

# Editorial

Charlotte Harris and Helen Jones

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Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr once said "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" and this issue of the BSC Newsletter is certainly proof that the more things change, the more they stay the same. A new government is usually a time for looking forward with optimism but as we move from the former Coalition to the present Conservative Government our themed articles suggest that we can expect more of the same in relation to austerity cuts and that things are unlikely to get better for many within the criminal justice system.

**Karen Evans** begins our series of missives to government by categorising the elements that combined to win the election for the Conservatives and she clearly identifies the financial interests that are mobilising, anticipating the profits to be made from privatisation aspects of the criminal justice system. **Patricia Gray** considers the plight of young people in relation to justice and outlines five key challenges facing the new government. When we chose the theme it seemed very likely that there would be a complete change of government but, as **Pamela Davies** highlights, during the Coalition victims were 'politicised, demarcated, prioritised and responsabilised' and it is unlikely that victims will fare better in the immediate future. This point was emphasised by **Susie Atherton** who asks whether we should be worried. Her point is that anyone considering criminology as a future degree topic and potential career should indeed be concerned. **Loraine Gelsthorpe** asks some searing questions about the position of women within the criminal justice system, while **Peter Squires** examines the political will (and resources) that might affect the police 'burden' of detainees with mental health issues. In the context of 'austerity' spending cuts it could be that the political climate combines with economic means: resulting in dire consequences for vulnerable people. However, each of our authors point to something which goes far beyond short-term austerity cuts (whilst not denying their depth or impact). Rather they point to a fundamental, ideological denial of the principles of state welfare, policing by consent, public service, social justice and equality before the law.

On a smaller stage, we are seeing changes here at the BSC. Our change of personnel includes both the recent election of a new President who will be taking the helm after the next BSC AGM, and bidding farewell to Mandy Ross, our membership secretary. Stepping in is Helen Jones. Many of you will know her from work with us as Chair of the Learning and Teaching Network or from her previous work with the Higher Education Academy or from her academic work. She will only be with us in the short-term as a consultant but we look forward to seeing how she adds to the existing blend of expertise here at the Society.

This newsletter contains an interesting article from Allan Brimicombe on how text mining is used to handle and analyse large amounts of qualitative data. He tackles the 2015 election manifestos and the graphic on our front page is a word cloud of some of this analysis. At the beginning of the year we undertook a survey of members to gather views on a number of issues relating to our member benefits and Society activity, and BSC Executive Director Charlotte Harris reports on some of the key findings and proposed changes. We also have reports from some of the BSC regional and special interest groups – including the new Prisons Network - and remember that their news and events can also be found on the website and in the bi-monthly bulletins. For the last four years we have had an excellent team at Leeds University led by Professor Adam Crawford editing the Society journal *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. At the end of last year we advertised for a group of members willing to take this role forward for the next four years and the tender process was won by a team from a consortia of Scottish universities led by Michele Burman at Glasgow University, Laura Piacentini of Strathclyde and Sarah Armstrong also from Glasgow, and we hear from them and their plans in this newsletter.

The new CCJ team will be at our annual conference in Plymouth. The theme for the conference is: 'Criminology: Voyages of Critical Discovery'. This reflects the spirit of Plymouth as a point of departure for numerous voyages of discovery including of course the Pilgrim Fathers setting off for the 'new world' from what is now known as the 'Mayflower Steps' on Plymouth's Barbican. Those voyages of imperial conquest are now viewed with ambivalence: the source of heroic myth and pride for some, a prelude to genocide and enslavement for others. The British Society of Criminology annual conference 2015 aims to take criminology on a reflexive and critical voyage that explores our ambivalence over the past, the present and the future.

With this in mind the conference is organised around a set of plenary panel discussions that provide keynote speakers with the opportunity to present their ideas and discuss them in the round. This exciting format will provide an excellent forum for an inclusionary dialogue and therefore promote a dynamic conference environment from which numerous personal voyages of critical discovery may be made. The conference organisers have given you the opportunity to put questions to the speakers beforehand – not many of you have taken up this challenge - but it is not too late and you can still pose a question from the conference website.

We look forward to seeing many of you in Plymouth.

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