our own lives, whilst facilitating such extensive exposure by Jo, our protagonist, was *fair*? Booth and Harriott (2021: 211), women with experience of participating in research whilst imprisoned, contend:

Researchers must take part in the relationship with participants with a deep consideration of the self; the self they are bringing to the relationship. If you want real from us, then you must lead with real... How ready are you to learn from us and change your practice and thought process? How will this aid us? In healthy relationships, would we not share of ourselves freely, if we did not have an idea of the person to whom we are speaking?

In response to these reflections and challenges, we now share more of our lives and histories with collaborators and audiences, but this grew towards the end of our collaboration, after several years had passed. In so doing, despite our discomfort, we seek to facilitate more open and ethical relationships and contribute to levelling relationships, rather than propagating the othering 'us and them' distinctions which are common in the context of suicide (Zou et al., 2022). We have begun to see a need to not disingenuously present ourselves as 'us' researchers, untouched by suicide and 'them', the researched, impacted by suicide (although we acknowledge that bereavement by prison suicide has different aspects to bereavement by suicide when the deceased person was not incarcerated). Revealing something of ourselves in this way may foster ethical, relationship-based research above one-sided extraction, potentially producing a form of resistance to othering (Amitay, 2021), creating less-hierarchical, more reciprocal research, as advocated by feminist principles

(Katila et al., 2023: 8), and working to counter the cool, rational, standardisation of emotional lives, which can be common to administrative justice (Karstedt et al., 2011).

### *Stories for social change*

There was also evidence that the process of creating the film produced changes for Jo, the filmmaker and audiences. Jo, for example, reflected:

I used to do a lot more moping than I do now. I think because I've been encouraged, because I've done something outside of the home... as the time has gone on from start to finish, I've got much more outgoing than before.

Jo describes the invitation to act in a public arena as something positive, which improved her confidence and distracted her from ruminating. Similarly, the filmmaker spoke of personal changes:

I think about how much I've grown and changed, and my worldview has been shaped by the people I worked with... I think people [are] sometimes made to feel they are really powerless by the establishment and art is a really powerful form, an act of resistance... you can actually put on something that can change people's minds, but also mutually benefit everyone along the way.

The filmmaker describes a change in personal perception through community endeavour: emphasising benefits for the team, protagonist and audiences. When asked if there is anything they will do differently having watched the film, audience responses included:

- i. I will remember [Jo] and encourage others to understand the stories of people in prison.
- ii. Have empathy, speak up for those in prison.
- iii. Consult families, not lose sight of families, be more aware of emotions and difficulties relatives face, think about the experience of families in social policy work.
- iv. Do more research on remand and mental health assessments, educate myself.
- v. Drive campaigns, promote and circulate the film with a view to affecting reform (Survey respondents, 2022).

Audiences described raised awareness, a determinedness to advocate for others and motivation to educate themselves. The film therefore stimulated change, increasing individual confidence, challenging worldviews, and cultivating a determination in viewers to advocate for prisoners and families, and campaign for penal reforms. To capitalise on and advance this determination, we developed a broader campaign. For example, the film – originally developed for a webinar – was embedded annually in a professional degree course. This session, co-delivered with Jo, focuses on preventing suicide in secure settings. The film was also screened at an event in England's parliament, hosted by the academics, filmmakers and families, which supplemented Jo's story with an evidence-based 'policy brief', highlighting the need for prison death investigations to highlight systemic hazards and provide the evidence base for judgments and recommendations. The theatre company also continued to work with Jo, connecting her with other bereaved families to develop a play about prison suicide. The play, which toured England and Scotland – and was acclaimed by reviewers in the United Kingdom and United States – included an invitation

for audiences to sign a letter to the Justice Secretary and join a national campaign to prevent deaths in prison. The success of the campaign enabled the theatre company to secure meetings with government ministers regarding prison conditions. These follow-on collaborations illustrated ways that film can have impacts beyond individualistic changes, making visible and addressing institutional and systemic forms of power.

However, it is important to note that these continued efforts and qualitative changes, while valuable, may not directly reduce the motivating phenomena significantly, which has implications for everyone involved, as researcher and artist reflected:

Researcher: work in this area comes up against the fact that people keep dying and we probably can't directly stop that any time soon, so expectations going in and during are another big thing to manage.

Creative director: A concern of mine with any project is people saying "*I shared my story and nothing changed*".

These reflections on the limitations of arts-research collaborations introduce the need to consider the potential pitfalls of such collaborations.

### *Harms to be mitigated*

Whilst film collaborations can engage audiences and advance social justice, there are also potential harms to consider, including emotional harm (to collaborators, researchers and audiences), the isolation and responsibility of activism, and negative audience responses. Indeed, there may be situations when the potential harms are, or become, too great for a project to be feasible. In our collaboration, there was potential for harm to Jo (in particular) to consider. For example, she reflected:

I do have my black days, don't get me wrong. The involvement of everyone else who has come along since the film has made a hell of a difference because I don't feel so, everything's on my shoulders... it's nice to know that there's other people [advocating]. And I think [name] feels the same, because they were battling on with the press and that all on their own... And I think it's taken a bit of a toll.

Jo highlights that speaking up for loved ones who have died in prison, as an individual, can feel like a heavy and lonely responsibility and take an emotional toll, but working alongside others who have had similar experiences lightened this. For Jo, this was facilitated by joining a prisoners' families' group and contributing to the theatre show, which grew out of our film. This follow-on production, conveying the experiences of three families who lost loved ones to prison suicide, took the subject to a national UK audience and gained significant media attention, shining another spotlight on the prisons' crisis. Whilst joining her experiences with others provided a protective factor for Jo (which may not always be the case, e.g., if people did not build rapport), it also introduced her to others' painful losses. For example, the theatre production included reference to a mother who lost her baby in prison:

Jo: I've been okay, I've had the counselling, I've had a friend to talk to... But there was a bit of extra stuff put into the [theatre] script that I hadn't known about... [the company] had spoken to some

ex-prisoners who, this is where I just went, I couldn't stop crying... I might go again, actually! [voice halts] It was their stories, they were pregnant. And they went into labour. And they were ringing their [cell] bells, and nobody came, one of them, she gave birth to her baby, and had to cut the umbilical cord so she actually bit through it, but the baby still died... And nobody came.

Jo refers here to the well-publicised case of an 18-year-old imprisoned mother who repeatedly tried to summon help when her baby daughter was sadly born in her prison cell, showing no signs of life (Taylor, 2023). Maternal suffering is evocative and powerful, making bereaved mothers' experiences persuasive and potentially prompting policy change (Cook, 2021). However, Jo had already experienced significant maternal trauma and, through campaigning, learnt about the suffering of others. Whilst Jo had experienced her own loss several years before, was committed to using her pain for awareness and activism and had access to therapeutic support, had her commitment changed, or the pain become too great, the project would have needed to be terminated, with potential emotional, reputational and financial implications for collaborators. Researchers needing to make such decisions may benefit from planning safe closure strategies, including signposts to after-care, for example, local and national mental health support teams and free distress helplines.

In our collaboration, our arts colleagues practiced with a strong ethic of care, prioritising Jo's wellbeing. However, they also learned to strengthen their approach to practitioner care, expanding wellbeing provision to theatre company staff for the play which followed the film. For example, they worked with a counsellor to shape the play's emotional wellbeing package, which included counselling for collaborators (or a discretionary budget for their chosen wellbeing activity: e.g., a sport or health spa). All staff attended workshops at the beginning and end of the project to plan emotional wellbeing strategies and counselling was available to the artistic team throughout. This included staff who moved on, to recognise that needs may arise for support once a contract ends.

As researchers, we had planned check-ins and employee assistance from the outset to acknowledge the need for research practice that protects researchers from harm (Bashir, 2020). However, these were not always sufficient to mitigate feelings of distress and a weight of responsibility:

Co-researcher: I came home from one [session] and spent a day crying. It was just so sad hearing about the lives that had been lost and the impact on the families and it took me back to grieving losses in my own life. I think I also underestimated how being in the company of people who have lost sons and brothers to suicide would weigh on me. I know from my training that bereavement by suicide is a risk factor for suicide attempts (see Pitman et al., 2014), so I already carry a fear for the health of my own family members bereaved by suicide. Through this work I also came to care for, and worry about, the bereaved activists I worked with.

It is recognised that suicide research can be draining, even a risk to health, but that therapeutic support for researchers can be transformative (O'Connor, 2021). Reflective supervision can help researchers make informed decisions about care for themselves and others. However, whilst access to reflection is integral practice in caring professions, it can be rare within (criminology and social work) research settings (Moncur, 2013). Indeed, there are concerns that institutional ethics reviews across social sciences do not adequately address the psychological wellbeing of researchers (Fenge et al., 2019). This is a structural omission – particularly in areas of social science that examine trauma – as supervision can help researchers make sense of personal responses

to data, improve analysis and validity (Moncur, 2013: 1885), mitigate vicarious trauma and protect researchers from overwhelm (Isobel, 2021). To address this omission, improved awareness of the emotional nature of research is needed – particularly for those focused-on death and trauma. Indeed, universities have a duty of care to researchers, for example, through improved supervision and mentoring (Fenge et al., 2019). We would also advocate that funding bodies recognise the value of supervision and facilitate the use of research funds for this important safeguard as required.

Finally, audience members reported painful emotions:

- i. It made me cry.
- ii. Heart-breaking and frustrated at the lack of care.
- iii. Sadness, rage, upset.
- iv. Disbelief, shock.
- v. Such sadness after watching it, but it needs to be watched.
- vi. Sadness and anger, but also admiration and hope.
- vii. A sense that something needs to be done about this (Survey respondents, 2022).

Whilst these responses from audiences do not *necessarily* present harmful emotions, and in fact appear to spur people to want to act, it is important to prepare people for the distressing nature of material and signpost supports that may be required. Screening emotionally powerful films is risky work that could provoke unpredictable audience reactions. It is important that researchers prepare as much as possible, for example, for audience members becoming upset and have people on hand for support. There is also a need to consider if some audiences should *not* see the film, such as children or young people who can be susceptible to the contagion effects of suicide depicted on screen (Gould et al., 2003).

This data on emotional pain raises short- and long-term ethical considerations. Firstly, in relation to Jo's emotions as a lived experience collaborator:

Creative director's I poem:

I will always worry that like, you know, [Jo] still loves it.  
 I really hope that she can look back in five- or ten-years' time and be so really proud of the work that she made. And  
 I just fear that her relationship with that film might change. But that's the gig.  
 I guess my fear will always be that she permanently has any regrets around it.  
 I think it's important to sit in that discomfort. And  
 I would rather sit in that discomfort and take that risk. And that story be told...  
 I also hope that we have infrastructures in place where [if she felt] that the film was no longer serving a purpose or she did have any regrets, we'd be able to talk it out and figure out why and see if it could be resolved. And  
 I think always... we work quite hard to make sure that we maintain those relationships.

These reflections indicate that there is an ethical imperative for artists to make all efforts to maintain relationships with collaborators, particularly those whose lived experiences are being centred, beyond the period of research dissemination. This is very different to the short term, bounded relationships that often characterise prisons research (Booth and Harriott, 2021). To ensure Jo maintains long-term control over the uses of her story, we decided to only share the film in co-planned

training events, but this introduces its own dilemma, as there is a risk of *not* sharing the film expansively:

Creative director: I think, actually, my bigger concern is that we've been quite targeted with [screenings] ... It's a really delicate thing. Being able to manage and control it where it isn't just slapped on the internet and people comment on it. That could be quite damaging for Jo and the creative team... But I do think there's also a risk of it still being shown in quite closed circles... Jo wants the film to be seen... we have a responsibility to [reach] the widest audience possible so it's having that impact... there's stuff isn't there about: "*I shared my story, and nothing changed*". And I think we have more work to do in terms of making sure that the film reaches the widest audience possible.

Jo concurred that she would like the film to reach a broad audience to maximise awareness-raising and advocacy. This would perform a kind of resistance to forms of marginalisation which cast some lives as dispensable (Butler, 2021: 24). However, the filmmaker's reflection that 'slapping the film on the internet' could be damaging, acknowledges the 'subaltern' position of prisoners and their families, and the dominant demonising discourse, which can limit prisoners' stories being heard beyond stereotypes and voyeurism (Warr, 2012). These complexities make issues like identifying storytellers and deciding the breadth of dissemination ethical tightropes, with multiple potential causes of distress in the short-and-long-term.

## Conclusion

When somebody dies in prison, families can experience 'disenfranchised' grief (Abbott et al., 2023), particularly common to complicated losses (e.g. suicide or adoption), where grief may not be openly acknowledged or supported. Such trauma is embodied, difficult to express in words (Murray et al., 2019) and not always possible to convey through textual representations alone (Lenette and Boddy, 2013). Collaborative film offers a powerful form of visual representation which can centre and validate lived experiences, emotionally engage audiences, influence understanding, and potentially instigate social change. These effects are especially valuable when representing areas hidden from view, such as prisons, or where people's highly emotional lived experiences are otherwise publicly represented by the 'cool rationality' of official death reports (Aitken, 2022: 490). Our reflection has shared some 'insider' perspectives of such partnerships, seeking to inform arts-social science collaborations more broadly. Verbatim film can valuably highlight emotional elements of traumatic experiences, creating knowledge outside of official means and inspiring participants and audiences to collectively (re)consider solutions. In turn, this film generated emotional experiences for people producing and watching. The protagonist experienced joy and fun, despite the painful topic, as she was learning new skills and working with people who matched her energy and showed her genuine care and commitment. She also experienced sadness in relation to hers and others' experiences, but joining other bereaved families meant that she no longer felt a 'lone crusader'. The filmmaker and academics processed and (re)experienced grief in their own lives, and audiences experienced a range of emotions from sadness and rage to hope and catharsis. These emotional experiences were often hidden away by professionals, revealed only in 'backstage' discussions, due to an understanding that professional boundaries include degrees of 'bracketing' of our own lives. Considering this bracketing critically, as potentially disingenuous and othering, enabled us to gradually practice a more open approach to collegial

and research relationships, which included sharing more of our personal connection to the research, in pursuit of more transparent, equitable and sensitive forms of engagement. For us, the effort of collaborating on the film (and the inherent uncertainty about the effect it would have) was, in this case, justified by enduring high prison suicide rates, the limited efficacy of prison oversight frameworks, and the outcome of a beautiful film which emotionally engaged broader audiences with the focus of our research, and which was valued by all collaborators.

This film also became a story for activating social change, inspiring audiences to have empathy, advocate for people in prison, be more aware of families and educate themselves and others. Less expectedly it also activated changes in collaborators who gained confidence, skills, (emotional) insights and changed perspectives. These messages hold value for social science researchers interested in creative forms of research (dissemination) and for social workers attracted to creative arts-based methods.

However, none of these positive impacts can be considered without attention to the (potential) harms of partnerships such as these, including the need to consider the viability of projects and the safety of people involved throughout. As a minimum, ethical collaborations should openly explore and plan to mitigate potential for emotional pain, anticipate the possibility that nothing might change, work with sensitivity to participants' needs, and facilitate wellbeing supports for all partners. This latter point may require challenging the practical reality that therapeutic supports are often structurally unavailable. Additionally, the creative team in this project maintained good relationships and committed to a long-term co-planning of the film's use. This relational commitment offered a refreshing counter to the extraction from, or invisibilisation of, marginalised people that can often occur within (social scientific) knowledge creation (Booth and Harriott, 2021). As a final safeguard, we were mindful of and open about the risk of 'epistemic injustice' or testimonies being undermined within a broader culture which can be unsympathetic to prisoners and their families. Jo was given choices about involvement at every stage, and consultations continue in planning where and how the film is screened. In addition, there was a need to prepare and signpost audiences about the distressing nature of the film's focus, which we did throughout. Provided the potential harms of such partnerships are considered and collaboratively addressed, and social scientists well-prepared for all eventualities and have the resilience to make bold decisions, co-produced verbatim film offers a valuable tool for research dissemination, engaging audiences in new ways and potentially influencing more humane and constructive responses to entrenched social problems.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to our partners in the collaboration for their outstanding work and willingness to learn along with us. Thanks also to Dr Sara Hyde, Dr Tom Kemp, Dr Rebecca Banwell-Moore and Dr Cathy Traynor for comments on this article.


### **Declaration of conflicting interests**


The authors declared the following potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This article reflects on a funded collaboration between academic researchers and a non-profit arts company. This professional allegiance could have influenced our judgements and analysis. The conflict was mediated by openness within the article on roles, relationships and backstage reflections and acknowledgement that we offer a single situated, rather than representative account.

## Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the UK Research and Innovation, Economic and Social Research Council (grant number MR/T019085/1).

## ORCID iDs

Gillian Buck  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4398-8445>

Philippa Tomczak  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2347-2479>

## Data availability statement

Data and other supporting information, are available from the UK Data Service 10.5255/UKDA-SN-856991, subject to registration. Access to the data is subject to approval and a data sharing agreement due to the sensitivity of this research.

## Note

1. This reflection is written from our perspective as academic researchers, but of course from the artists' side, the researchers' work could also have lacked quality, rigor, or accuracy.

## References

- Abbott L, Scott T and Thomas H (2023) Compulsory separation of women prisoners from their babies following childbirth: Uncertainty, loss and disenfranchised grief. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 45(5): 971–988.
- Aitken D (2022) Investigating prison suicides: The politics of independent oversight. *Punishment & Society* 24(3): 477–497.
- Amitay G (2021) From helpless rage to loving resistance: Resistance to othering and practices of agency in mentoring children of asylum seekers in Israel. *Child & Youth Care Forum* 51: 705–727.
- Banwell-Moore R, Tomczak P, Wainwright L, et al. (2022) 'The human toll': Highlighting the unacknowledged harms of prison suicide which radiate across stakeholder groups. *Incarceration* 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/26326663221097337>
- Barone T (2003) Challenging the educational imaginary: Issues of form, substance, and quality in film-based research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(2): 202–217.
- Barry C (2020) 'You can't tell anyone how you really feel': Exploring emotion management and performance among prison staff who have experienced the death of a prisoner. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 61: 100364. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2019.100364
- Bartlett R (2014) Citizenship in action: The lived experiences of citizens with dementia who campaign for social change. *Disability & Society* 29(8): 1291–1304.
- Bartlett R (2015) Visualising dementia activism: Using the arts to communicate research findings. *Qualitative Research* 15(6): 755–768.
- Bashir N (2020) The qualitative researcher: The flip side of the research encounter with vulnerable people. *Qualitative Research* 20(5): 667–683.
- Bion WR (1967) *A Theory of Thinking*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Bishop C (2005) The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents. *Artforum* 44(6): 178.
- Booth M and Harriott P (2021) Service users being used: Thoughts to the research community. In: Masson I, Baldwin L and Booth N (eds) 1st ed. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

- Bradford L (2016) My family was traumatised first by a murder, then by the TV serialisation. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/02/the-secret-my-family-traumatised-murder-tv-drama-bereaved>.
- Braithwaite J, Coglianese C and Levi-Faur D (2007) Can regulation and governance make a difference? *Regulation and Governance* 1(1): 1–7.
- Brannelly T and Barnes M (2022) *Researching with Care: Applying Feminist Care Ethics to Research Practice*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Braun V and Clarke V (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77–101.
- Brosnan L (2019) “The Lion’s Den”: The epistemic dimensions of invisible emotional labour in service-user involvement spaces. *Journal of Ethics in Mental Health* 10: 1–16.
- Brown M (2012) Social documentary in prison: The art of catching the state in the act of punishment. In: Cheliotis P (ed) *The Arts of Imprisonment: Control, Resistance and Empowerment*. vol. 1. Farnham: Ashgate, 99–116.
- Brown M (2014) Visual criminology and carceral studies: Counter-images in the carceral age. *Theoretical Criminology* 18(2): 176–197.
- Buck G, Tomczak P and Quinn K (2022) This is how it feels: Activating lived experience in the penal voluntary sector. *The British Journal of Criminology* 62(4): 822–839.
- Butler J (2021) *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*. London, UK: Verso.
- Calls from home (2023) About. Available at: <https://www.callsfromhomefilm.com/about>.
- Cook EA (2021) Motherhood, moral authority and the charismatic matriarch in the aftermath of lethal violence. *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 21(3): 353–368.
- Cooper F (2012) *Professional Boundaries in Social Work and Social Care: A Practical Guide to Understanding, Maintaining and Managing Your Professional Boundaries*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Corlett S and Mavin S (2017) Reflexivity and researcher positionality. In: Cassell C, Grandy G and Cunliffe AL (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods*. London, UK: Sage, 377–399.
- Corston J (2007) *The Corston Report: A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Home Office.
- Costa L, Voronka J, Landry D, et al. (2012) “Recovering our stories”: A small act of resistance. *Studies in Social Justice* 6(1): 85–101.
- Denscombe M (2021) *The Good Research Guide: Research Methods for Small-Scale Social Research Projects* (7th ed.). London, UK: Open University Press.
- de Smet S, Rousseau C, Stalpaert C, et al. (2019) A qualitative analysis of coping with trauma and exile in applied theatre with Syrian refugees: The role of within-group interactions. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 66: 101587.
- Douglas K and Carless D (2020) The long run: A story about filmmaking as qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 26(3–4): 281–290.
- Fazel S, Ramesh T and Hawton K (2017) Suicide in prisons: An international study of prevalence and contributory factors. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 4(12): 946–952.
- Fenge LA, Oakley L, Taylor B, et al. (2019) The Impact of Sensitive Research on the Researcher: Preparedness and Positionality. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18: 1–8.
- Finley S (2008) Arts-based research. In: Knowles JG and Cole AL (eds) *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*. London, UK: Sage, 71–82.
- Franzen S (2013) Engaging a specific, not general, public: The use of ethnographic film in public scholarship. *Qualitative Research* 13(4): 414–427.

- Freire P (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Reprint, London: Penguin. 1996.
- Fricker M (2013) Epistemic justice as a condition of political freedom? *Synthese (Dordrecht)* 190(7): 1317–1332.
- Furman R, Lietz C and Langer CL (2006) The research poem in international social work: Innovations in qualitative methodology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5(3): 24–34.
- Gould M, Jamieson P and Romer D (2003) Media contagion and suicide among the young. *American Behavioral Scientist* 46(9): 1269–1284.
- Gray J and Kontos P (2019) Working at the margins: Theatre, social science and radical political engagement. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 24(3): 402–407.
- Greene M (2014) On the inside looking in: Methodological insights and challenges in conducting qualitative insider research. *Qualitative Report* 19(29): 1–13.
- HMPPS (His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service) (October 2023) Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to September 2023 Assaults and Self-harm to June 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-june-2023/safety-in-custody-statistics-england-and-wales-deaths-in-prison-custody-to-september-2023-assaults-and-self-harm-to-june-2023>.
- House of Commons report: Committee of Public Accounts (2022) Secure training centres and secure schools Thirteenth Report of Session 2022–23. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/23082/documents/171302/default/>.
- Howard League (2024) *Howard League responds to safety in custody statistics*. Available at: <https://howardleague.org/news/howard-league-responds-to-safety-in-custody-statistics-2/>
- Huss E and Bos E (2018) *Art in Social Work Practice: Theory and Practice: International Perspectives*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Isobel S (2021) Trauma-informed qualitative research: Some methodological and practical considerations. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 30: 1456–1469.
- Jackson W, McGowan W and Murray E (2023) Criminological activism: Examining the potential of collaboration and coproduction between socially engaged art and critical criminology. In: *The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 49–62.
- Jarldorn M (2016) What can ruby do with a camera? Ex-prisoners use photovoice to reverse the rules of surveillance. *Qualitative Social Work* 15(2): 209–230.
- Johanson K and Glow H (2019) Reinstating the artist's voice: Artists' perspectives on participatory projects. *Journal of Sociology (Melbourne, Vic.)* 55(3): 411–425.
- Kara H, Lemon N, Mannay D, et al. (2021) *Creative Research Methods in Education: Principles and Practices*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Karstedt S, Loader I and Strang H (2011) *Emotions, Crime and Justice*. Portland, USA: Hart.
- Katila S, Meriläinen S and Bell E (2023) Introduction to the handbook of feminist research methodologies in management and organization studies. In: Katila, S., Meriläinen, S., & Bell, E. (Eds.). (2023). *Handbook of Feminist Research Methodologies in Management and Organization Studies*. Gloucester, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1–23.
- Kelly D and Potter J (2023) Professional boundary violations in prisons: A scoping review of the literature. *Journal of Criminal Psychology* 13(3): 190–208.
- Kiegelmann M (2009) Making oneself vulnerable to discovery. Carol Gilligan in conversation with Mechthild Kiegelmann. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 10(2): 1–19.
- Lenette C and Boddy J (2013) Visual ethnography and refugee women: Nuanced understandings of lived experiences. *Qualitative Research Journal* 13(1): 72–89.
- Loots L (2016) The autoethnographic act of choreography: Considering the creative process of storytelling with and on the performative dancing body and the use of verbatim theatre methods. *Critical Arts* 30(3): 376–391.

- Lorde A (1977) The transformation of silence into language and action. In: Lorde A (2017) (ed.) *Your Silence will not protect you*, 81–84. London, UK: Silver Press.
- Macbeth D (2001) On “reflexivity” in qualitative research: Two readings, and a third. *Qualitative Inquiry* 7(1): 35–68.
- Maruna S and Liem M (2021) Where is this story going? A critical analysis of the emerging field of narrative criminology. *Annual Review of Criminology* 4: 125–146.
- Marzano L, Adler JR and Ciclitira K (2015) Responding to repetitive, non-suicidal self-harm in an English male prison: Staff experiences, reactions, and concerns. *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 20(2): 241–254.
- Medical Research Council (MRC) (2021) Identifiability, anonymisation and pseudonymisation. Available at: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/MRC-291121-GDPR-Identifiability-Anonymisation-Pseudonymisation.pdf>
- Merrill E and Frigon S (2015) Performative criminology and the “state of play” for theatre with criminalized women. *Societies* 5(2): 295–313.
- Moncur W (2013, April) The emotional wellbeing of researchers: considerations for practice. In: Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems, (pp. 1883–1890).
- Murray E, Davies K and Gee E (2019) The separate system? A conversation on collaborative artistic practice with veterans-in-prison. In: Lippens R and Murray E (eds). *Representing the Experience of War and Atrocity*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 179–201.
- O’Connor R (2021) *When It is Darkest: Why People Die by Suicide and What We can Do to Prevent It*. London, UK: Random House.
- Ogston-Tuck S, Baume K, Clarke C, et al. (2016) Understanding the patient experience through the power of film: A mixed method research study. *Nurse Education Today* 46: 69–74.
- Paget D (2010) Acts of commitment: Activist arts, the rehearsed reading, and documentary theatre. *New Theatre Quarterly* 26(2): 173–193.
- Patton D, Best D, Pula P, et al. (2023) The culture of recovery: An antidote to coloniality. *Addiction Criminology* 6(5): 166.
- Peters E (2012) I blame the mother: Educating parents and the gendered nature of parenting orders. *Gender and Education* 24(1): 119–130.
- Pitman A, Osborn D, King M, et al. (2014) Effects of suicide bereavement on mental health and suicide risk. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 1(1): 86–94.
- PRT (Prison Reform Trust) (2019) *Prison Factfile. Winter 2019*. London: PRT.
- Quinn K, Tomczak P and Buck G (2022) “How you keep going”: Voluntary sector practitioners’ story-lines as emotion work. *The British Journal of Sociology* 73(2): 370–386.
- Redmon D (2018) Video methods, green cultural criminology, and the anthropocene: SANCTUARY as a case study. *Deviant Behavior* 39(4): 495–511.
- Ricchiardi S (2021) *Humanising Data: Connecting Numbers and People*. European Journalism Centre. Available at: <https://datajournalism.com/read/longreads/humanising-data-connecting-numbers-and-people>.
- Rossiter K, Kontos P, Colantonio A, et al. (2008) Staging data: Theatre as a tool for analysis and knowledge transfer in health research. *Social Science & Medicine* 66(1): 130–146.
- Roy A, Kennelly J, Rowley H, et al. (2021) A critical discussion of the use of film in participatory research projects with homeless young people: An analysis based on case examples from England and Canada. *Qualitative Research* 21(6): 957–974.
- Ryerson S (2023) Abolitionist Media in Carceral Geographies: Calls from Home and the Fight to Stop a Prison. *Antipode*. [https://antipodeonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/10/Film-review\\_Brown-on-Ryerson-3.pdf](https://antipodeonline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/10/Film-review_Brown-on-Ryerson-3.pdf)
- Schulz S, Rigney LI, Zembylas M, et al. (2024) Affect and the force of counter stories: Learning racial literacy through thinking and feeling. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 32(5): 1307–1324.

- Silvén Hagström A (2020) Based theater and “stigmatized trauma”: The case of suicide bereavement. *Frontiers in Psychology* 11: 1129.
- Tartaro C (2021) *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology: A Text and Reader* (1st ed.). Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Taylor D (2023) The tragedy of Rianna and baby Aisha: Why a teenager gave birth all alone in a prison cell. *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/aug/02/the-tragedy-of-rianna-and-baby-aisha-cleary-teenager-gave-birth-all-alone-in-a-prison-cell>.
- Tomczak P (2018) *Prison Suicide: What Happens Afterwards?* Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Tomczak P (2020) Prison Regulation, for Safer Societies. UKRI FLF grant. <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=MR%2FT019085%2F1>.
- Tomczak P (2022) Reconceptualizing multisectoral prison regulation: Voluntary organizations and bereaved families as regulators. *Theoretical Criminology* 26(3): 494–514.
- Turner-King R (2019) Questioning collaborative devising in a post-truth era: Crafting theatre with youth. *Youth Theatre Journal* 33(2): 94–106.
- Turner J (2014) Being young in the age of globalization: A look at recent literature on neoliberalism’s effects on youth. *Social Justice* 41(4 (138)): 8–22.
- Tyler I (2020) *Stigma Machine: Inequality and the Politics of Shame*. Zed Books.
- Vannini P and Vannini AS (2020) Artisanal ethnography: Notes on the making of ethnographic craft. *Qualitative Inquiry* 26(7): 865–874.
- van Zyl Smit D (2010) Regulation of prison conditions. *Crime and Justice* 39(1): 503–563.
- Warr J (2012) Afterword. In: Crewe B and Bennett J (eds) *The Prisoner*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 142–148.
- Wiles R, Clark A and Prosser J (2011) Visual research ethics at the crossroads. In: Margolis E and Pauwels L (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods*. London, UK: Sage, 685–706.
- Zou W, Tang L and Bie B (2022) The stigmatization of suicide: A study of stories told by college students in China. *Death Studies* 46(9): 2035–2045.