POLSKA AKADEMIA NAUK • INSTYTUT NAUK PRAWNYCH

ZAKŁAD KRYMINOLOGII

ARCHIWUM KRYMINOLOGII

Archives of Criminology

PL ISSN 0066-6890

DOI 10.7420/AK2024.07

2024 • 46(2) • 181–196

Andrzej Uhl ■

Why study the imprisoned middle class?*

Po co badać więźniów z klasy średniej?

Abstract: This essay asks how consideration of middle-class prisoners can elucidate assumptions and blind spots of mainstream prison research. Prisoner experience has recently been studied at the intersection of gender, race, religion, citizenship and other categories. Nevertheless, nothing similar has been done with regard to socioeconomic status. Once an individual has crossed the threshold of a prison, his or her class is no longer of interest to a criminologist. As a result, it has been taken for granted that a prisoner is proletarian, and little attention has been paid to those who transition into the carceral world from a background of privilege. However, middle-class prisoners do exist, and considering their experiences can further our understanding of prison. For instance, the middle class's adaptation to carceral settings could inform the perennial deprivation/importation debate or challenge the dominant notions of rehabilitation. The essay concludes with a case for broadening the research agenda.

Keywords: middle-class prisoners, prison sociology, class, importation, deprivation, rehabilitation

Abstrakt: Ten esej jest próbą odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak badania nad więźniami z klasy średniej mogą przyczynić się do lepszego zrozumienia doświadczeń więziennych jako takich. Studia penitencjarne w ostatnich latach wielokrotnie skupiały się na przedstawicielach różnorakich grup społecznych, etnicznych i religijnych, ale podobnych badań nie przeprowadzono, jeśli chodzi o różnice klasowe pomiędzy więźniami. Dlatego też nasza wiedza koncentruje się wokół więźniów o niskim statusie społeczno-ekonomicznym i bardzo niewiele wiadomo o doświadczeniach tych, którzy do zakładów karnych trafiają z innych środowisk społecznych. Mamy jednak do czynienia z więźniami z klasy średniej i badając ich sytuację, możemy lepiej zrozumieć, jak działa więzienie. W szczególności warto zadać pytanie, czy normy i wartości charakterystyczne dla tej klasy sprawdzają się w warunkach penitencjarnych, a także – jak należałoby rozumieć resocjalizację tej nietypowej grupy więźniów.

Słowa kluczowe: więźniowie z klasy średniej, socjologia więzienna, klasa społeczna, importacja, deprywacja, resocjalizacja

* I gratefully thank Daria Przybylska for her insightful comments on the manuscript and for inspiring me to venture into prison sociology.

Andrzej Uhl, University of Cambridge and St John's College, United Kingdom, au274@cam.ac.uk, ORCID: 0000-0002-3408-9766

This essay is dedicated to Professor Krzysztof Krajewski on the occasion of his retirement

❧

> Do you know who we are? Do you have any idea how we have lived—in pavilions where everything was covered in lapis and malachite, and where we slept on down while select servants scratched the soles of our feet? What shall become of us in this pit? They have put us into a bare room, where we have been sitting since before daybreak behind bolted doors, and no one pays us any attention. The heart's curse upon Zawi-Rê! There is nothing, nothing, nothing here. We have no mirror, we have no razor, we have no rouge box, we have no bath! Do you have a soul that can respond to our state, for it cries out to high heaven?
>
> Thomas Mann, *Joseph the Provider*, 1943/2005

In the passage referred to above, the German Nobel laureate sketches a most unusual situation: an encounter in a prison cell on the Nile among three men who, by modern standards, can be described as respectable, high-ranking professionals. The main character, Joseph, is a former overseer of a large private estate, whilst his cellmates descended straight from the pinnacles of state power. In the ensuing conversation, the latter complain about their abject degradation and cling to their previous non-criminal self-images. The pious Hebrew, on the contrary, adopts an optimistic stance and soon wins the favour of the warden.

With astonishing precision, the literary world of Zawi-Rê reflects the condition of a category of prisoners which only began to attract academic interest 40 years later. Even today, a middle-class[1] prisoner experiences an acute shock and abrupt relative deprivation upon entrance (Button et al. 2020), but later overcomes the personal crisis by denying the criminal label (Benson, Cullen 1988) and winning over the staff (Dhami 2007). Beyond these few ethnographic insights confirming Thomas Mann's intuitions, however, little is known about this unusual category; most research attends only to imprisoned white-collar offenders. This gap can only partially be explained by the criminal justice system focussing disproportionately on crime in the lower social strata.

Against this backdrop, I discuss the conspicuous absence of class in prison sociology and illustrate how this gap manifests in the insufficient attention to prisoners with atypical socioeconomic backgrounds: the imprisoned middle class. This is followed by a negative literature review, documenting the scarcity of research on middle-class prisoners within mainstream prison sociology. Sections on importation/deprivation and rehabilitation demonstrate how the field's major themes could be better understood with more scholarly focus on middle-class prisoners. The concluding section outlines possible directions for empirical inquiry.

[1] Or, for that matter, an upper-class prisoner.

The "classless" state of prison sociology?

In the last two decades, a major part of penological research has been driven by the assumption that the ways in which individuals experience prison is greatly shaped by their identities and social characteristics. This diversified research programme promises to "deepen our understanding of the prison experience itself, whilst reminding us that imprisonment is different for different people in different institutions" (Ievins 2012: 5). To illuminate the blind spots and assumptions of mainstream prison sociology, researchers have inquired into racial (Cheliotis, Liebling 2006; Earle, Phillips 2015) and gendered (Crewe, Hulley, Wright 2017) experiences of incarceration. Specific categories such as former soldiers (Logan, Pare 2016) or elderly prisoners (Mann 2016) have likewise received a share of scholarly attention, so that prison sociology has ceased to view its subject population as a shapeless monolith.

However, nothing similar has been done with regard to *social class*. The interest in carceral subpopulations came some time after class virtually disappeared from criminology's horizons, as Michael J. Lynch (2015) bemoans. The discipline, he adds, has returned to a stage of development "where class is no longer seen as a relevant theoretical or empirical concern" (Lynch 2015: 65). Roger Matthews (2017: 584) similarly writes that "references to social class amongst criminologists have become very unfashionable." In particular, "criminology tends to ignore its middle-class" and focusses on lower-class crime and criminals by default (Singer 2017). The aim of this essay is to challenge this approach within prison sociology.[2]

Unlike Michael J. Lynch, I follow the Bourdieusian, not Marxian, definition of class as not only one's economic standing, but also one's social capital (network of friends and family), cultural assets (such as knowledge, manners, or formal education) and symbolic resources (e.g. respect and recognition) (Bourdieu 1983). There is a significant advantage to this broader framing: some imprisoned individuals might have lost their pre-prison fortunes, but their experience is still shaped by a middle-class "habitus" – "a system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same class" (Bourdieu 1977: 86). Within this framework, it is possible to conceive of a middle-class prisoner, who can then be compared against prisoners of other social classes.

Introducing the imprisoned middle-class

The study of social class in prison necessarily involves the study of middle- or upper-class prisoners. It seems that penology has either ignored the issue or has assumed prisoners' class affiliation to be a sort of constant – i.e. invariably lower-class.

[2] There is, of course, a body of literature on class disparities in who goes into prison (Pettit, Western 2004) and whose class interests it generally serves (Rusche, Kirchheimer 1939; Wacquant 2009). However, once an offender is imprisoned, their class is no longer of interest to penologists.

The proletarian prisoner is a given and the knowledge about them is assumed to be universal. Just as gender-blind prison sociology is often "blindly dominated by assumptions about what is relevant to men" (Liebling 2009: 22), the omission of class confines our knowledge to the lower-class majority. This is, of course, somewhat counterintuitive. Outside prison, the professional class is all too often the "default" – consider the recent transition to remote work that was ceaselessly discussed in the media, but actually concerned only the already privileged, office-based fraction of the workforce (Sostero et al. 2020). In this respect, the carceral world inverts the reality beyond it; this "warehouse of the poor" (Wright, Herivel 2003) and functional doppelgänger of a ghetto (Wacquant 2001) is not a place where the complacent middle class can further enjoy their familiar hegemony. The question then arises as to how representatives of the ruling social classes fare within the alien world of prison, disproportionally populated by the underprivileged segments of society (Uhl 2023).

Despite what could be inferred from their relative absence from prison scholarship, there are middle-class prisoners. In the absence of direct indicators of their prevalence, we may rely on indirect estimates. The 1991 national prison survey identified 18% of the prison population in England and Wales (over 8,000 individuals) as social class I, II or III – that is, coming from professional, intermediate and skilled non-manual occupations (Walmsley, Howard, White 1992). This data is largely outdated and presented as an aggregate, but the three groups roughly correspond with the broadly defined middle class and accounted for 45% of the general population at that time. Educational achievement serves as another proxy; in 2014, one in twenty American prisoners held an undergraduate diploma and 1% had completed some postgraduate degree – more or less 78,000 and 15,000 people, respectively (Rampey et al. 2016). Then, there are personal accounts, such as that of the imprisoned filmmaker Chris Atkins. Recalling his time in an English facility, he noted that "some wings were full of white, educated criminals convicted of offences such as fraud and computer hacking" (cited in Lewis 2020).

One could ask how middle-class individuals wind up in prison in the first place. Some of those who transition from a background of privilege into the carceral world are indeed from the ranks of white-collar offenders and cybercriminals, whose crimes require specialised knowledge. Further variance in class is added by the perpetrators of fatal road accidents, who rarely match the stereotype of an offender.[3] But traditional crimes such as murder are also committed by the privileged social strata (Green, Wakefield 1979) and even top defence lawyers cannot keep every middle-class offender out of prison (Reiman, Leighton 2020). As this paper argues below, the question of class in prison cannot be limited to any particular type of crime – white-collar crime included. The next section shows how mainstream, and indeed even sidestream, prison sociology lacks substantial accounts of middle-class imprisonment.

[3] A middle-class background is also common among individuals convicted of sex offences (Ievins 2012).

A penological lacuna

This lack is particularly evident in major prison ethnographies that have left an indelible imprint on the discipline. Imprisoned middle-class people are absent from, for example, Gresham Sykes' (1958) "Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison" and James Jacobs' (1977) "Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society". Others mention those unusual prisoners only in passing: Erving Goffman (1961: 31) remarks that the affronts of institutional life might be most keenly felt by middle-class individuals, whereas Ben Crewe (2009) mentions how white-collar prisoners were situated somewhat outside the prisoner hierarchy. Interestingly, one of his interviewees captured the shared social background of a prison researcher and another prisoner, a middle-class man, saying: "I'm not being funny or anything, but he's more like you than what he is us" (Crewe 2019: 286).

This intriguing observation warrants further reflection. The similarity between a prison ethnographer and an educated prisoner is not necessarily superficial. Many imprisoned middle-class individuals assume the role of lay sociologists and use the abundance of time to reflect upon the imprisoned community (Benson, Cullen 1988). Some later turn into professional social scientists,[4] as with the case of a detained mathematics and sociology student, Marek Kamiński (2004), whose misadventures inspired the now-classic game theory analysis of prison subculture. Many gain profound insights into the social life of prisons and some publish their thoughts upon release (see Crewe 2009: 289). Under some circumstances, these indigenous observers of the carceral world might prove powerful allies to anyone who wants to understand and theorise prisons. However, except for Ben Hunter's (2012) analysis of memoirs by formerly imprisoned businesspeople, few academics have seriously engaged with the middle class's own accounts of prison.

Such incuriousness is all the more surprising given that the issue has been fully embraced outside academia. The fêted prison film "Shawshank Redemption" (1994) tells the story of a banker-turned-prisoner, whilst in the last scenes of Scorsese's 2013 masterpiece, we hear the eponymous "Wolf of Wall Street" recount his years behind bars. The press likewise treat such unusual prisoners with watchful interest (De Mauri 2020; Lewis 2020) and profit-seeking entrepreneurship follows suit: the emerging industry of prison consultancies now monetises the anxiety of middle-class individuals awaiting custody by offering both practical and legal advice for hefty amounts (Hitt 2022). This makes it all the more conspicuous that the single piece of scholarly research dedicated exclusively to middle-class prisoners is a dated, half-page psychological report by Wayne Wooden and Alex Ballan (1996).

In addition, there is a growing body of literature on imprisoned white-collar offenders. This strand of research has been furthered mostly by authors with expertise

[4] And so do some working-class prisoners with spectacular results (e.g. Irwin 1970). However, their application of the academic lens is retrospective. Contrast this with Marek Kamiński (2004), who theorised imprisonment in real time, even leading his cellmates to suspect he was an undercover criminologist. Ultimately, both perspectives are immensely valuable.

in white-collar crime rather than prison sociology (Benson, Cullen 1988; Payne 2003; Stadler, Benson, Cullen 2013; Button et al. 2020; cf. Dhami 2007). As a result, their findings are rarely integrated into the broader body of scholarship on imprisonment. Instead of fully engaging with the classed experience of imprisonment, these authors often focus on a "blunt optic" around the presence or lack of the elite's "special sensitivity" to imprisonment (Button et al. 2020: 1586), which in itself is a concept derived from research on white-collar crime (Mann, Wheeler, Sarat 1979). Oftentimes, interviews conducted in prisons focus on crime and conviction, rather than the lived experience of imprisonment (e.g. Cressey 1953; Jordanoska 2018). Not surprisingly, there is little dialogue between these studies and the penological mainstream; even the most prominent publications (Benson, Cullen 1988; Logan et al. 2019) have been almost exclusively cited by other white-collar crime scholars (Google Scholar 2024). I conclude that studies of incarcerated white-collar offenders have not earned a broad readership in prison sociology.

Even if they had, a focus on a specific offender category does not always equal engagement with classed prison experience. Firstly, many of these studies use official ("offence-based"; Edelhertz 1970) operationalisations of white-collar crime that are detached from the notion of class and privilege, which has been termed "definitional trivialisation" of the original Sutherlandian (Sutherland 1983) concept (Pontel 2016). If white-collar crime is equated with fraud, the researcher often ends up with a sample of recidivist scam artists or petty fraudsters, who tell us little about the "imprisoned elite" these studies often (explicitly or implicitly) set out to research. Several scholars avoided definitional trivialisation by sampling high-status white-collar offenders (Willot, Griffin, Torrance 2001; Goldstraw-White 2012; Logan et al. 2019), and indeed, social status was shown to serve as a conduit for better prison adjustment among imprisoned professionals (Logan et al. 2024). Secondly, however, not every middle-class prisoner is serving time for economic crimes. White-collar offenders' experience might not be fully indicative of what their class-based peers convicted of traditional offences go through. At best, the study of imprisoned white-collar offenders offers insight into a specific subgroup, limited to certain offences and heterogenous in terms of class composition.

Lastly, much has been written about those who adhere to conventional values and avoid prison subculture whilst incarcerated, be it so-called "square johns" (Sykes 1958) or "enthusiasts" (Crewe 2009). John Irwin (1970: 32) links the emergence of this category to "many persons convicted of felonies who are members of working-class or middle-class strata". Certainly, the middle class's greater stake in conformity might facilitate "pro-social" adaptations to imprisonment. They find it easier to assume non-criminal identity, avoid conflicts and follow the established rules (Benson, Cullen 1988). However, we cannot forget that "square john" is an adaptation style and not a pre-existing habitus. In fact, many supporters of prison's correctional ideology are former drug addicts who only converted to middle-class values inside prison (Crewe 2009). Conversely, some educated prisoners might tenaciously oppose institutional power through non-violent means, such as querulous complaints. It is

therefore not legitimate to equate "square johns" with the imprisoned middle class. This line of research, however important, does not close the identified gap.

In sum, the imprisoned middle class constitute a blind spot of mainstream prison sociology. They are a qualitatively distinct, but thus far underexamined subpopulation. As the review above shows, the extant literature does not illuminate their experience in the nuanced manner found in the research on many other "unusual" prisoners. Given the centrality of class in the social experience, this is not an inconsequential omission. The remainder of this paper utilises the framework of deprivation and importation to show how the inclusion of middle-class offenders can inform our understanding of imprisonment.

Deprivation, importation and the middle-class prisoner

For decades, the penological mainstream has been shaped by two distinct perspectives on prison culture and adaptation. On the one hand, the deprivation theory posits that the experience of imprisonment is shaped by the unique "pains of imprisonment" suffered by anyone who enters the strange world of prisons. These include deprivation of goods and services, autonomy and personal security (Sykes 1958). Sykes did not wonder who prisoners had been before they put on the striped uniform of New Jersey State Prison; he only allowed them to vary in their differential responses to carceral pains, classified as argot roles. Any mentions of external factors are "tentative or tokenistic" (Crewe 2016: 80). Although few authors fully subscribe to Sykes' agnosticism regarding prisoners' background, his main focus on what prison does to people had purchase in the later development of the discipline, as evidenced by Erving Goffman's (1961) assertion that the pre-institutional self is erased by a series of degradation ceremonies upon entry. On the other hand, John Irwin (1970) formulated what was later termed the importation model. Departing from observed similarities between prison culture and criminal subculture outside prison, he and Donald Cressey (Irwin, Cressey 1962) stressed the importance of what convicts bring with them into correctional facilities. What if prison life is conditional upon the developments outside the criminal justice system? What if a prisoner's plight is but an extension of what they suffered outside the walls of prison: addiction, mental illness, violence – or perhaps all of these things?

In terms of deprivation, later scholarship has jettisoned Sykes' disregard for prisoners' backgrounds and acknowledged that imprisonment can be significantly more painful for some than for others (Liebling 1992). Various authors have formulated category-specific pains of imprisonment on top of the classic enumerations (see Haggerty, Bucerius (2020) for a critical review). This begs the question of whether middle-class imprisonment is related to additional pains in need of discovery. Some judges, for instance, believe that a white-collar convict would hardly survive under a prison regime, and their arguments easily extend to

middle-class in general: the middle-class offender is neither accustomed to prison as an institution nor familiar with the criminal subculture present there; they are used to a higher standard of living, and already devastated by the trial itself (Mann, Wheeler, Sarat 1979). Although this so-called special sensitivity hypothesis has been empirically disproved (Logan et al. 2019), at least in its crudest form, there might be more subtle ways in which middle-class prisoners suffer pains unknown to others. In particular, they might experience double exclusion: their criminal label places them outside the law-abiding community, but they are still seen as total strangers by fellow prisoners they have little in common with. Stripped of their middle-class identities, they nonetheless find themselves "bungling amateurs" in the criminal world (Willot, Griffin, Torrance 2001: 458).

In terms of importation, what the middle class imports into prison might be best conceptualised through Pierre Bourdieu's (1983) notion of social, cultural and symbolic capital. As with habitus, capital is to some extent field-specific; some resources might be advantageous in certain social contexts but useless in others. In his later writings, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992) claims that the notion of capital is inseparable from the field concept. To study the workings of capital in prison is therefore to study the prison itself; what type of capital ensures domination there? Does successful adaptation require criminal connections, knowledge of the argot and working-class masculinity (cf. Crewe 2014)? Is middle-class status a source of alienation and derision, or does it earn the same recognition as outside due to its rarity and prestige? The answers to these questions can illuminate the relationship between broader society and prison, helping to assess competing visions of prison as an insulated "total" institution (Goffman 1961) or as a porous environment and a seismograph of broader societal trends (Jacobs 1977).

Furthermore, middle-class offenders bring assets which might function as complete game changers – take organisational experience for instance, which allows them to see prison as yet another "tameable" bureaucracy (Benson, Cullen 1988). Those who maintained good financial standing after conviction are likely to put it to use as much as the prison regime allows. Moreover, their knowledge might prove useful not to only other prisoners (i.e. through formal writing skills) but also to the facility (Button et al. 2020); Helen Lewis (2020) mentions how imprisoned businesspeople help "keep the place running". This might enable adaptation styles that include dialogue with institutional power on more equal terms than those available to most prisoners. By this, I mean something more than the fraternisation that sometimes occurs between inexperienced guards and traditional offenders (Crewe 2011). The background shared with senior prison staff, psychologists, social workers and chaplains might even lead to the blurring of the seemingly insurmountable divide between the captives and their custodians, something that prison sociology assumes whilst writing on "two cultures" within a total institution (Goffman 1961).

In terms of both deprivation and importation, it has been argued that "the concept of social class is particularly important when examining variation in prison adjustment" (Logan, Olma 2020: 296). Importation and deprivations are

hard to disentangle if the population under study are street offenders only, but educated and affluent prisoners might offer some necessary variation in class and conventional capital. Examining their experience could therefore help better assess the various visions of prison, all of which were formed with only street offenders in mind. This problem can be visualised as two perpendicular axes, one representing the severity of deprivations and the other the relative value of imported assets. Starting from the deprivations axis, we see a solid body of evidence for differential experiences of those imprisoned in various prison regimes (e.g. Haney 2003; Mjåland et al. 2021). Comparative studies have been conducted in facilities ranging from "light", open Norwegian prisons to the "heavy" American supermax, not to mention other dimensions such as "depth" and "tightness" (Crewe 2011). Turning to the importation axis, however, one notices that researchers' attention is understandably skewed towards low values, such as prisoners with mental health issues, drug addiction or other vulnerabilities (Birmingham et al. 2000; Small et al. 2005), with privileged offenders being omitted from the picture. Projected on the deprivation axis it is almost as if prison researchers – hypothetically – decided to ignore open facilities as an anomaly, visiting high- and medium-security ones only, and passing a judgement of imprisonment based exclusively on their observations of these places. If conventional resources do aid successful prison adaptation (see above), then the oversight of class appears to be an important omission.

Rehabilitation

In terms of rehabilitation, a concept saturated with assumptions regarding a lower-class prisoner in need of therapy, schooling and vocational training, what can be offered to a university diploma holder with a record of stable employment who might have even used their knowledge to commit crimes in the course of their occupation? Under the direction of Krzysztof Krajewski, I have previously grappled with the question of what, if any, the rehabilitative function of imprisonment for white-collar convicts could be (Uhl 2020). Indeed, they attribute some transformative potential to the time spent reflecting on their past lives, helping less fortunate inmates and improving relations with their families (Button et al. 2020; Sun 2022). Since all of these occur outside the formal frames of the rehabilitative regime, it remains unclear what role, if any, the institution should play in the self-improvement of middle-class prisoners? That same question had been puzzling Sergio Ruiz, a Spanish prison psychiatrist, who also noted the dearth of research on the middle class in the criminal justice system:

> Dr. Ruiz explained he had been surprised at the outset when he searched the scientific literature and found almost nothing on rehabilitating white collar criminals. Psychiatrists had studied murderers ad nauseam, […] but few had ever bothered to get inside the mind of the shady functionary who swindled the public garbage fund. (Casey 2021)

The solution he devised combines elements of offender therapy and restorative justice with measures to instil humility and countervail moral disengagement (Ministerio del Interior 2021). In 2021, more than 2,000 prisoners were signed up for this unprecedented intervention (Casey 2021), and many students of white-collar crime are anxious to learn about the results of the programme, as it evidently addresses an important gap in the societal reaction to elite offending.

This gap is easier to document than to explain, since there are now programmes for multiple prisoner subpopulations tailored to their individual needs (Day et al. 2006). It has finally been noticed that the imprisonment of middle-class offenders, often necessary on the grounds of justice and fairness, can easily produce a number of frustrated inmates lingering in correctional facilities that have nothing to offer them, or still worse, subject them to an infantilising regime of one-size-fit-all rehabilitation (cf. Mason 2007). My own interlocutors – politicians and businesspeople who served time for white-collar crime in Polish prisons – could not have been more clear about this institutional failure; they were given unsolicited advice on their perfectly functional family lives or repeatedly encouraged to take up drug and alcohol therapy despite showing no symptoms of substance abuse. If criminological research and criminal justice agencies continue to shy away from middle-class prisoners, such counterproductive practices are likely to continue. Here too, there is no need to fix our gaze on middle-class individuals imprisoned for crimes in business and political life to the exclusion of their peers serving time for conventional offences.

Moreover, some imprisoned middle-class individuals prefer to think of themselves as conveyors rather than recipients of rehabilitation. Whilst sceptical of interventions directed at themselves, people I have met recounted having at times mentored their less fortunate cellmates: typically imprisoned adolescents whose needs could hardly be met by the limited rehabilitative capacities of prison.[5] They engaged in intimate one-on-one conversations outside the institutional context, painted alternatives to the life of crime and set a counterweight to the prison subculture that otherwise lured many a young prisoner on search for validation and a sense of belonging. Temporarily sharing living conditions with people whom they would rarely encounter outside prison, these middle-class men enjoyed more trust from their cellmates than psychologists or other professionals affiliated with the facility normally do. As one of the reviewers noted, "their contribution to helping other prisoners [could] be viewed as a restorative element, the way they help society in a more general sense". Should their accounts be true, these unusual prisoners could be playing another important role in the prisoner community, be it informally or hand in hand with the staff.

[5] For methodology, see Andrzej Uhl (2023).

Outlook

Several avenues for future work emerge from this landscape. To begin with, we should, but currently do not, know the exact socioeconomic composition of the prison population. Naturally, class is harder to record than say race, but both are social constructs that eventually lend themselves to some forms of measurement. For instance, Bourdieu-inspired survey items could be applied in the context of prisons to see how their populations fit into the groupings identified by latent class analysis (Savage et al. 2013). Once we know how many middle-class individuals traverse the carceral world, we can begin to study this subpopulation systematically. Non-white-collar middle-class prisoners are an obvious candidate for ethnographic inquiry, as is the intersection of class and gender in correctional settings. A study of how social status and other class-related features predict successful prison adjustment has great potential to inform research and policy (Logan et al. 2024). At the micro-level, network analysis could be used to examine whether the presence of a middle-class individual in a cell or facility impacts other prisoners' disciplinary record, adaptation or perhaps even post-release performance.

For now, the aim of this essay was to argue that the inclusion of class, in particular the middle class, can rejuvenate prison sociology in a multitude of ways. I have focussed on empirical and theoretical aspects, but they also invite normative considerations. If the afflictions of the imprisoned middle-class individuals are no greater than those of their underprivileged cellmates, is sentencing practice justified in its avoidance of middle-class imprisonment? And is it desirable to involve these prisoners in the rehabilitation of others – as mentors for the incarcerated adolescents and co-organisers of the cultural life in prison? Nothing but speculation is possible as long as further inquiry produces reliable knowledge about the imprisoned middle class. Without knowing more about this distinct but under-researched prisoner category, criminologists will not only fail to address their special needs and realise their potential, but will also miss an opportunity to better understand imprisonment itself.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are also due to two anonymous reviewers who greatly helped to improve the arguments presented above.

Declaration of Conflict Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no specific funding for this work.

References

Benson M. and Cullen F.T. (1988). 'The special sensitivity of white-collar offenders to prison: A critique and research agenda.' *Journal of Criminal Justice* 16, pp. 207–215. https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2352(88)90049-9

Birmingham L., Gray J., Mason D., and Grubin D. (2000). 'Mental illness at reception into prison.' *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* 10(2), pp. 77–87. https://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.347

Bourdieu P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812507

Bourdieu P. (1983). *'Ökonomisches Kapital, soziales Kapital, kulturelles Kapital'* [Economic, social and cultural capital]. In R. Kreckel (ed.) *Soziale Ungleichheiten* [Social inequalities]. Göttingen: Otto Schwarz, pp. 183–193.

Bourdieu P. and Wacquant L. (1992). *An Invitation to Refexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Button M., Gough D., Shepherd D., and Blackbourn D. (2020). 'White collar criminals' experience of imprisonment in England and Wales: Revisiting the 'special sensitivity' debate.' *Deviant Behavior* 41(12), pp. 1585–1600. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2019.1635861

Cheliotis L. and Liebling A. (2006). 'Race matters in British prisons: Towards a research agenda.' *British Journal of Criminology* 46(2), pp. 286–317. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azi058

Cloyes K.G., Lovell D., Allen D.G., and Rhodes L.A. (2006). 'Assessment of psychosocial impairment in a supermaximum security unit sample.' *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 33(6), pp. 760–781. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854806288143

Cressey D. (1953). *Other People's Money: A Study of the Social Psychology of Embezzlement*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Crewe B. (2009). *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199577965.001.0001

Crewe B. (2011). 'Depth, weight, tightness: Revisiting the pains of imprisonment.' *Punishment & Society* 13(5), pp. 509–529. https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474511422172
Crewe B., Liebling A., and Hulley S. (2011). 'Staff culture, use of authority and prisoner quality of life in public and private sector prisons.' *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 44(1), pp. 94–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004865810392681
Crewe B. (2014). 'Not looking hard enough: Masculinity, emotion, and prison research.' *Qualitative Inquiry* 20(4), pp. 392–403. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413515829
Crewe B. (2016). *'The sociology of imprisonment.'* In Y. Jewkes, B. Crewe, and J. Bennett (eds.) *Handbook on Prisons*. London: Routledge, pp. 123–151.
Crewe B., Hulley S., and Wright S. (2017). 'The gendered pains of life imprisonment.' *British Journal of Criminology* 57(6), pp. 1359–1378. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azw088
Day A., Bryan J., Davey L., and Casey S. (2006). 'The process of change in offender rehabilitation programmes.' *Psychology, Crime & Law* 12(5), pp. 473–487. https://doi.org/10.1080/10683160500151209
Dhami M. (2007). 'White-collar prisoners' perceptions of audience reaction.' *Deviant Behavior* 28(1), pp. 57–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620600987475
Earle R. and Phillips C. (2015). *'Prison ethnography at the threshold of race, reflexivity and difference.'* In D.H. Drake, R. Earle, and J. Sloan (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 230–251. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137403889_13
Edelhertz H. (1970). *The Nature, Impact and Prosecution of White Collar Crime*. Washington: U.S. Department of Justice.
Goffman E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients*. Harmonds-Worth: Pelican.
Goldstraw-White J. (2012). *White-Collar Crime: Accounts of Offending Behaviour.* Palgrave Macmillan.
Green E. and Wakefield R.P. (1979). 'Patterns of middle and upper class homicide.' *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 70, pp. 172–180.
Haggerty K.D. and Bucerius S. (2020). 'The proliferating pains of imprisonment.' *Incarceration* 1(1), pp. 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/2632666320936432
Haney C. (2003). 'Mental health issues in long-term solitary and "supermax" confinement.' *Crime & Delinquency* 49(1), pp. 124–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128702239239
Hunter B. (2012). 'A contrast in lives? White-collar offenders in prison.' *Prison Service Journal* 199, pp. 29–31.
Ievins A. (2012). *Living Among Sex Offenders: Identity, Safety and Relationships at HMP Whatton*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, Institute of Criminology.
Irwin J. and Cressey D.R. (1962). 'Thieves, convicts and the inmate culture.' *Social Problems* 10(2), pp. 142–155. https://doi.org/10.2307/799047
Irwin J. (1970). *The Felon*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
Jacobs J.B. (1977). *Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Jordanoska A. (2018). 'The social ecology of white-collar crime: Applying situational action theory to white-collar offending.' *Deviant Behavior* 39(11), pp. 1427–1449. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2018.1479919

Kamiński M. (2004). *Games Prisoners Play. The Tragicomic Worlds of Polish Prison*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv39x71g

Liebling A. (1992). *Suicides in Prison*. London: Routledge.

Liebling A. (2009). 'Women in prison prefer legitimacy to sex.' *British Society of Criminology Newsletter* 63. Available online: https://www.britsoccrim.org/new/newdocs/bscn-63-2009-Liebling.pdf [10.07.2024].

Logan M.W., Morgan M.A., Long J.S., and Chio H.L. (2024). 'Sensitivity for thee, but not for me: The role of social status as a conduit for white-collar prison adjustment.' *Journal of Criminal Justice* 93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2024.102221

Logan M.W., Morgan M.A., Benson M.L., and Cullen F.T. (2019). 'Coping with imprison-ment: Testing the special sensitivity hypothesis for white-collar offenders.' *Justice Quarterly* 36(2), pp. 225–254. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1396488

Logan M.W. and Olma T. (2020). *'Separating popular myth from empirical reality: The white-collar prison experience.'* In M. Harmes, B. Harmes (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Incarceration in Popular Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 289–304. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36059-7_17

Logan M.W. and Pare P. (2016). 'Are inmates with military backgrounds "army strong?".' *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 28(8), pp. 814–841. https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403415623033

Lynch M.J. (2015). 'The classlessness state of criminology and why criminology without class is rather meaningless.' *Crime Law and Social Change* 63(1–2), pp. 65–90. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-015-9553-y

Mann K., Wheeler S., and Sarat A. (1979). 'Sentencing the white-collar offender.' *American Criminal Law Review* 17, pp. 479–500. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095694

Mann N. (2016). *'Older age, harder time: Ageing and imprisonment.'* In Y. Jewkes, B. Crewe, and J. Bennett (eds.) *Handbook on Prisons.* London: Routledge, pp. 514–528.

Mason K.A. (2007). 'Punishment and paperwork: White-collar offenders under community supervision.' *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 31, pp. 23–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-007-9001-3

Matthews R. (2017). 'False starts, wrong turns and dead ends: Reflections on recent develop-ments in criminology.' *Critical Criminology* 25(4), pp. 577–591. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-017-9372-9

Mjåland K., Laursen J., Schliehe A., and Larmour S. (2021). 'Contrasts in freedom: Comparing the experiences of imprisonment in open and closed prisons in England and Wales and Norway.' *European Journal of Criminology* 20(5), pp. 1641–1642. https://doi.org/10.1177/14773708211065905

Payne B.K. (2003). *Incarcerating White-Collar Offenders: The Prison Experience and Beyond*. Springfield: Charles Thomas Publisher.

Pettit B. and Western B. (2004). 'Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class inequality in US incarceration.' *American Sociological Review* 69(2), pp. 151–169. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/000312240406900201

Pontell H. (2016). *'Theoretical, empirical, and policy implications of alternative definitions of "white-collar crime": "Trivializing the lunatic crime rate".'* In M. Benson and S. van Slyke (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of White-Collar Crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 39–56. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199925513.013.3

Rampey B.D., Keiper S., Mohadjer L., Krenzke T., Li J., Thornton N., and Hogan J. (2016). *Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education, and Training. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies: 2014*. Washington: U.S. Department of Education.

Reiman J. and Leighton P. (2020). *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison. Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice*. New York: Routledge.

Rusche G. and Kirchheimer O. (1939). *Punishment and Social Structure*. New York: Russel & Russel.

Savage M., Devine F., Cunningham N., Taylor M., Li Y., Hjellbrekke J., Le Roux B., Friedman S., and Miles A. (2013). 'A new model of social class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey experiment.' *Sociology* 47(2), pp. 219–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513481128

Singer S. (2017). *Middle-Class Crime and Criminality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780195396607-0212

Small W., Kain S., Laliberte N., Schechter M.T., O'shaughnessy M.V., and Spittal P.M. (2005). 'Incarceration, addiction and harm reduction: Inmates experience injecting drugs in prison.' *Substance Use & Misuse* 40(6), pp. 831–843. https://doi.org/10.1081/JA-200030795

Sostero M., Milasi S., Hurley J., Fernandez-Macias E., and Bisello M. (2020). *Teleworkability and the COVID-19 Crisis: A New Digital Divide?*. Seville: European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC). Available online: https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/231337 [10.07.2024].

Stadler W.A., Benson M.L., and Cullen F.T. (2013). 'Revisiting the special sensitivity hypothesis: The prison experience of white-collar inmates.' *Justice Quarterly* 30(6), pp. 1090–1114. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2011.649296

Sun D. (2022). *What Will They Think of Me? Understanding the Experiences of White-Collar Inmates*. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati [doctoral dissertation].

Sutherland E. (1983). *White Collar Crime: The Uncut Version*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sykes G. (1958). *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14164hw

Uhl A. (2020). 'Punishing white-collar offenders. Theory and function.' *Archiwum Kryminologii* 42(2), pp. 27–47. https://doi.org/10.7420/AK2020Y

Uhl A. (2023). 'Carceral experiences of white-collar offenders: Qualitative research design utilising the offender-based definition and pierre bourdieu's capital theory.' *Crime, Law and Social Change* 79, pp. 129–151. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-022-10038-x

Wacquant L. (2001). 'Deadly symbiosis: When ghetto and prison meet and mesh.' *Punishment & Society* 3(1), pp. 95–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/14624740122228276
Wacquant L. (2009). *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Walmsley R., Howard L., and White S. (1992). *The National Prison Survey 1991: Main Findings*. London: Home Office.
Willot S., Griffin C., and Torrance M. (2001). 'Snakes and ladders: Upper-middle class male offenders talk about economic crime.' *Criminology 39*(2), pp. 441–446. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2001.tb00929.x
Wooden W.S. and Ballan A.O. (1996). 'Adaptation strategies and transient niches of one middle-class inmate in prison.' *Psychological Reports* 78(3), p. 870. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1996.78.3.870
Wright P. and Herivel T. (2013) *Prison Nation: The Warehousing of America's Poor*. New York: Routledge.

Internet sources

Casey N. (2021). *Spain Turns to Corruption Rehab for Officials Who Can't Stop Stealing*, Nytimes.com. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/world/europe/spain-corruption-rehab.html [10.07.2024].
De Mauri J.S. (2020). *I Had a Comfortable Middle-Class Life – Then I Was Jailed for Fraud*, Theguardian.com. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/commentisfree/2020/nov/20/i-had-a-comfortable-middle-class-life-then-i-was-jailed-for [10.07.2024].
Google Scholar (2024), Scholar.google.com. Available online: https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=12203483527175590 49&as_sdt=2005&sciodt=0,5&hl=de [10.07.2024].
Hitt J. (2022). *Want To Do Less Time? A Prison Consultant Might Be Able to Help*, Nytimes.com. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/07/magazine/prison-consultants-fixers.html [10.07.2024].
Lewis H. (2020). *In Britain, Even Jails Have a Class System: How a Filmmaker, Convicted of Fraud, Discovered the "White Collar Club"*, Theatlantic.com. Available online: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/02/jails-britain-chris-atkins-book/606730/ [10.07.2024].
Ministerio del Interior (2021). *Programa de intervención en delitos económicos PIDECO. Documentos Penitenciarios 28*, Interior.gob.es. Available online: https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/archivos-y-documentacion/documentacion-y-publicaciones/publicaciones-descargables/instituciones-penitenciarias/Programa_de_intervencion_en_delitos_economicos_PIDECO_126210489.pdf [10.07.2024].