

**Information on Postgraduate Research Project- Ref:**

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| **Faculty:** Education, Health and Human Sciences Department**:**  Human Sciences |
| **Lead Supervisor:** Dr Christian Perrin |
| **Project Title:** A Mixed Method Exploration of Circles of Support and Accountability for Individuals who have Previously Sexually Offended |

**Project Description:**

Reoffending after a prison sentence is the norm in the UK, with two-year reconviction rates as high as 63% (Yukhnenko, 2019). Prison does not promote desistance from offending behaviour, and the social costs of this cannot be understated. In contrast, stigmatisation and ostracism represent major risk factors for further offending. Ostracised individuals are less likely to cultivate core human needs such as connectedness, self-esteem, autonomy, and a sense of meaning and purpose (Perrin & Blagden, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2010). Individuals who fail to replenish these fundamental needs enter a ‘resignation stage’, characterised by the entrenchment of depression, helplessness, and withdrawal (Eisenberger et al., 2003). Theoretical and empirical links have been drawn between the resignation stage and all forms of recidivism (Gruter & Masters, 1986; Wilson, Bates & Völlm, 2010; Williams, 2007). As such, it can be argued that ostracism constitutes a dynamic risk factor for cycles of offending behaviour. This of course points to the need for community-based programmes which buffer the social isolation faced by returning ex-prisoners.

Circles of Support & Accountability (COSA) is a community-based initiative which provides an alternate means of social support to high-risk offenders released at the end of their sentences without any community supervision. Circles are comprised of the reintegrating ex-offender (known as the core member) and six community volunteers who provide emotional and practical support via weekly meetings which are managed by Circles UK, local police forces, and collaborating aftercare charities. The aim is to assist the core member in tackling the social and emotional obstacles that come with prison-community transition, thus reducing risk of reoffence. Emerging research into the efficacy of COSA report an 83% reduction in sexual recidivism, a 73% reduction in all types of violent recidivism, and an overall reduction of 71% in all types of recidivism in comparison to (ex)offenders not attached to a Circle (Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009). It is suggested that Circles act as a buffer for risk factors such as impulsivity, emotional dysregulation, helplessness, and social isolation (Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo & Cortoni (2007). However, little is known about the psychological mechanisms that connect core members to their Circles and how these interrelations might reduce risk. Theoretically, Circles as a rehabilitative program can be reconceptualised as an ostracism recovery intervention. There is great social impact in developing a deeper understanding of an initiative which purports to reduce crime by margins that no other implementation has achieved. Accordingly, this research adopts a mixed-method approach to interrogate the following research questions:

1. How are COSA experienced by ex-offenders and volunteers?
2. How does COSA mediate the risk factors associated with reoffending?
3. How is ostracism related to the connection to a Circle?
4. What are the long-term outcomes for those who reintegrate with COSA vs those who do not?

Candidates should propose a minimum of three studies (preferably featuring both quantitative and qualitative elements) that correspond to the above research questions.

If you would like to discuss this opportunity and the PhD project before applying, please contact Dr Christian Perrin (Senior Lecturer of Psychology) [c.s.perrin@greenwich.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.perrin@greenwich.ac.uk)

**Duration: 3 years Full-Time Study or 6 years Part-Time Study**

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| ***Person Specification of Essential (E) or Desirable (D) requirements:*** | |
| ***Criteria:*** | ***E or D*** |
| ***Education and Training:*** | |
| • 1st Class or 2nd class, First Division (Upper Second Class) Honours Degree or a taught Master’s degree with a minimum average of 60% in all areas of assessment (UK or UK equivalent) in Psychology | **E** |
| • For those whose first language is not English and/or if from a country where English is not the majority spoken language (as recognised by the UKBA), a language proficiency score of at least IELTS 7 or an equivalent UK VISA and Immigration secure English Language Test is required, unless the degree above was taught in English **and** obtained in a majority English speaking country, e.g. UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc, as recognised by the UKBA. | **E** |
| ***Experience & Skills:*** | |
| • Previous experience of undertaking research in Psychology or Sociology or Education (e.g., undergraduate or taught Master’s dissertation) | **E** |
| • Good knowledge of quantitative methods and statistical analysis | **E** |
| • Good writing skills | **E** |
| • Good quantitative | **E** |
| ***Personal Attributes:*** | |
| • Understands the fundamental differences between a taught degree and a research degree in terms of approach and personal discipline/motivation | **E** |
| • Able to, under guidance, complete independent work successfully | **E** |
| ***Other Requirements:*** | |
| • A PhD project research proposal that is related to the research area | **E** |

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| **Closing date for applications:** applications are accepted all year round |
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| **For further information contact:** Dr Christian Perrin  ***E-mail:*** [c.s.perrin@greenwich.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.perrin@greenwich.ac.uk%20) |

**Making an application:**

Please read this information before making an application. Information on the application process is available at: https://www.gre.ac.uk/research/study/apply/application-process. Applications need to be made online via this link. **No other form of application will be considered**.

All applications **must include** the following information. Applications not containing these documents will not be considered.

* Reference Number (Ref)– included in the personal statement section together with your personal statement as to why you are applying
* a research proposal related to the subject topic \*
* a CV including 2 referees \*
* academic qualification certificates/transcripts and IELTs/English Language certificate if you are an international applicant or if English is not your first language or you are from a country where English is not the majority spoken language as defined by the UK Border Agency \*

\**upload to the qualification section of the application form. Attachments must be a PDF format.*

Before submitting your application, you are encouraged to liaise with the Lead Supervisor on the details above.