

**Being a Criminology Ethnographer in a South African Prison:
A Search for Dynamics and Prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the
Westville Prison, Durban, South Africa¹**

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ABSTRACT This paper is about doing research in a South African prison. It focuses on three issues viz. overcrowding in prisons, acquiring access to doing research in South African prisons, the impact of overcrowded conditions on prison life, and finding an appropriate conceptual research framework to elicit the best possible material from research in prisons. The paper takes a further cue from prison life to understand what impact it could have on civilian life after the release of prisoners. It postulates that the negativities, especially in health conditions and particularly with HIV/AIDS infections, poses a serious threat to an already unstable situation in wider South African society.